

Shoshone Encounter Packet

Unit: Politics & Diplomacy (Elementary and Middle School)

To the Cooperative Group:

In this packet you will find:

1. a map showing locations of four tribal encounters
2. a short explanation of the Shoshone encounter
3. excerpts from Lewis's journal concerning that encounter
4. four questions for your group to discuss and try to answer

Lewis and Clark were eager to find the Shoshone Indians in the late summer of 1805 because they knew the Shoshone had horses. They needed horses to successfully cross the Bitterroot Mountains before winter. The Shoshone had had no contact with other whites before meeting Lewis and Clark. On August 11, 1805, when Lewis first met the Shoshone, the people in the tribe were very hungry, had poor weapons, and were often harassed by neighboring Indians. When they wanted to communicate with the Shoshone, Lewis and Clark were able to do so by having Sacagawea (who turned out to be the sister of the Shoshone chief) translate. The messages between the Shoshone the captains went through a long line of interpreters—from Cameahwait (the chief) to Sacagawea, to Charbonneau (her husband) who translated it into French, to another interpreter who finally translated the message into English for the captains. The result was of this communication was that Lewis and Clark were able to get horses for their trip over the Bitterroot Mountains by trading with the Shoshone.

Here is what Captain Lewis wrote about his first horse trade with the Shoshone:

Meriwether Lewis, Sunday, August 18, 1805

“This morning while Capt. Clark was busily engaged....I exposed some articles to barter with the Indians for horses...I soon obtained three very good horses, for which I gave an uniform coat, a pair of leggings, a few handkerchiefs, three knives and some other small articles, the whole of which did not cost more than about \$20 in the U' States. The Indians seemed quite as well pleased with their bargain as I was.”

Questions and activities for cooperative group to consider:

- find Camp Fortunate, where Lewis and Clark met with the Shoshone
- how far did the Corps travel from St. Louis to Camp Fortunate?
(Use the scale of miles on your map)
- what did Lewis and Clark want/need from the Shoshone? why?
- what special person helped Lewis and Clark to be successful in dealing with the Shoshone? explain.