



# Sacagawea

## Pre-reading

Questions: Who was Sacagawea? What would you like to learn about her?

Definitions: Courage – facing danger with confidence. Persevere – to remain constant to a purpose; to not give up.

## Reading\*

18 Although no two accounts of her life are the same, Sacagawea is famed as a courageous young woman  
19 who played a significant role in the settling of the west. When she was only eleven years old her tribe, the  
39 Shoshone, who lived in present day Idaho, was attacked by the Hidatsa, a rival Indian tribe. She was  
57 captured by an enemy brave and taken from her home.

67 As a slave in North Dakota, Sacagawea learned a new language and new skills. Unlike the Shoshone,  
84 the Hidatsa stayed in one place (near present day Bismarck). They built homes from clay and timber and  
102 farmed the land. Here, Sacagawea became one of Charbonneau's many Native American wives. Some say  
117 Sacagawea was bought by the French Canadian fur trader. Others say he won her in a gambling bet.

135 In 1804 Charbonneau was employed by Lewis and Clark to accompany them on their **expedition** west  
151 through the Louisiana Territory. He was an experienced fur trapper and trader and could make himself  
167 understood by most of the river Indians. Lewis and Clark were also aware of how useful Sacagawea could  
185 be on their journey, especially if they came in contact with her old tribe.

199 At this time, Sacagawea was only sixteen years old and expecting her first child. She delivered a baby  
217 boy just two months before they set out on their journey. The baby was christened Jean Babtiste and  
235 nicknamed "Pomp," meaning firstborn in Shoshoni.

241 Some of the men thought the young woman and her new baby would be a hindrance on the trip. Others  
261 felt it would be wise to have them in their party. They hoped Sacagawea and Pomp would be seen as  
281 symbols of peace so that their expedition would not be mistaken by the Indian tribes as a war party.

300 On April 7, 1805, the Lewis and Clark party set out on its expedition to explore the unknown  
318 Northwest. The group consisted of thirty-one explorers, Charbonneau, sixteen year old Sacagawea, and two  
332 month old Pomp. The newborn was strapped to Sacagawea's back on a cradle board.

346 Sacagawea proved to be a great help on the journey. She knew more about the Indians they  
363 encountered than anyone else in the group. Often times she would save the men from starvation by finding  
381 fruits and nuts the small animals had hidden for the winter. Captain Clark wrote in his journal that she was  
401 cheerful and did not complain.

406 The group traveled to the land of the Shoshone tribe where Sacagawea learned that many of her  
423 relatives had been kidnapped or killed in the attack five years before. Much to her delight her brother  
441 survived and was now the tribe's chief. Sacagawea negotiated a trade that enabled the expedition to obtain  
458 much needed horses to continue its journey.

465 Nature's elements made the trip a grueling one. Gnats and mosquitoes were thick in number.  
480 Rattlesnakes were a constant danger. The weather was extreme and seldom in their favor. Still they forged  
497 ahead and made it to the Pacific Ocean. By the time the expedition returned home, the group had traveled  
516 through present day Montana, Idaho, Washington, and Oregon.

524 Sacagawea was a remarkable woman whose perseverance and resourcefulness while traveling with the  
537 Lewis and Clark Expedition helped make the journey west a success. It is said that there are more  
555 monuments to honor Sacagawea than any other woman in U.S. history.

566 \*Revised selection – original text authored by Melissa Horrocks. Reprinted with permission by Deborah Byrnes, Ph.D., Utah State University.

## Understanding

1. What does the word **expedition** mean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. From what present day state did the Lewis and Clark party view the Pacific Ocean? \_\_\_\_\_  
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3. What are some words that are used to describe Sacagawea? \_\_\_\_\_  
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4. What words would you use to describe her? \_\_\_\_\_  
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5. How did Lewis and Clark record the information about their journey? \_\_\_\_\_  
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6. Why was Sacagawea such an asset on the trip? (List at least three reasons.) \_\_\_\_\_  
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7. Do you think Lewis and Clark would have been successful without her? Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_  
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8. What was Sacagawea's home tribe? \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Imagine yourself on that expedition. What do you think would be most difficult? What do you think would be most exiting? How would you be similar to or different than Sacagawea?

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