

Teton Sioux 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 Teton Sioux encounter
3. excerpts from Clark's journal concerning that encounter
4. four questions for your group to discuss and try to answer

When Lewis and Clark met the Teton Sioux on Sept. 24, 1804, they were new at dealing with Indian tribes because they had only had two other encounters with Indians. The Teton Sioux, on the other hand, were used to interacting with white men because they had been dealing for years with French, Spanish, and British fur traders. The Teton Sioux considered the area where they camped their territory and expected anyone passing on the river to pay them a toll for safe passage. Lewis and Clark did not intend to pay for traveling on the river; in fact, they believed the whole area belonged to the United States because of the Louisiana Purchase. This difference of opinion caused problems during this four-day meeting.

Here is what Captain William Clark had to say in his journal about the second day with the Teton Sioux:

William Clark, September 25, 1804

“Met in council...Cap. Lewis proceeded to Deliver a Speech which we (were) obliged to curtail for want of a good interpreter...invited those Chiefs on board to show them our boat...we gave them (the chiefs) _ a glass of whiskey... (they) soon began to be troublesome...I went with those Chiefs in one of the pirogues...to shore...the 2nd Chief was very insolent both in words and gestures...stating he had not received presents sufficient from us...I felt myself compelled to draw my sword...I felt myself warm & spoke in very positive terms....Most warriors appeared to have their Bows strung and took out their arrows from the quiver... remaining in this situation some time, I offered my hand to the 1st & 2nd Chiefs who refused to receive it.”

The four-day visit see-sawed between friendly gift giving and angry words and threats. Finally, on September 29, the encounter ended with an argument. The Teton Sioux tried to stop the Corps from going up the river without paying, but Lewis and Clark aimed

their cannon at the Indians, and the head chief kept the warriors from attacking. The keelboat traveled up the Missouri, but the captains were still wary about the Teton Sioux.

This is what Captain Clark wrote in his journal a few days after leaving the Teton-Sioux villages:

William Clark Tuesday October 2, 1804

“...(we) observe great caution this day expecting the Seaux (Sioux) intentions (to be) somewhat hostile towards our progression.”

Questions and activities for cooperative group to consider:

- find the location of the Teton Sioux encounter
- how far had the Corps traveled from St. Louis to the Teton-Sioux camp? (Use the scale of miles on your map)
- how much experience had Lewis and Clark had with other tribal encounters before meeting with the Teton Sioux?
- did Lewis and Clark make any mistakes in their gift giving or chief making with the Teton Sioux?