

## Excerpts from the Journals

Unit: Women (Middle and High School)

The journals from the expedition provide clues to Sacagawea's role during the trip. She is not always mentioned by name – sometimes she is “the interpreter's wife” or “the squaw.” (Squaw is an Algonquian Indian word for “woman” that is considered derogatory now, but simply meant “Indian woman” then.)

The Corps was several days upriver from Fort Mandan.

“When we halted for dinner the squaw busied herself in searching for the wild artichokes which the mice collect and deposit in large hoards. this operation she performed by penetrating the earth with a sharp stick about some small collections of drift wood. her labour soon proved successful, and she procured a good quantity of these roots.”

—*Meriwether Lewis, April 9, 1805*

A sudden wind squall had caught the crew of the pirogue by surprise and water filled the boat.

“By 4 o'clock in the evening our Instruments, Medicine, merchandize provision &c, were perfectly dried, repacked and put on board the perogue. the loss we sustained was not so great as we had at first apprehended... the Indian woman to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution, with any person onboard at the time of the accident, caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard”

—*Meriwether Lewis, May 16, 1805*

Weary and desperate to find the Shoshone Indians, the crew worked even harder as the river narrowed.

“The Indian woman recognizes the country and assures us that this is the river on which her relations live, and that the three forks are at no great distance. this peice of information has cheered the sperits of the party who now begin to console themselves with the anticipation of shortly seeing the head of the missouri yet unknown to the civilized world.”

—*Meriwether Lewis, July 22, 1805*

The expedition had passed the place where Sacagawea had been captured years earlier.

“The Indian woman recognized the point of a high plain to our right which she informed us was not very distant from the summer retreat of her nation on a river beyond the mountains which runs to the west. this hill she says her nation calls the beaver's head from a conceived re[se]mblance of it's figure to the head of that animal. she assures us that we shall either find her people on this river or on the river immediately west of it's source; which from it's present size cannot be distant.”

—*Meriwether Lewis, August 8, 1805*

Clark's party finally caught up with Lewis and his men, and Sacagawea suddenly recognized friends.

"We soon drew near to the camp, and just as we approached it a woman made her way through the crowd towards Sacajawea, and recognising each other, they embraced with the most tender affection. The meeting of these two young women had in it something peculiarly touching, not only in the ardent manner in which their feelings were expressed, but from the real interest of their situation. They had been companions in childhood, in the war with the Minnetarees they had both been taken prisoners in the same battle, they had shared and softened the rigours of their captivity, till one of them had escaped from the Minnetarees, with scarce a hope of ever seeing her friend relieved from the hands of her enemies. While Sacajawea was renewing among the women the friendships of former days, Captain Clarke went on, and was received by Captain Lewis and the chief, who after the first embraces and salutations were over, conducted him to a sort of circular tent or shade of willows....After this the conference was to be opened, and glad of an opportunity of being able to converse more intelligibly, Sacajawea was sent for; she came into the tent, sat down, and was beginning to interpret, when in the person of Cameahwait she recognised her brother: She instantly jumped up, and ran and embraced him, throwing over him her blanket and weeping profusely: The chief was himself moved, though not in the same degree. After some conversation between them she resumed her seat, and attempted to interpret for us, but her new situation seemed to overpower her, and she was frequently interrupted by her tears. After the council was over the unfortunate woman learnt that all her family were dead except two brothers, one of whom was absent, and a son of her eldest sister, a small boy, who was immediately adopted by her."

—*Nicholas Biddle, in History of the Expedition under the Command of Captains Lewis and Clark, 1814*

Heading down the Columbia River toward the Pacific, the expedition encountered many Indian cultures.

"This time Capt. Lewis came down with the Canoes in which the Indians[s were], as Soon as they Saw the Squar wife of the interperter they pointed to her and informed those who continued yet in the Same position I first found them, they imediately all came out and appeared to assume new life, the sight of This Indian woman, wife to one of our interprs. confirmed those people of our friendly intentions, as no woman ever accompanies a war party of Indians in this quarter."

—*William Clark, October 19, 1805*

The expedition had arrived at the Pacific Ocean and its rainy damp coast.

"The squar gave me a piece of bread made of flour which she had reserved for her child and carefully kept untill this time, which has unfortunatley got wet, and a little sour. this bread I eat with great satisfaction, it being the only mouthfull I had tasted for several months past."

—*William Clark, November 30, 1805*

Encamped among the Nez Perce, the Corps waited for the snow in the mountains to melt. “The Squar wife to Shabono busied her self gathering the roots of the fenel called by the Snake Indians *Year-pah* for the purpose of drying to eate on the Rocky mountains. those roots are very paliatiabile either fresh roasted boiled or dried.”

—*William Clark, May 18, 1806*