

**TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROGRAM**

**Westward Expansion  
Lesson Plan**

**The Journals of Lewis and Clark**

**Erick M. Eiben  
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## Lesson Plan on the Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

### Lesson 4: The Journals of Lewis and Clark      Day 5, 6, 7, and 8

**Summary:** The students will create a skit of an event or dramatic episode taken from the journals of Lewis and Clark. The students will be placed into groups using the popsicle sticks with their names on them and will be given the task of choosing a journal entry to reenact into a one-act play approximately three to five minutes in length. The students will perform the skits over the next two class periods.

Too often the students in classrooms across America are restrained to sitting in their desks and watching the teacher perform. Students have an amazing array of talents and abilities and all too often those abilities go unappreciated. The skit activity allows the students to study the information and incorporate their learning experience into a dramatic, although usually more comedic, performance.

#### Standards:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

Political Democratization, Westward Expansion, and diplomatic developments, 1790–1860

- USI.22 Summarize the major policies and political developments that took place during the presidencies of George Washington (1789–1797), John Adams (1797–1801), and Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809). (H, C)
  - A. the origins of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties in the 1790s
  - B. the conflicting ideas of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton
  - C. the Alien and Sedition Acts
  - D. the Louisiana Purchase

#### Objectives:

1. The student will interpret the information learned from the Journals of Lewis and Clark.
2. The students will work together in groups to complete the project.
3. The student will write a skit reenacting an episode of the Lewis and Clark journey.
4. The student will use creative skills to write and perform the skit.
5. The student will appreciate the difficulties of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

#### Materials:

1. Copy of The Journals of Lewis and Clark Edited by John Bakeless
2. Lined Paper
3. Markers
4. Materials for Props
5. Popsicle Stick Name Chooser Thingys – to pick the groups

#### Procedures:

##### Day 5

#### 1. Attendance and Review      10 Minutes

At the beginning of class, after attendance is taken, students will have an opportunity to review their responses to the previous days class. The class will review issues regarding minority involvement in the Lewis and Clark expedition as well as the interaction between Lewis and Clark and the Native Americans encountered along the journey

**2. Separate the students into groups      2 Minutes**

**3. Explain the skit activity to the groups    5 Minutes**

The students must clearly understand the expectations of the activity and the steps for creating their skit. The teacher must explain the process to them and answer any questions about the project. Explain to the students how they must choose an appropriate journal entry for their skit. Then, the students will need to create a skit, divide up the roles, and rehearse. It is important to remind the students that everyone's participation is vital to the performance of the skit. Students usually will make known to the teacher the actions of other team members who are not performing their tasks or carrying their own weight.

**4. Student teams discuss and create their skits.    Remainder of the Class Period**

Each group will discuss the sections of the Lewis and Clark journals they have read and will need to choose a section to interpret into a one-act skit. Then, after seeking the approval and input of the teacher, the students will write a brief skit to reenact the events of the journal entry they have chosen. The final product will be given to the teacher at the end of class for final approval and the students will perform the plays over the next two days.

The students will, on the one hand, be using the journals, while at the same time, using their creative skills to interpret the material. It will give them a break from the traditional learning activities of the classroom. Students will be able to communicate their knowledge through the accuracy and creativity of the skit.

**Day 6**

**1. Complete skit writing and rehearse.            Entire Class Period**

The activities of day 6 will be the most difficult to guide. The students will need to stay on task. First, the students will need to finish writing and organizing their skits. For the remainder of this class period the students will then be able to rehearse their skits. It would probably be best to place each group in a different corner of the classroom.

Help students to balance their performance between humor and accuracy. Part of the motivation for this project is to allow the students to do something different that in the end will help them remember the topic and have some fun. Of course, with teenagers, the likelihood of having the whole experiment blow out of control is a real possibility.

**Day 7 and 8**

**1. Perform skits.                                        Entire Class Period**

Over the course of the next two days, students will be allowed to perform their skits for the teacher and the class. The skit will be graded according to a performance rubric. Student skits are graded on the ability of the group to have re-created the journal entry.

The teacher needs to address each group after they have performed their reenactments and use the opportunity to teach about the specific journal mentioned. The combination of visual entertainment with teacher reinforcement is one of the best ways to support student learning.

**Assessments:**

## 1. Skit Presentation Rubric

Each team will be graded for the performance of their skit according to the rubric. The teacher should pay special attention to the accuracy of the skit as well as the execution. Students will have a tendency to drift toward the silly when performing an activity of this type. While some humor is encouraged, the students should be reminded that this is a learning experience for the benefit of the other students.

2. Read *The Journals of Lewis and Clark* p.296 – 382 Days 5,6,7, and 8 (includes a weekend)

3. Homework – Pass out articles for the next day’s lesson. See next lesson materials list.

**References:**

Ambrose, Stephen E. Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West. Simon & Schuster, New York. 1996.

The Journals of Lewis and Clark. Edited by John Bakeless. Signet Classic, New York. 2002.

“The National Archives” <http://archives.gov/exhibits/>