

Assignment Discovery Lesson Plan Lewis and Clark: A Scientific Journey

Subject

U.S. History

Grade level

6-8

Duration

Two or three class periods

Objectives

Students will

- write questions similar an archaeologist's; and
- answer the questions and compare their ideas to archaeological work.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access
- Print materials on Lewis and Clark

Procedure

1. Ask students what they know about archaeologists and the work they do. Explain that archaeologists are scientists who study the remains of past human activity. They look for such evidence as the remains of buildings and cookware, as well as artifacts and soil patterns that indicate where fires were built.
2. Divide the class into small groups, and tell them to imagine that they are archaeologists charged with the task of finding physical remains of Lewis and Clark's expedition.
3. The student-archaeologists' first step is to develop a list of questions before beginning their work. Give students a few minutes to brainstorm among themselves. If they are having difficulty, suggest the following questions:
 - What kinds of evidence do you think could survive over time?
 - Where would you look for this evidence?
 - What kinds of tools would you need?
 - What kinds of experts would you need to work with to answer these questions?
4. Students may use library and Internet sources to research Lewis and Clark's expedition. Their goal is to answer their own lists of questions. The following Web sites may prove helpful:
 - <http://www.columbian.com/special/lewisclark/011901b.html>
 - <http://www.nps.gov/focl/archoverview.htm>

- <http://www.emporia.edu/earthsci/student/wilson1/fort1.htm>
 - <http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/98mar/clark.htm>
 - <http://lewisandclarktrail.com/trailadventures/tales/index.htm>
5. Have each group record responses to the questions.
 6. When the groups have completed their work, bring the class together and discuss students' findings. Did students find it relatively easy to answer their questions? How did the answers relate to work uncovering remains of the expedition? What archaeological evidence has been found Where has most of it been found? What tools have archaeologists used to interpret the evidence?
 7. Ask students if they have seen other media (programs or museum displays) about archaeologists and their work. How do these compare with the work of the archaeologists who have uncovered remains from Lewis and Clark's expedition? What skills and expertise are necessary to interpret information uncovered by an archaeologist?

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students actively participated in class discussions; thought creatively in developing their list of questions; completed their research carefully and thoroughly; articulated comprehensive answers to their questions.

2 points: Students participated somewhat in class discussions; thought somewhat creatively in developing their list of questions; completed their research; answered their questions.

1 point: Students participated little, if at all, in class discussions; had difficulty developing their list of questions; did not complete their research; were unable to answer most of the questions.

Vocabulary

archaeologist

Definition: Scientists who study past human activity by uncovering and identifying artifacts and their use

Context: Archaeologists have had a hard time finding artifacts of Lewis and Clark's expedition because so few were left behind.

William Clark

Definition: Co-leader of the historic expedition to find a waterway across North America to the Pacific Ocean; he was responsible for mapping the journey.

Context: William Clark's experience as a military leader and his expertise in drawing maps enhanced Lewis and Clark's cross-continental expedition.

Thomas Jefferson

Definition: Third president of the United States, who obtained a grant from Congress in 1803 to send Lewis and Clark on an expedition to the Pacific Ocean

Context: Thomas Jefferson was a brilliant statesman and author who sought to expand the United States' all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Meriwether Lewis

Definition: A U.S. captain and Jefferson's private secretary, Lewis was chosen by Jefferson to lead the expedition to the Pacific Ocean.

Context: Meriwether Lewis set out from St. Louis in 1804 and led a group of 50 men for about 8,000 miles to the Pacific Ocean and back, a journey that took more than two years.

National Standards

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To become a member of the NCSS, or to view the Standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
- People, Place, and Environments
- Science, Technology, and Society

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor