

Westward Knowledge

Exploration reports changed how the United States viewed western lands.

SS.5.A.6.4 "Explain the importance of the explorations west of the Mississippi River."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details about what explorers learned or recorded, and circle two details showing why that information mattered to the United States or Native nations.

Reports From the West

- ① In 1803, the United States bought the Louisiana Territory from France. Much of this huge region lay west of the Mississippi River, and Americans knew little about its rivers, mountains, plants, animals, or peoples. President Thomas Jefferson sent Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore it. Their Corps of Discovery left near St. Louis in 1804 and traveled toward the Pacific Ocean.
- ② On the journey, the explorers depended on help from Native peoples. Sacagawea, a Shoshone woman traveling with the group, helped the expedition communicate with Shoshone people. The group obtained horses needed to cross the Rocky Mountains. The expedition also made maps and recorded information about the land. These records gave Americans a clearer picture of western rivers and possible travel routes.
- ③ Other explorers also gathered knowledge west of the Mississippi River. Zebulon Pike traveled through southern parts of the Louisiana Territory and reported on land near the Rocky Mountains. Together, these explorations helped United States leaders plan trade, travel, and future settlements. They also strengthened United States interest in controlling western lands. The reports did not make the land empty. Many Native nations already lived there and faced growing pressure as more Americans moved west.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Why did President Jefferson send Lewis and Clark west of the Mississippi River?

2 How did Native peoples help the Lewis and Clark expedition succeed?

3 How could the maps and records from the expeditions help the United States?

4 Why were western exploration reports important even though Native nations already lived on the land?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum caption about either Lewis and Clark or Zebulon Pike. Explain why that exploration mattered, using two different details from the passage, including one effect on people or United States plans.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details about what explorers learned or recorded, and circle two details showing why that information mattered to the United States or Native nations. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did President Jefferson send Lewis and Clark west of the Mississippi River?	Much of the region was unknown to Americans, so Jefferson wanted information about its land, rivers, plants, animals, and peoples.
2	How did Native peoples help the Lewis and Clark expedition succeed?	Sacagawea helped the group communicate with Shoshone people, and the group obtained horses needed to cross the Rocky Mountains.
3	How could the maps and records from the expeditions help the United States?	They gave Americans information about western rivers and travel routes, helping leaders plan trade, travel, and settlements.
4	Why were western exploration reports important even though Native nations already lived on the land?	The reports increased United States interest in controlling western lands and planning settlements, which led to growing pressure on Native nations.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Zebulon Pike explored southern parts of the Louisiana Territory near the Rocky Mountains. His report gave United States leaders information they could use to plan trade, travel, and settlements. Like other exploration reports, it increased United States interest in controlling western lands.

Accept responses that explain exploration as important because it provided knowledge of western lands or routes and affected United States plans, land claims, settlement, or Native nations. Students may choose either expedition for the museum caption.