

Lewis and Clark:

Winter by the Pacific



Comprehension

Lewis and Clark: Winter by the Pacific

By November 1805, Lewis and Clark had reached the Pacific Ocean. They hoped that ships would pass the coast and pick them up. But no ships came, so Lewis and Clark spent the winter on the Pacific Coast. They built a camp called Fort Clatsop for shelter. Read about what that winter was like in these diary entries of Clark. Remember that they are written in the language of the time, and some words might look unfamiliar at first.

Monday November 11, 1805:

"Most tremendous waves breaking with great violence against the Shores, rain falling in torrents, we are all we as usual – and our Situation is truly a disagreeable one; the great quantities of rain which has loosened the Stones on the hill Sides; and the Small stones fall down upon us, our canoes at one place at the mercy of the waves, our baggage in another; and our selves and party Scattered on floating logs and Such dry Spots as can be found on the hills sides and crevices of the rocks."

Thursday November 14, 1805:

"The rain continues all day. all wet. The rain which has continued without a longer intermission than 2 hours at a time for ten days past has destroyed the robes and rotted nearly one half of the few clothes the party has, particularly the leather clothes. Fortunately for us we have no very cold weather as yet. And if we have cold weather before we can kill & Dress Skins for clothing the bulk of the party will Suffer very much."

Monday December 30, 1805:

"The fort was completed this evening and at sun set we let The [American] Indians know that, our custom will be to shut the gates at sun set, at which time they must all go out of the fort. those people who are verry foward and disagreeable, left the huts with reluctance.... I saw flies & different kinds of insects in motion to day Snakes are yet to be seen, and Snales without cover is common and large, fowls of every kind common to this quarter abound in the Creek & Bay near us."

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 '**tremendous**'.

b From that sentence, suggest what '**tremendous**' means.

c Write a new sentence using the word '**tremendous**'.

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

e Draw a small picture showing what you think '**tremendous**' 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: disagreeable	unpleasant

Sequencing

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

The American Indians eventually agreed to leave the camp.

For the past ten days, it has rained almost constantly.

Huge waves break on the shore, putting our canoes and baggage at risk.

We have had no really cold weather. If cold weather comes before we are ready, we will be in trouble.

It is raining heavily, which causes landslides.

We finished building the fort today. We explained to the American Indians that we did not want them inside the camp after dark.

Get to the facts

- 1 Which ocean did Lewis and Clark spend the winter of 1805 next to?
- 2 What has the rain loosened on the hillsides?
- 3 For how long has it been raining almost constantly?
- 4 At what time of day did the expedition men shut the fort gates?
- 5 What kind of animal has Clark not yet seen?

Make a story...

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

Waiting for a ship

Imagine you are one of Lewis and Clark's men. You sit in the camp, trying to keep dry in the pouring rain. You gaze out to sea, and see something that looks like a ship... (now complete the story)

Below is a plain text version for printing:

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- c Write a new sentence using the word 'tremendous'.
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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 – disagreeable

Synonym – unpleasant

Sequencing:

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