

The Louisiana Purchase—Main Exploration Routes Teacher Pages

Overview

Students examine a map showing the routes of the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Zebulon Pike expedition in the early 19th century. They use their prior knowledge of these expeditions to predict what the map will show, and check their predictions by revealing the map's layers. They conclude by discussing the expeditions' results and writing paragraphs about what they have learned.

Time Required

30–50 minutes

National History Standards

Historical Thinking Standard 1: Chronological thinking

Historical Thinking Standard 2: Historical comprehension

United States History Era 4, Standard 1: United States territorial expansion between 1801 and 1861, and how it affected relations with external powers and Native Americans.

National Geography Standards

Standard 1: How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective

Standard 17: How to apply geography to interpret the past

Enduring Understanding

Shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, the United States government sent expeditions to explore the new territory; these expeditions returned with considerable knowledge about the geography of the western part of the continent.

Essential Question

What routes did the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Pike expedition take, and what did they discover on their journeys?

Procedure

Note: The following directions are for doing this lesson as a whole-class activity. If you wish, you may instead use the student handout and have students work individually or in groups on the activity.

1. Briefly read the “Historical Context” section to the class to set the stage for the activity. Make sure students understand the words and terms in bold.
2. Using a whiteboard, projector, or another display device, show the class the “Louisiana Purchase—Main Exploration Routes, 1804–1807” map with only the “Ocean,” “Gulf,” “River,” “State,” and “Lake” layers turned on.
3. Ask volunteers to point out the extent of the Louisiana Purchase on the map. Can they identify the territory the United States acquired in this deal? What country claimed the territory to the west of the Louisiana Purchase territory?
4. Turn on the “Louisiana Purchase” and “Territory” layers to reveal the answers to the questions above. Have students shade and label the Louisiana Purchase territory on their outline maps.
5. Ask students if they can recall the name of the first expedition the United States government sent to explore the Louisiana Purchase territory. They should remember that this was the Lewis and Clark Expedition, under the direction of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark.
6. Ask if anyone can identify the approximate route Lewis and Clark took on their outbound journey.
7. Ask students to lightly pencil lines reflecting their recollections of the route Lewis and Clark took.
8. Pose these questions to the class:
 - a. What major rivers did they follow?
 - b. What present-day states did they explore?
 - c. Where did they end up, before commencing their return voyage?
 - d. Where did they spend their winters?
 - e. Did they remain within the Louisiana Purchase territory, or did they venture beyond this territory? What country claimed the westernmost territory into which they ventured?
9. Ask volunteers to name and identify these places, as best they can, on the map.
10. Turn on the “Lewis and Clark, 1804–1805” and “City” layers to show the route. Have students use darker pencil lines to draw the actual route, as compared to the one they predicted.
11. Now ask students whether Lewis and Clark took exactly the same route on the way back east. What differences do students recall about the eastbound journey? Did Meriwether Lewis and William Clark stay together the entire time, or did they split up?
12. Turn on the “Lewis and Clark, 1805–1806” layer to show this eastbound route. Students will notice that Lewis and Clark split up for part of the journey. Have students draw this route on their maps. Also, ask them to label the places where the expedition spent the winters.

13. Ask students what they know about Zebulon Pike's explorations. What area did Pike explore first? Did his explorations overlap with Lewis and Clark's, or not?
14. Ask students to lightly pencil in lines reflecting their predictions of Pike's routes.
15. Turn on the "Zebulon Pike, 1805–1806" layer to show Pike's exploration of the upper Mississippi River and to reveal that Pike was in this region at the same time as Lewis and Clark were headed back from the West.
16. Pose these questions to the class:
 - a. Where else did Pike explore?
 - b. Does anyone know his approximate route?
 - c. Can you identify the approximate location of the mountain that bears his name?
 - d. Did Pike remain within the Louisiana Purchase territory, or did he venture beyond this territory?
 - e. Whom did Pike encounter on his journey? What happened next?
17. Turn on the "Zebulon Pike, 1806–1807" layer to show Pike's western route. Students will also see Pikes Peak, and they'll notice that he entered into Spanish territory. Remind them that Spanish troops captured him and held him captive in Santa Fe (students can locate this city on a U.S. map). The Spanish then took him to Chihuahua (in present-day Mexico), and later released him back into U.S. territory at Natchitoches.
18. Have students use darker pencil lines to draw Pike's actual routes, as compared to the ones they predicted.
19. Ask students to look again at Pike's route to the Rocky Mountains and Southwest. Explain that his mission was to find the sources of the Arkansas and Red Rivers. Did he succeed in this mission? What river did he mistake for the Red River? Ask them to label these rivers on their maps.
20. Discuss these questions as a class, based on students' prior knowledge and on the map:
 - a. What information did Lewis and Clark, and Pike provide about the Louisiana Purchase territory? How successful were their explorations in finding out about this vast region?
 - b. What present-day states did each expedition explore? What types of terrain and landscapes did they cover?
 - c. What was the role of Native Americans in these expeditions? Were the Native Americans always friendly, always hostile, or a combination? How did Native Americans respond to the white visitors to their land?
 - d. What was the historical significance of these explorations? What was their legacy?

Historical Context

In 1803, the United States purchased approximately 828,000 square miles of land from France for a price of around \$15 million. This transaction, called the **Louisiana Purchase**, doubled the size of the United States, expanding its territory west of the Mississippi to the Rocky Mountains and

from New Orleans into small parts of present-day Canada. Immediately after the purchase, President **Thomas Jefferson** commissioned an expedition to explore the new territory. This expedition, led by **Meriwether Lewis** and **William Clark**, aimed to explore the continent for potential commercial and scientific purposes. A subsequent expedition, under the leadership of **Zebulon Pike**, explored additional areas of the new territory.

Assessment

Have students write paragraphs responding to the following question:

Why do you think both Lewis and Clark and Zebulon Pike explored far beyond the boundaries of the Louisiana Purchase?

Extensions

1. Ask students to use the Internet or library resources to find excerpts from the Lewis and Clark journals and/or drawings from the expedition. Have them work in groups to create multimedia presentations answering the question “What did Lewis and Clark discover, and what was the expedition’s legacy?”
2. Have students conduct further research to learn about Pike’s experience as a captive in New Spain. What did he learn during this time? How did this help the United States? Ask them to write paragraphs or create multimedia presentations answering these questions.