

A Day in the Life of Captain Lewis

June 14, 1805, was an amazing day for Captain Lewis. First, read the journal entry. It is written just as Lewis wrote it, misspellings and all. Answer the questions that follow using complete sentences.

1. What animals did Lewis see that day?
2. How many shots did he fire?
3. How many bullets could be loaded in his gun at any one time?
4. Do you think Lewis was ever afraid? Explain.

(Lewis) June 14, 1805

I slected a fat buffaloe and shot him very well, through the lungs; while I was gazeing attentively on the poor animal discharging blood in streams from his mouth and nostrils, expecting him to fall every instant, and having entirely forgotten to reload my rifle, a large white, or reather brown bear, had perceived and crept on me within 20 steps before I discovered him; in the first moment I drew up my gun to shoot, but at the same instant recolected that she was not loaded and that he was too near for me to hope to perform this opperation before he reached me, as he was then briskly advancing on me...in this situation I thought of retreating in a brisk walk as fast as he was advancing untill I could reach a tree about 300 yards below me, but I had no sooner terned myself about but he pitched at me, open mouthed and full speed, I ran fast about 80 yards and found he gained on me fast, I then run into the water...at this instant he arrived at the edge of the water within about 20 feet of me; the moment I put myself in this attitude of defence he sudonly wheeled about as if frightened....As soon as I saw him run in that manner I returned to the shore and charged my gun, which I had still retained in my hand throughout this curious adventure...in returning through the level bottom of the Medecine river and about 200 yards distant from the Missouri, my direction led me directly to an anamal that I first supposed was a wolf; but on nearer approach or about sixty paces distant I discovered it was not it's colour was a brownish yellow...I took aim at it and fired...I loaded my gun and examined the place which was dusty and saw the track from which I am still further convinced that it was of the tiger kind...I had not proceed more than three hundred yards from the burrow of this tyger cat, before three bull buffaloe, which wer feeding with a large herd about half a mile from me on my left, seperated from the herd and ran full speed toward me. I thought at least to give them some amusement and altered my direction...I then continued my rout homewards passed the buffaloe which I had killed, but did not think it prudent to remain all night at this place.

5. How did the Indians react to Clark's coming into their village?
6. What did Clark have in his hand when he entered the lodges?
7. What did Clark do with the Indian men? Why?
8. Where do the Indians think Lewis and Clark came from?
9. Who do you think the "Squar wife of the interpreter" is?
10. At the end, why do the Indians believe that Lewis and Clark have friendly intentions?

(Clark) October 19th 1805

I observed a great number of Lodges on the opposit Side at Some distance below, and Several Indians on the opposit bank passing up to where Capt. Lewis was with the Canoes, others I Saw on a knob nearly opposit to me at which place they delayed but a Short time, before they returned to their Lodges as fast as they could run, I was fearfull that those people might not be informed of us, deturmined to take the little Canoe which was with me and proceed with the three men in it to the Lodges, on my aproach not one person was to be seen except three men off in the plains, and they Sheared off as I saw approached near the Shore, I landed in front of five Lodges which was at no great distance from each other, Saw no person the enterance or Dores of the Lodges wer Shut with the Same materials of which they were built a mat, I approached one with a pipe in my hand entered a lodge which was the nearest to me found 32 persons men, women, and a few children Setting permiscuesly in the Lodg, in the greatest agutation, Some crying and ringing there hands, others hanging their heads. I gave my hand to them all and made Signs of my friendly disposition and offered the men my pipe to Smok and distributed a few Small articles which I had in my pockets, this measure passified those distressed people verry much, I then Sent one man into each lodge and entered a Second myself the inhabitants of which I found more fritened than those of the first lodge I destributed Sundrey Small articles amongst them, and Smoked with the men, I then entered the third 4h & fifth Lodge which I found Somewhat passified, the three men , Drewer Jo. & R. Fields haveing useed every means in their power to convience them of our friendly disposition to them, I then Set my Self on a rock and made Signs to the men to come and Smoke with me not one Come out untill the Canoes arrived with the 2 chiefs, one of whom spoke aloud, and as was their Custom to all we had passed the Indians came out & Set by me and Smoked They said we came from the clouds &c &c. and were not men &c. &c. this time Capt. Lewis came down with the Canoes rear in which the Indian, as Soon as they Saw the Squar wife of the interpereters they pointed to her and informed those who continued iyet the Same position I first found them they imediately all came out and appeared to assume new life the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter.

Letters Home

The men who started on the expedition weren't sure if they would make it back home or even that they would ever be heard from again.

Honored Parente. Camp River Dubois April the 8th 1804

". . . I now embrace this opportunity of writing to you once more to let you know where I am and where I am going. I am well thank God, and in high spirits. I am now on an expedition to the westward, with Capt. Lewis and Capt. Clark, who are appointed by the President of the United States to go on an expedition through the interior parts of North America . . . I have Recd. no letters since Betseys yet, but will write next winter if I have a chance. Yours, &c."

John Ordway Sergt.

Most Americans, including the men on the expedition, had received little or no schooling. Lewis had a few years at local schools, and Clark may have been taught the basics of reading and writing by his older brothers. Neither man had been to college. Spelling and grammar had not been standardized yet, so people often spelled words different ways. The word mosquitoes is spelled 15 different ways in journals of the expedition. Usage for periods, capitals, and commas varied as well.

Letter to a Friend

Write a letter to a friend. Assume your friend has never been to school in the United States and speaks only basic English. Describe what you do in school in each subject, and nutrition, and at lunch. Relate any interesting things that happen to you or your friends during the school day. In addition, tell how you spend the rest of your day after school – where you go, what you do, and how you spend your evening. Complete this activity in your notebook.