Meriweather Lewis

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage and then respond to the questions.

Meriwether Lewis the Lewis of Lewis and Clark, who explored the western U.S. frontier. Born in Charlottesville, Virginia, Lewis had a rural upbringing, and spent a great deal of his boyhood hunting and exploring. He became a soldier when he was still quite young, and fought in the Whiskey Rebellion when he was 20. He also fought battles against Native Americans in the Northwest Territory, becoming very educated about Native American Culture and even learning some of their languages.

Thomas Jefferson knew Meriwether Lewis because their families were neighbors, and he appointed Lewis as his personal secretary. In preparation for exploring the lands Jefferson had bought for the U.S. in the Louisiana Purchase, Lewis studied plants, animals and navigation at the University of Pennsylvania. Lewis invited William Clark to accompany him, and though according to Congress, Lewis was the captain of record, as far as he was concerned, the two men co-led the expedition, which took over two years.

Lewis's journal, in which he recorded most of the expedition, is one of the most important documents in American history. They mapped much of the terrain, and traded with various Indian tribes, as well as discovering over 300 news species of animals and plants. They were also the first to confirm that there was no way to get across the continent entirely by water. Lewis and Clark established Fort Clatsop in Oregon, and then made the return trip and went home. Meriwether Lewis became governor of the Louisiana Territory.

1. How did Lewis know Thomas Jefferson? _____

2. Where did Lewis study to prepare for his trip? _____

3. What was the relationship between Lewis and Clark? _____

4. How many new species of plants and animals did Lewis and Clark discover? _____

5. Where did Lewis and Clark establish a fort? _____

6. To what government position was Lewis appointed? _____

7. Why do you think Jefferson thought Lewis was qualified to explore the Louisiana Purchase?

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