

Jefferson to Benjamin Rush

Unit: Preparing for the Trip (Elementary and Middle School)

Dear Sir

Washington Feb. 28, 1803

I wish to mention to you in confidence that I have obtained authority from Congress to undertake the long desired object of exploring the Missouri & whatever river, heading with that, leads into the Western ocean. About 10. chosen woodsmen headed by Capt. Lewis my secretary, will set out on it immediately & probably accomplish it in two seasons. Capt. Lewis is brave, prudent, habituated to the woods, & familiar with Indian manners & character. He is not regularly educated, but he possesses a great mass of accurate observation on all the subjects of nature which present themselves here, & will therefore readily select those only in his new route which shall be new. He has qualified himself for those observations of longitude & latitude necessary to fix the points of the line he will go over. It would be very useful to state for him those objects on which it is most desirable he should bring us information. For this purpose I ask the favor of you to prepare some notes of such particulars as may occur in his journey & which you think should draw his attention & enquiry. He will be in Philadelphia about 2. or 3. weeks hence & will wait on you.

I pray you to accept assurances of my affectionate friendship & sincere respect.

Th: Jefferson