



Survival Needs and Native American Contributions Student Handout

Educators:

This five-page handout accompanies the lesson “Lewis and Clark: Native American Contributions,” for grades 6–8, at www.nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions.

For more about the Lewis and Clark Expedition, go to www.nationalgeographic.com/lewisandclark.

Included

- Four Survival Needs “cards”
- Four Native American Contributions “cards”

Preparing for the Activity

1. You can have students do this activity individually or in groups. Photocopy enough cards to give each student or group all four Survival Needs cards and all four Native American Contributions cards.
2. Cut the cards apart.

To conduct the activity, see the “Development” section of the lesson.

Native American Contributions

Mandan and Hidatsa Indians



During the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Mandan lived on the Great Plains, near the Missouri River. The Mandan and their neighbors, the Hidatsa, lived in five large, settled villages, not far from the Arikara. The Mandan were buffalo hunters and farmers. They grew beans, squash, and tobacco in fields around their villages, and harvested roots, as well. Their most important crop was corn, which they sold and traded to other tribes and to European merchants who visited them.

The Mandan and the Hidatsa helped the expedition during the winter, when temperatures fell as low as 45° below zero F (– 43° C). The Indians performed a sacred buffalo-calling ceremony and took the men on a hunt when buffalo arrived in the Plains. The expedition traded goods, such as beads and axes, for corn and other food. Lewis and Clark hired a French fur trapper, Toussaint Charbonneau, and his Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, to act as interpreters on the journey ahead.

Tribal leaders such as Black Cat offered valuable information about the geography to the west. He knew that the best way to cross the mountains ahead was by horseback, and that Sacagawea’s tribe, the Shoshone, kept many horses.

Native American Contributions

Shoshone Indians

When Lewis and Clark made their historic expedition, the Shoshone were known as the Snake Nation and lived in the Rocky Mountains. The Shoshone on the eastern side of the Rockies had once lived as buffalo hunters on the plains of Montana, but had been pushed into the mountains by more powerful rival Plains tribes. They spent part of the year in the mountains, and ate roots, berries, and sometimes fish. They would travel to the Plains for short periods to hunt buffalo.



Sacagawea had been born a Shoshone, but had been kidnapped by the Hidatsa several years before she joined the expedition. She realized that one of their chiefs, Cameahwait, was her brother, whom she hadn't seen for several years. Cameahwait told Lewis and Clark that the rivers ahead were impassable and no easy all-water route to the Pacific existed. He eventually agreed to sell nearly 30 of the Shoshone's many horses to the expedition.

Native American Contributions

Nez Perce Indians

During the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Nez Perce lived just west of the Bitterroot Range of the Rocky Mountains, in present-day central Idaho and eastern Washington and Oregon. Depending on the season, they lived in different kinds of houses. They were excellent horsemen and some Nez Perce bands regularly journeyed across the Rockies to hunt buffalo on horseback. They also ate berries, fish, wild game, roots, and bulbs.



They gave food to the expedition members, who were nearly starving after crossing 160 miles of dangerous mountain terrain. The Nez Perce showed the expedition how to burn out the insides of logs to make canoes. They had one of the largest herds of horses on the continent. They agreed to care for the expedition's horses until the explorers returned on their route home. On the expedition's return trip, the Nez Perce let the group stay to wait for the snow to melt, since, even in May and June, snow made crossing the Bitterroots a challenge. Clark gave them medical help in exchange for food.

Native American Contributions

Clatsop Indians

At the time of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, the Clatsop were a small tribe of about 400 people who lived on the south side of the Columbia River. They fished in the ocean and other waters, and hunted animals for fur and meat. The Clatsop also told Lewis and Clark about a whale that had washed ashore on the seacoast, to the south of their fort. The Clatsop showed the expedition where to find elk, which they could use for food or to make clothing. The Clatsop and the expedition, who lived near each other for several months, had a friendly relationship.



Survival Needs

On the Great Plains



Winter was approaching and the expedition had traveled about 1,600 miles (2,600 kilometers) up the Missouri River. They needed supplies to get them through the winter—wood for fuel; and water, game, and food. Protection from the harsh weather would also be important.

They hoped to learn about the land they would travel through after the winter, and needed a translator to help them communicate with Native Americans they might encounter.

Sergeant Patrick Gass—December 7, 1804

“the Big-white head chief . . . came to our garrison and told us that the buffaloe were in the prairie coming into the bottom. Captain Lewis and eleven more of us went out immediately, and saw the prairie covered with buffaloe and the Indians on horseback killing them. They killed 30 or 40 and we killed eleven of them . . .”

Needs: food, fuel, winter protection, information, translators

Draw a  on the map where you think this took place.

Survival Needs

In the Mountains



The Missouri River had come to end. Finding the source of the Missouri had been an important part of the mission. Now the expedition found themselves on the Continental Divide, looking west, and saw even more mountains. They would need horses to carry their heavy gear through the steep terrain ahead. They knew of a Native American tribe in the area who might sell horses to them, but the Indians were nowhere to be found. “If we do not find them, I fear the successful issue of our voyage will be very doubtful . . . I determined to proceed . . . until I found the Indians,” wrote Meriwether Lewis in his journal.

Sergeant Patrick Gass—August 20, 1805

“They have a great many fine horses, and nothing more; and on account of these they are much harassed by other nations. They move about in any direction where the berries are most plenty. We had a long talk with them, and they gave us very unfavourable accounts with respect to the rivers. From which we understood that they were not navigable down, and we expect to perform the rout by land.”

Needs: horses, information

Draw a  on the map where you think the expedition is located.

Survival Needs

West of the Mountains




It was late September; winter was coming. Tall, steep, nearly impassable mountains had made travel slow and dangerous, and the expedition had lost several horses. An early winter storm had driven large game to lower elevations, and the members of the group were near starvation. They were forced to kill three colts for food.

The mountains led into a huge, arid valley, where Lewis and Clark met another group of Native Americans. The expedition needed food, badly. They would have to make canoes for the next leg of their journey. They also needed to find people who would care for their horses, which the expedition would need for their return trip across the mountains.

Private Joseph Whitehouse—September 19, 1805

“ . . . we descended down the moun[n]t. which was verry Steep descent, for about three miles. then assended [ascended] another as bad as any we have ever been up before. it made the Sweat run off of our horses & ourselves . . . one of the men killed a fessent [pheasant]. their is not any kind of game or Sign of any to be Seen . . . one of our horses fell backward and roled about 100 feet down where it was nearly Steep and a Solid rock & dashed against the rock in the creek, with a load of Ammunition. but the powder being in canisters did not git damaged nor the horse killed, but hurt . . . we are in hopes to git out of [these mountains] Soon.”

Needs: food, canoe-building techniques

Draw a  on the map where you think this place is located.

Survival Needs

At the Mouth of a River



The expedition had finally made it all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Winter was coming, and they needed to be protected from the elements, and to make new clothing and moccasins. They needed to build a fort, but they weren't sure where to locate it. They camped throughout the area, looking for a safe place where they would have a food supply for the winter ahead and with easy access to the ocean, so they could make salt.

Private Joseph Whitehouse—December 7, 1805

“We proceeded on to a deep bay about 8 Miles, & went up a River, which was about 100 Yards wide. We then unloaded our Canoes & carried all our baggage, about 200 Yards to a piece [of] rising ground in a thicket of tall pine Trees; where we intend building Cabbins, & stay if Game is to be had through the Winter season.”

Private Joseph Whitehouse—December 25, 1805

“We had hard rain & Cloudy weather as usual. We all moved into our new Garrison or Fort, which our Officers named after a nation of Indians who resided near us . . . We have at present nothing to eat but lean Elk meat & that without Salt, but the whole of our party are content with this fare.”

Needs: shelter, food

Draw a  on the map where you think this took place.