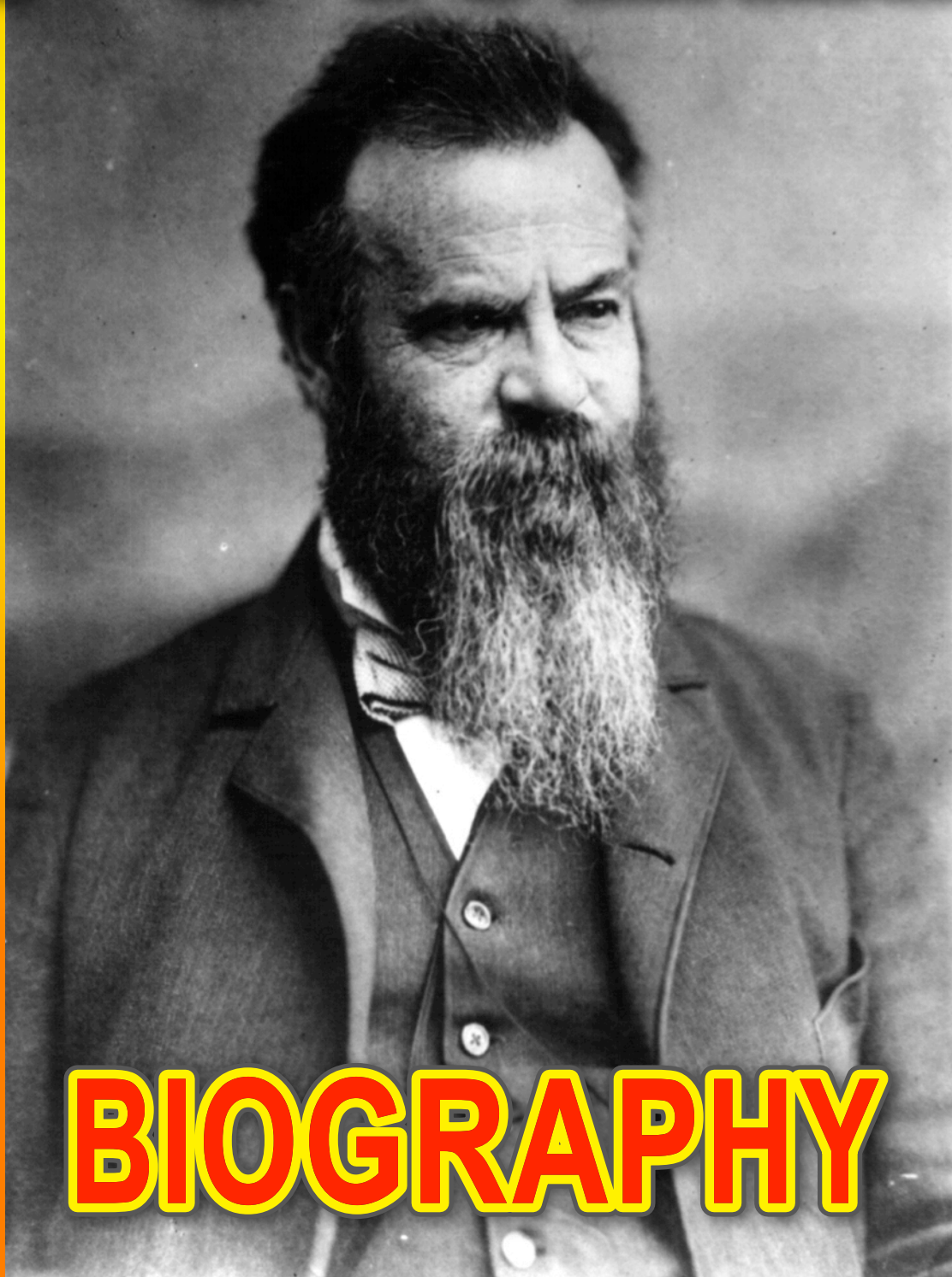


JOHN WESLEY POWELL



BIOGRAPHY

JOHN WESLEY POWELL

John Wesley Powell was born on March 24, 1834 in Mount Morris, New York, but his family moved through Ohio and Wisconsin before settling in Illinois, where he studied.

Powell loved nature and outdoor pursuits. As a young man, Powell walked through Wisconsin for four months. He also rowed on many rivers, like the Mississippi, Ohio, and Illinois. In 1859, Powell became secretary of the Illinois Natural History Society.

But when the Civil War broke out, Powell stopped his expeditions, and fought for the Union side in the war. He was wounded at the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee. Powell lost his right arm, though he survived and continued to fight in the war.

After the war, Powell wanted to explore more of the American West. He and nine men loaded up boats with supplies and set out on the Green River in Wyoming. Powell and his men then joined the Colorado River in Utah. Traveling down this river was the most dangerous part of their journey. Many people thought it was impossible to navigate.

Along the way down the Colorado River, Powell sometimes stopped to make measurements and collect specimens from the canyon walls above the river. But Powell and his men also encountered rapids. Sometimes, the men hauled their boats over land and joined the river lower down, but sometimes they just had to go over the rapids. They survived, but by the end of their trip, they had lost many of their supplies, and two of their boats altogether.

Eventually, Powell's expedition reached the Grand Canyon. It had not been explored thoroughly before by people other than the Native Americans who lived there.

This first trip was not enough for Powell, who wanted to go back and survey the Grand Canyon area properly, which he did in 1871. This time he helped produce maps and collect more scientific and geological specimens. Powell also took with him a camera to record the landscape and the people there so that more settlers could try to understand their way of life.

The expeditions showed Powell that water was vital to settlement. He thought that the American West should be settled carefully, and not randomly, or there would be drought problems. But Powell's ideas were not really listened to at the time.

After his Grand Canyon expeditions, Powell became head of the U.S. Geological Survey, which had been created not long before to bring together surveys of new lands. In 1889, Powell also helped found the National Geographic Society.

Towards the end of the 19th century, Powell became ill, and he died in Maine on September 23, 1902.

Understanding words

Before we can understand a story we have to know what all of the words mean. Let's try one...

a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'navigate'.

b From that sentence, suggest what 'navigate' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word 'navigate'.

d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'navigate'.

e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'navigate' means.

Try this for other words, too. 

Finding key words

Next, we need to find the key words that tell us what the story is about...

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list like the one below. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym). You don't have to use all the spaces, but you should not use more.

| Key word | Synonym (similar word) |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Example: dangerous | perilous |
| | |
| | |
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| | |

Sequencing

Sequencing means getting the events in the right order. Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense.

After the expedition, Powell went back to the Grand Canyon and surrounding area to make proper maps and record the Native Americans' way of life.

During the expedition, Powell also explored the Grand Canyon.

After the war, Powell went on a major expedition to explore and survey the Colorado River.

John Wesley Powell was born in 1834, and loved outdoor pursuits from a young age.

Later on, Powell was head of the U.S. Geological Survey, and he helped found the National Geographic Society.

During the Civil War, Powell lost his right arm.

Powell and his men had to overcome obstacles like rapids.

Get to the facts

1 Where did Powell lose his right arm?

2 Which river did Powell's expedition start on?

3 Which river did they join later on?

4 How many boats did they lose on the expedition?

5 Which canyon did Powell explore?

Make a story...

When you read a description it often gives you ideas about how the event might be described differently.

Rapids!

I was on Powell's expedition on the Colorado River. Another boat was in front of me. I heard a roaring sound, getting louder all the time. Then I saw the fierce swirling water of rapids up ahead. The boat in front was heading straight for them...

Below is a plain text version for printing:

Understanding words:

- a Write the sentence in which you found the word 'navigate'.
- b From that sentence, suggest what 'navigate' means.
- c Write a new sentence using the word 'navigate'.
- d Use a dictionary to find words with a similar meaning (synonyms) to 'navigate'.
- e Draw a small picture showing what you think 'navigate' means.

Finding key words:

Read the story and underline the key words. Write the most important of these key words in a list. Write next to it a word that means a similar thing (a synonym).

For example:

Key word – dangerous Synonym – perilous

Sequencing:

Write these sentences in the correct order, so they make sense:

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Make a story...

Rapids!

I was on Powell's expedition on the Colorado River. Another boat was in front of me. I heard a roaring sound, getting louder all the time. Then I saw the fierce, swirling water of rapids up ahead. The boat in front was heading straight towards them... (now complete the story)

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