

On the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark



OVERVIEW

During their famous 1804-1806 trip mapping the territory from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark had many adventures, which they faithfully recorded—with curious spellings—in their journals. Two of these entries follow, the first by Lewis, the second by Clark.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following questions:

- How do these two journals differ in their descriptive styles?
 - What types of activities did the expedition involve?
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Tuesday, May 14th, 1805.

Some fog on the river this morning, which is a very rare occurrence. The country much as it was yesterday with this difference that the bottoms are somewhat wider; passed some high black bluffs. Saw immense herds of buffaloe today also elk deer wolves and antelopes. Passed three large creeks one on the stard. [starboard, or right] and two others on the lard. [larboard, or left] side, neither of which had any runing water. Capt Clark walked on shore and killed a very fine buffaloe cow. I felt an inclination to eat some veal and walked on shore and killed a very fine buffaloe calf and a large woolf, much the whitest I had seen, it was quite as white as the wool of the common sheep. One of the party wounded a brown bear very badly, but being alone did not think proper to pursue him. In the evening the men in two of the rear canoes discovered a large brown bear lying in the open grounds about 300 paces from the river, and six of them went out to attack him, all good hunters. They took the advantage of a small eminence which concealed them and got within 40 paces of him unperceived. Two of them reserved their fires as had been previously conscerted, the four others fired nearly at the same time and put each his bullet through him, two of the balls passed through the bulk of both lobes of his lungs. In an instant this monster ran at them with open mouth. The two who had reserved their fires discharged their pieces at him as he came towards them. Boath of them struck him, one only slightly and the other fortunately broke his shoulder. This however only retarded his motion for a moment. The men unable to reload their guns took to flight, the bear pursued and had very nearly overtaken them before they reached the river. Two of the party betook themselves to a canoe and the others seperated and concealed themselves among the willows, reloaded their pieces, each discharged his piece at him as they had an opportunity. They struck him several times again but

the guns served only to direct the bear to them. In this manner he pursued two of them separately so close that they were obliged to throw away their guns and pouches and throw themselves into the river altho' the bank was nearly twenty feet perpendicular. So enraged was this animal that he plunged into the river only a few feet behind the second man he had compelled [to] take refuge in the water, when one of those who still remained on shore shot him through the head and finally killed him. They then took him on shore and butchered him when they found eight balls had passed through him in different directions. The bear being old the flesh was indifferent, they therefore only took the skin and fleece, the latter made us several gallons of oil.

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Nov. 7, 1805. A cloudy foggy morning. Some rain. We set out early, proceeded under the stard. [starboard] side under high rugged hills with steep ascent, the shore bold and rocky, the fog so thick we could not see across the river. Two canoes of Indians met and returned with us to their village which is situated on the stard. side behind a cluster of marshy islands, on a narrow chanl. of the river through which we passed to the village of 4 houses. They gave us to eat some fish, and sold us fish, *wap pa to* roots, three dogs and 2 otter skins for which we gave fish hooks principally, of which they were very fond. . . .

After delaying at this village one hour and a half we set out piloted by an Indian dressed in a sailor's dress, to the main channel of the river. The tide being in we should have found much difficulty in passing into the main channel from behind those islands, without a pilot. A large marshy island near the middle of the river near which several canoes came along side with skins, roots, fish &c. to sell, and had a temporary residence on this island. Here we see great numbers of water fowls about those marshy islands. Here the high mountainous country approaches the river on the larboard [larboard] side, a high mountain to the s. w. about 20 miles, the high mountains' country continues on the stard. side. About 14 miles below the last village and 18 miles of this day we landed at a village of the same nation. . . . We proceeded on about 12 miles below the village under a high mountainous country on the stard. side, shore bold and rocky, and encamped under a high hill on the stard. side opposite to a rock situated half a mile from the shore, about 50 feet high and 20 feet diameter. We with difficulty found a place clear of the tide and sufficiently large to lie on and the only place we could get was on round stones on which we lay our mats. . . .

Great joy in camp. We are in view of the ocean (in the morning when fog cleared off just below last village, first on leaving this village, of Warkiacum) this great Pacific Ocean which we have been so long anxious to see, and the roaring or noise made by the waves breaking on the rocky shores (as I suppose) may be heard distinctly.