Sacajawea Study Guide

Sacajawea by Joseph Bruchac

BOOKRAGS

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Plot Summary

President Thomas Jefferson believed that a successful trans-continental exploration would establish the United States' claim to the largely unknown interior of the continent; spur commercial exploitation of the area; stymie British, French, and Spanish interests in the area; reap a vast benefit of scientific knowledge; discover an all-water route across the continent; make peaceful contact with numerous Indian nations; and, finally, enhance the international prestige of the young nation. He thus authorized governmental expenditure to fund such an expedition. Jefferson appointed Meriwether Lewis to lead what would become known as the Corps of Discovery. Lewis enlisted William Clark, a personal and intimate friend and a prior commanding officer, to act as co-captain on the voyage.

From 1804 to 1805 Lewis and Clark led the Corps of Discovery up the Missouri River, across the Rocky Mountains, and down the Columbia River. They spent the winter in what is present-day Washington State, and then in 1806 returned along largely the same route. Over the entire period the Corps of Discovery suffered only a few serious injuries—no deaths and no permanent disabilities. During 1805 the expedition stayed for several weeks at the Mandan Indian villages where they met and hired Toussaint Charbonneau, a French trapper. Charbonneau was to act as interpreter on the voyage. Charbonneau's wife, the Indian woman Sacajawea, accompanied the expedition because as a Shoshone Indian by birth she was familiar with the terrain, culture, and language of the Shoshone Indians. Over the next year Sacajawea proves of great worth to the expedition, teaching the white men many things about survival in the mountains and securing for them much Indian assistance. Charbonneau proves rather less useful. Sacajawea takes her weeks-old infant, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, along on the voyage. After the successful completion of the exploration, Charbonneau and Sacajawea move briefly to Saint Louis where they entrust the upbringing and education of their son to the successful Clark. Meanwhile, Lewis descends into depression and eventually takes his own life. The novel is strongly based on historic events and every character appearing in the novel has a historic counterpart.

Prologue, Chapter 1 - The Camp by the River through Chapter 5 - Stories Up The River

Prologue, Chapter 1 - The Camp by the River through Chapter 5 - Stories Up The River Summary

In the Prologue, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau (1805-1866), son of Sacajawea (c. 1788-1812), introduces himself during a trader's rendezvous at the Green River in 1833. He states that he will tell the story of his mother and his adopted uncle, Captain William Clark (1770-1838). Jean Baptiste notes that in the custom of his mother's people, one can only tell a story of the events that the teller actually witnessed. As Jean Baptiste was an infant during the events narrated in the book, he will present segments of the story as told to him by his mother or adopted uncle.

In Chapter 1 - The Camp by the River, Sacajawea speaks from the city of St. Louis in the Louisiana Territory in 1811. She begins by commenting that the city is large and confusing. She then recalls events that transpired c. 1799 when she "had eleven winters" (p. 5). She and her people were poor but did have horses that allowed them overtly to hunt buffalo on the plains. Her people, the Shoshone, were surrounded by hostile Indian tribes including the Pahkees, the Blackfeet, the Atsina, and the Siksika. The Shoshone had thus been driven into the mountains to live, near present-day Salmon, Idaho. During the summer months, the Shoshone often would move down from the mountains to gather food and hunt. On one occasion in July, Sacajawea and her friend Wren are picking berries, putting some in baskets and eating others. They are startled when an alarm is raised by Stays Here, Sacajawea's older brother—their group is under attack by hostile Hidatsa Indians. The Shoshone Indians refer to the Hidatsa Indians as Minnetarees. Wren and Sacajawea flee across the river; Wren escapes but Sacajawea is captured by a horse-riding Indian warrior.

In Chapter 2 - The Corps of Discovery, William Clark speaks to Jean Baptiste in c. 1812. Clark calls Jean Baptiste 'Pomp', a nickname he gave the boy on their expedition. Clark recalls commanding a Chosen Rifle Company in the army and being stationed on the Ohio frontier in 1795. There he met Ensign Meriwether Lewis, a fine marksman. Lewis served in Clark's company for only six months. Later, Lewis served as the secretary to President Thomas Jefferson, with Jefferson's express purpose in employing him as such to prepare him to lead an audacious exploratory voyage to cross the North American continent. When the voyage finally was authorized, Lewis—now a Captain—wrote Clark asking him to join the expedition as co-leader. Clark accepted. The expedition would include twenty-five picked men and travel down the Ohio River by boat to the junction with the Mississippi, then up the Mississippi to the mouth of the Missouri and up that river to its source. Then crossing by land to the Columbia or Oregon River

and descend that river to the Pacific Ocean. The voyage then would return along a similar route. The chapter begins with an extract of a letter sent by Sergeant John Ordway indicating the voyage would start in mid-April, 1804, and last from eighteen months to two years. Clark recalls also how he had first met Sacajawea at Fort Mandan in 1804, five years after her abduction by the Hidatsa.

In Chapter Three - Among the Minnetarees, Sacajawea talks about her early experiences in captivity. She is bound at first and travels tied up. As she and Otter Woman travel farther and farther from their home their captors exercise less and less caution, knowing that their captives don't know how to get back home. They are taken to the Mandan and Minnetaree villages. Their captor, Horned Weasel, gives both of the women to his aunt, Red Calf Woman. They are slaves with other captured women from other tribes. They are set to work and must work hard or face severe discipline. They begin to learn the language of the Hidatsa, their capturers. One day Sacajawea meets Toussaint Charbonneau. He is clever but is "a man of little courage" (p. 17), preferring to flee from danger rather than face it. The Indians call him Bear of the Forest, Chief of the Smallest Village, or Great Horse From Afar—all terms of mild disdain because of his widely-known cowardice. Horned Weasel and Toussaint begin to gamble and by the end of the day Toussaint, a practiced gambler, has won Sacajawea and Otter Woman in a game of chance. Horned Weasel is angry but complies with the terms of the betting.

In Chapter Four - York, William Clark discusses his early preparations for the expedition. One of the expedition members is a black man named York; in fact, York is Clark's slave—Clark prefers to refer to him as a lifelong companion. York is hard working, intelligent, and possessed of a good humor. Clark spends a considerable amount of space discussing and justifying owning a slave, and concludes that by owning York he is doing him a favor. By being a slave, Clark theorizes, York has been "saved from a freedom he could not handle" (p. 22). In other words, York will accompany the mission because he has no choice and he will not be paid for his services. After months of preparation, packing, and provisioning, the expedition sets off from Saint Louis at the end of May, 1804. They travel in a river keel boat that is fifty-five feet long and eight feet wide. It has eleven rowing benches and a mast that is thirty-two feet tall. The boat is armed with one bronze swivel cannon at the bow. Clark finds the early voyage difficult but concludes it is not nearly as difficult as the endless waiting to depart had been.

In Chapter Five - Stories up the River, Sacajawea recalls how many stories and tall tales about the Corps of Discovery preceded the voyage by several weeks. Lewis and Clark were said to be crazy white men who would not sell or trade weapons; would not trade anything, in fact; and who offered gifts that were practically without value. Sacajawea notes that typically things move down river but the Corps of Discovery, with much hard work, chose to move upriver.

Prologue, Chapter 1 - The Camp by the River through Chapter 5 - Stories Up The River Analysis

Sacajawea's birth name is apparently Boat Pusher (refer to p. 6). The initial five chapters of the novel establish the background of the Corps of Discovery and the early biography of Sacajawea. Chapters are told in alternating voices where, presumably, the person most familiar with the events does the narrating. Chapters One, Three, and Five begin with unattributed anecdotes, presumably Indian legends. Chapter Two begins with an excerpt from a letter written by Sergeant John Ordway just prior to departure. Chapter Four begins with an excerpt from the journal of Meriwether Lewis just prior to departure. The Corps of Discovery is not described in detail—it transpired from 1804 to 1806 and was the first official transcontinental expedition to the Pacific Coast by the United States. It was commissioned by President Thomas Jefferson and was led by two veteran Captains: Meriwether Lewis and William Clark. The expedition had various goals, including plant and animal studies; geographic studies and mapping; and the determination of potential economic opportunities. The expedition also was to inform the native populations of the new authority of the United States Government; convince the native populations to cease hostilities; and possibly establish or expand trade. The expedition included between twenty-nine and thirty-three people, depending on the stage of the voyage.

The initial chapters see Sacajawea kidnapped from her home village and transported as a slave to the distant Mandan villages; there she learns the language and is acquired by Toussaint Charbonneau, a French trapper. This background aligns nearly perfectly with extant professional biographies. Meanwhile, the Corps of Discovery organizes, provisions, and sets off from Saint Louis, traveling upriver in large keel boats.

Chapter 6 - Looking for Indians through Chapter 9 - The White Men's Fort

Chapter 6 - Looking for Indians through Chapter 9 - The White Men's Fort Summary

In Chapter 6 - Looking for Indians, Clark relates the events of the early portion of the trip. Traveling from St. Charles the expedition moves several hundred miles up the Missouri River. They are pestered by mosquitoes and gnats and use buffalo grease as a sort of insect repellent. On the river, they meet Pierre Dorion who has a Yankton Sioux wife. Believing that Dorion will be able to communicate with the Sioux, they hire him on as a translator. As the expedition travels upriver they are surprised to not see Indians—later they learn the Indians are away from the river hunting buffalo. Clark describes the area as "like the Garden of Eden" (p. 33) because of its lush greenery and plentiful wildlife. Finally at the beginning of August the expedition meets the first Indians, Otoes and Missouri. Another French trader, Monsieur Fairfong, acts as translator. They give the Indians gifts—medals and certificates—which the Indians do not much value, instead preferring food and tobacco. The expedition stays a few days and performs some marching and firearms drills to awe the Indians. Private Moses Reed attempts to desert, fleeing downriver. He is apprehended by Drouillard who returns with his prisoner. Then Sergeant Charles Floyd becomes ill from "bilious colic" (p. 35) and dies. He is buried on Sergeant Floyd's Bluff, overlooking a wide swath of the Missouri. The expedition continues upriver. Private George Shannon becomes lost and for about two weeks he travels upriver alone, trying to catch up with the expedition but actually ahead of them. Eventually they are reunited. The expedition then meets a large party of Yankton Sioux only to discover Dorion is unable to communicate with them—in any event Dorion remains behind. The expedition continues and encounters a large group of the Teton Sioux, including two chiefs Black Buffalo and Partisan. Partisan is offensive, crafty, and disagreeable and a tense standoff occurs that is broken only by Black Buffalo's intervention. Clark finds the Teton Sioux to be little other than thieving pirates and notes that they remain a barrier to safe trade even until 1811 and beyond.

In Chapter 7 - Little Mice, Sacajawea speaks about the period of time when her current tribal area first is visited by Lewis and Clark. The chapter opens with a presumed Indian folk tale about Indians deliberately leaving some of the grain harvest behind to support the mice and other small animals. When the expedition is said to arrive, the Indians all run to the river to see the large keelboat. In Chapter 8 - Making Peace, William Clark discusses the initial contact with the Mandan tribes. The Mandan tribes were already associated with British and French trappers and traders. Clark worries that the new American government will be resisted by these British and French trappers who are thought to have strong influence over the Indians. Clark first visits the village of Mitutanka, where Sacajawea and Charbonneau live. He is physically ill and unable to eat, thus inadvertently offending his Indian hosts. A man named Jessaume interprets for

Lewis as he makes a speech of friendship. The Corps of Discovery plans to over-winter near the Mandan villages. In Chapter 9 - The White Men's Fort, Sacajawea describes how the white men build a large square palisade from local lumber. The so-called fortress has high palisaded walls and an interior enclosure. When Lewis and Clark learn that Sacajawea is a Snake Indian they arrange to hire Charbonneau (and thus his wife) as interpreters. Sacajawea explains the Snake Indians derive their name from a misunderstanding. The Snake Indians use a wiggling hand motion to describe their own tribe—it is the motion of weaving long twigs into wattle walls for housing. However, others assume it is the motion of a crawling snake and thus have named her people the Snake Indians. During the early winter the Mandans tell the Corps of Discovery the Minnetarees are hostile; this is not true, but an attempt on the Mandans' part to monopolize trade with the new white men. Meanwhile, various ambassadors are sent out to request peace alliances among all the tribes—most agree though privately they all feel it is ridiculous to expect all inter-tribal conflict to cease. The Corps of Discovery is not outfitted for extensive trade and begins to run short on food during the winter. They eventually begin to manufacture steel war axes to trade for food.

Chapter 6 - Looking for Indians through Chapter 9 - The White Men's Fort Analysis

In Chapter 6 - Looking for Indians, Clark describes several events during the first portion of the narrative. He notes that his area of particular responsibility is geographic while Lewis focuses on biology and botany. Several of the animals they 'discover', including the pronghorn antelope and coyote, are so prevalent in Western America as to appear almost comical to be taken as a novel species—one must consider the experiences of the adventurers when reading the book. Chapter 7 - Little Mice, is quite short and merely notes the excitement among the Indians of the final arrival of the long-predicted Corps of Discovery. Chapter 8 - Making Peace, is related from Clark's perspective. He further describes the purpose of the Corps of Discovery: in this geographic region, it attempts to establish the sovereignty of the United States of America. This involves forcing the British and French trappers out of the area to allow American trappers and traders to monopolize trade with the Indians. It also involves attempting to bring numerous hostile tribes and warring factions into an alliance of peace so that river trade will be possible. While Clark and Lewis believe they make good progress to this end because most of the Indian tribes agree to send envoys to their traditional enemies, in actual fact most of the Indians assume these peace overtures are fairly silly.

Chapter 9 - The White Men's Fort, describes exactly why Sacajawea was viewed as such a valuable addition to the Corps of Discovery by Lewis and Clark. The next phase of their voyage, to be accomplished in the early spring, will take them from the relatively safe and fairly well-known Mandan villages to the Three Forks area and bring them into contact with nearly completely unknown tribes, including the Snake Indians. As Sacajawea was born a Snake, later enslaved as a Minnitarees, she knows the customs, the area, and the language of both tribes. Lewis and Clark realize that she would be an invaluable asset as the voyage moves ever further west. Sacajawea is married to

Charbonneau, however, and thus Lewis and Clark hire him knowing that he will bring his young wife. For his own part, Charbonneau claims to be fluent in all of the regional languages of the Indians. Whether Lewis and Clark believe him is not stated, but in the event Charbonneau proves generally unable to work as a translator.

Chapter 10 - Firstborn through Chapter 14 - Near Disasters

Chapter 10 - Firstborn through Chapter 14 - Near Disasters Summary

In Chapter 10 - Firstborn, Clark describes the birth of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the narrator of the book. The birth is said to be a hard birth with much labor. Finally, the ground rattles of a rattlesnake are admitted as medicine and the birth completes shortly thereafter. Clark refers to Jean Baptiste as Pomp throughout the novel. In Chapter 11 - Charbonneau's Demands, Sacajawea talks about the arrangement between Charbonneau and the Corps of Discovery. Originally Charbonneau agreed to join the expedition as a typical member, meaning he would stand night watches, row, and work—in addition to his duties as a translator. As the winter passes Charbonneau becomes convinced his worth is great and his services are indispensable to the success of the mission. He therefore demands that he will join the expedition as a privileged member, freed from the duties of guard and work. His demands are met by instant dismissal. Over the next four days Sacajawea remains silent while Charbonneau fumes. Finally he returns to Clark and Lewis and apologizes for his actions. He requests again to be admitted on the same agreement as before his inflated demands, and again is accepted.

In Chapter 12 - Departures, Clark describes leaving Fort Mandan in present day North Dakota. The spring has broken up the river ice and the men launch their large keelboat. One small group returns to St. Louis. The remaining men pack much equipment and supplies. The large keelboat holds most of the heavy equipment. The group also uses two pirogues, or smaller craft somewhat like a big canoe, and a few normal canoes. The pirogues are more maneuverable and hold much of the scientific equipment. In Chapter 13 - To Be of Use, Sacajawea describes the early days of the voyage. She quickly becomes aware that she is far more useful to the group than she had suspected. She knows how to find edible plants, talk to the locals, and prepare game. She often is the first person to see game, Indians, or other objects of interest. She teaches the men how to find food caches of rodents that can be used as human food. The journey proceeds up the river. In Chapter 14 - Near Disasters, Clark continues the narrative. The journey proceeds through difficult weather—primarily strong and constant winds. On several occasions the winds take the pirogues into dangerous situations. Biting and stinging insects are prevalent and troublesome. And bears—black and grizzly—begin to appear with increasing frequency. The men discover that grizzly bears are fearless, dangerous, and quite difficult to kill.

Chapter 10 - Firstborn through Chapter 14 - Near Disasters Analysis

Chapter 10 - Firstborn is a fairly odd chapter. Recall that the book's structure is based on the Indian concept that only an eyewitness can relate a story (page 2). Yet Chapter 10 is about the birth of a child and is related by Clark, who begins the chapter by noting he actually was not present for most of the events described. Chapter 10 begins with a brief extract from Lewis' journal, noting the birth of Pomp. Chapter 11 - Charbonneau's Demands, begins with a fragmentary Indian myth about the origins of smoking the peace pipe. This is one of a handful of chapters that characterize Charbonneau as a foolish man of little skill: here, he becomes convinced of his own superior worth and nearly loses his employment with the journey. The novel strongly suggests that Clark is uninterested in Charbonneau but highly interested in Sacajawea—that Sacajawea will follow Charbonneau is the principle rationale for keeping the bumbling and cowardly Charbonneau along for the expedition. This aspect of the novel is emphasized more than most actual history would suggest. Chapter 12 - Departures, marks a major turning point in the novel.

From Chapter 12 onwards, the men voyage through territory that is entirely unknown. East of the Mandan villages is poorly explored, but at least still explored. West of the Mandan villages is entirely unknown to the European colonizers of North America. Chapter 12 begins with a lengthy extract from Lewis' journal, giving the names of all the men who accompanied the expedition (Sacajawea is referred to as an "Indian squar...Sah-kah-gar we a" (p. 69). Chapter 13 - To Be of Use, characterizes Sacajawea as the one possessed of invaluable local knowledge that materially helps the men survive the first stages of their journey. She finds food, educates the men about dangers, and proves uncannily correct about everything. She quickly earns Clark's complete confidence and respect. Meanwhile Charbonneau demonstrates his inability and lack of skill in nearly everything he attempts. Chapter 14 - Near Disasters, discusses several anxious moments during the first days of the expedition. Heavy winds, biting insects, and dangerous animals are the types of danger and difficulty the expedition must conquer.

Chapter 15 - Difficulties Through Chapter 19 - What Do You Call Us?

Chapter 15 - Difficulties Through Chapter 19 - What Do You Call Us? Summary

In Chapter 15 - Difficulties, Sacajawea discusses some of the voyage's various difficulties in the early portion of the expedition. The chapter opens with an Indian fable about the Gods turning an ocean into a river so that the people would be able to catch fish without so much difficulty. Sacajawea relates how a dog became lost and then found, how various craft were sunk, and how equipment was lost or damaged. On one occasion a buffalo stampedes through camp ruining some items. On other occasions bear menaced the voyage. And then Sacajawea becomes seriously ill. In Chapter 16 - The Great Falls, Clark describes reaching a series of waterfalls on the river that pose a significant roadblock to the expedition. While the group begins the portage around the waterfalls Clark treats Sacajawea's illness. The group is forced to abandon their large keelboat and therefore has to select what equipment and food will be carried and what will be cached for the return voyage. One of the objects they pack is a heavy iron frame that can be used to construct a boat from animal skins—the frame is of Lewis' own design. Clark and the men feel it will never work but they pack the heavy frame anyway. During the week and a half portage the group is harassed by biting gnats and mosquitoes. The end of the portage is marked by heavy rains. In Chapter 17 - Flash Flood, Sacajawea relates being caught in a flash flood. On that occasion Clark, York, Charbonneau, Sacajawea, and Pomp were in a small group walking back toward camp. A fierce storm with lightning and high winds rolled in and, seeking shelter, the small group went to ground in a defile. Then, a massive flash flood roared down the defile nearly catching the group by surprise. They flee to the higher ground and escape, but it is a close thing.

In Chapter 18 - The Three Forks, Clark discusses the transition from the larger boats to the smaller boats necessitated by the decreasing size of the river at the area referred to as Three Forks. Lewis' metal frame is bolted together and skins are pulled over the frame. The skins were sealed together with pitch and other extemporized ingredients. The boat does float well, but the sealing is not water resistant and within an hour or so the skins come loose and the boat founders. The iron frame is removed and buried in a cache. The expedition continues west. They hear the roaring sounds of distant landslides. They pass through the territory of the hostile Blackfeet Indians but do not meet any of them. The trip through the unbroken land is difficult and thorns often have to be drawn from feet. Finally, the party arrives at the home of the Snake Indians; the area where Sacajawea was born. In Chapter 19 - What Do You Call Us?, Sacajawea relates coming back to her homeland with great joy. The men of the expedition are worn and many are sick so they too are happy at arriving in a land of presumably friendly Indians. Finally the party meets a few Snake Indians and the two groups make peaceful

gestures. Sacajawea explains that the Snake word for white men is '"Ta-ba-bone.' It is a word for those who are strangers, who might be enemies" (p. 108). Having ascended so far into the mountains the expedition can no longer see far off peaks; the men thus loose some sense of the distances they must still cover.

Chapter 15 - Difficulties Through Chapter 19 - What Do You Call Us? Analysis

This section of the book transitions the expedition from the plains to the mountains. Much of the text describes various difficulties and obstacles that must be overcome, from massive waterfalls to simple ground thorns to illness and injury. The largest waterfall is marked on the map in the frontispiece of the novel as "4 - Great Falls". Insects are a constant nuisance, animals are an occasional danger, flash floods and winds are a threat. On several occasions, Sacajawea criticizes Charbonneau's performance or accuses him of stupidity or cowardice. She always contrasts Charbonneau with Clark; Charbonneau is inefficient, silly, and incapable while Clark is driven, intelligent, and capable. The iron boat designed by Lewis appears sound in theory but lack of a water-proof glue to bind the hides around the frame leaves the boat a failure. This is a significant drawback to the expedition—on the one hand, they have hauled the frame, weighing hundreds of pounds, overland for hundreds of miles; on the other hand, they will not have a lightweight vessel to carry goods and supplies but must rely more and more on clumsy and heavy log canoes. Most of the men are not surprised by the boat's failure but Lewis takes it very hard.

Finally the expedition comes to the area where Sacajawea was born. On the map in the frontispiece of the novel this location is noted as "1 - Three Forks of the Missouri River". From examining the map, the voyage from St. Charles and St. Louis to Fort Mandan is seen to be approximately half of the distance traveled West—however, it is the 'easy' half, traveled in large boats along the river. From Fort Mandan to the Great Falls is more difficult but still mostly navigable river travel. From Great Falls to Three Forks the voyage becomes increasingly difficult as the river becomes too small to navigate freely. The land also changes from plains to broken foothills and mountains and the character of the plant and animal life changes.

Chapter 20 - Finding the Shoshones to Chapter 25 - Quamash

Chapter 20 - Finding the Shoshones to Chapter 25 - Quamash Summary

In Chapter 20 - Finding the Shoshones, Clark describes the initial contact between the expedition and the Shoshone or Snake Indians. It is clear the Shoshones do not want to interact with the strangers because they perceive them as dangerous. Eventually Lewis manages to overtake some fleeing women and children and befriends them. Shortly thereafter the local chief, Cameahwait, appears at the head of a large party of Indians. Cameahwait is cautious, believing the white men may be aligned with the enemies of the Snake Indians. In Chapter 21 - Reunion, Sacajawea relates how the rest of the expedition eventually caught up with Lewis's advance party. When Sacajawea arrives the Indians realize the expedition is in fact friendly; Sacajawea enjoys a very joyous reunion with Indians from her tribe—as yet, however, she has not met any close relatives but she meets Jumping Fish, a childhood friend. In Chapter 22 - The Welcome, Clark describes the process of meeting and befriending the Indians. The expedition sets up at a place they call Camp Fortunate. There the leaders of both groups meet and smoke tobacco. Clark asks Charbonneau to interpret but it develops that Charbonneau cannot speak the language. Instead, Sacajawea is invited to join. When she is introduced to Cameahwait the two instantly embrace. In Chapter 23 - New Names, Sacajawea explains that Cameahwait, whom she refers to as Says Here, is in fact her brother. Overjoyed at the reunion, Sacajawea is remorseful to learn that most of the rest of her family no longer lives. Later, Jumping Fish and Sacajawea spend time talking and getting reacquainted. Inevitably, the talk turns toward the further trail to the west—the trail leading over the mountains. In Chapter 24 - The Terrible Trail, Clark describes the urgency of the expedition to cross the mountains and reach the Pacific Ocean before winter. Cameahwait advises that it is already far too late in the season to attempt the crossing but Clark will not be dissuaded. They locate a willing guide and spend the next fifteen days making the grueling trek over the mountains. The expedition finds no game and verges on starvation constantly. But finally, they leave the mountains and locate a village of friendly Nez Percé Indians. In Chapter 25 - Quamash, Sacajawea briefly recounts the voyage described by Clark. She notes the Snake Indian guide departed quickly after the expedition found the Nez Percé. The Indians themselves do not have much food but they do have a large amount of Quamash, a small root that is edible. The expedition members gather large amounts of Quamash. Sacajawea urges them to eat only a tiny amount every day until they become used to it, but they ignore her and instead gorge on the root. The men who eat it become violently ill with dysentery and weakness. During this time the men would have been easy victims of the Nez Percé but those honest people did not molest the helpless white men.

Chapter 20 - Finding the Shoshones to Chapter 25 - Quamash Analysis

These chapters transpire between the Three Forks of the Missouri River and the Shoshone Settlements and Camp Fortunate, marked "1" and "5", respectively, on the map in the frontispiece of the historical novel. Chapter 24 - The Terrible Trail, sees the expedition leave the Shoshone Settlements and travel first north and then west across the Rocky Mountains. The trans-mountain voyage is made in an area today referred to as the Bitterroot Mountains. Although the novel does not spend much time describing the voyage across the mountains, historically this was physically perhaps the most demanding segment of the trip. The expedition could not use boats and was very short on pack animals meaning most of the animals were heavily loaded and many of the men were heavily loaded too. The crossing was made in the early stages of winter when the weather was disagreeable and game was virtually nonexistent. Notwithstanding the shortage of food, the men had to perform heroic exertions to continue the voyage.

Sacajawea's contribution to the expedition is nowhere more evident than in this segment of the novel. Charbonneau was brought along specifically to talk to the Shoshone Indians as a translator but cannot communicate with them at all. Fortunately Sacajawea could and she effectively replaces Charbonneau as the translator for this segment of the voyage. Not only that, it turns out she is the sister of the local Chief and with her intercession he agrees to treat the white men as trusted friends. Across the mountains, the expedition again encounters friendly Indians in the Nez Percé; Sacajawea calls them the pierced-nose tribe (Nez Percé is French for pierced nose) because of their style of adornment. These Indians are honest, friendly, and supportive. Here the expedition stops to regroup and regain strength after the difficult mountain crossing. The interlude of quamash induced sickness is presented as a humorous interlude.

Chapter 26 - Many Rapids, Many Nations through Chapter 31 - Deep Snow

Chapter 26 - Many Rapids, Many Nations through Chapter 31 - Deep Snow Summary

In Chapter 26 - Many Rapids, Many Nations, Clark relates several weeks of travel very quickly. The expedition rapidly travels down river in crude canoes. The presence of Sacajawea and her infant is seen by the local Indians as a sure sign that the expedition is a traveling party and not a war party. Lewis continues to write in his journals. In Chapter 27 - The Great Hungry Water, Sacajawea relates several weeks of travel very quickly, covering the same period as Clark discussed in Chapter 26. She notes different topics, however, and focuses on the food the local Indians used—primarily fish or a root called wapato. Wapato is much like quamash but does not make anyone sick. Finally the expedition arrives at salt water—Clark is so happy he nearly weeps; he realizes the journey west is over. The expedition then looks for a place to overwinter. Strong winds make crossing the wide river estuary difficult but eventually the expedition scouts and decides on a place to camp for the winter. The wintering location is put to a vote and everyone—even York—gets to vote. Clark considers the local Clatsop Indians honorable and friendly but decides the local Chinook Indians are thieves and untrustworthy. In Chapter 28 - At Fort Clatsop, Clark discusses the selection of an overwintering camp sight. The expedition finally settles on a location suggested by the Clatsop Indians. Later, Clark travels to see a whale carcass being stripped by coastal Indians. The winter is difficult but passes uneventfully. In Chapter 29 - Thieves, Sacajawea discusses leaving the winter camp and heading east along the river. They pass through Chinook villages and the Indians are still fond of stealing; the expedition is happy to travel into the land of the honorable Wallawalla Indians. In Chapter 30 - Doctoring the Nez Percé, Clark describes staying with the Nez Percé for a time waiting for the snows to melt sufficiently to allow further travel. Clark and Lewis provide medical assistance to the Indians though their medical supplies are severely depleted. During this time Clark trades medical services for food and also treats Pomp for fever. Finally, the expedition decides it is time to proceed east—even though they are warned it is still too early. In early June the expedition departs for the mountains. In Chapter 31 - Deep Snow, Sacajawea describes the initial ascent into the mountains. The ground is covered in snow that becomes increasingly deep as the expedition ascends in altitude. The snow obscures the landscape and the expedition becomes lost. After several difficult days the expedition turns around to wait for more snow to melt. Two days later another attempt is made, this time with more success. The expedition decides to split up into five groups, each with a separate goal, and plans to reunite further east. Clark, Sacajawea, York, and five other men travel in one group that attempts to locate an easier mountain pass near the Yellowstone River.

Chapter 26 - Many Rapids, Many Nations through Chapter 31 - Deep Snow Analysis

The novel's pace speeds up remarkably during this section. Instead of describing portions of the trip, Chapters 26 and 27 move the expedition some hundreds of miles without much detail—from the Bitterroot Mountains to the coast. On the map in the frontispiece of the novel, the coast site is indicated by number 6, Fort Clatsop. Chapters 28 and 29, both very brief, describe the entire winter season of some months of time. Chapters 30 and 31 then detail the return trip from the coast to the Bitterroot Mountains. These chapters, then, cover about thirty percent of the entire distance and about fifty percent of the entire time expended in the expedition; they only comprise, however, about six percent of the novel. This comes at a price—while earlier Indians were described in some detail, including individual names and customs being noted, the Indians appearing in these chapters are merely described in general, or even aggregate, terms. Likewise the actions taken by the men, the foods eaten, the methods of travel, and other details are simply summarized. This compression of time and distance continues for the remainder of the novel and marks a notable shift in narrative style and tone.

The rationale for splitting the expedition into five groups is not fully considered. In essence, the expedition had numerous goals and Lewis and Clark felt that the goals could best be met only if the expedition separated into smaller groups. In the execution most of these goals were not met or were only partially met—what is remarkable, however, is the fact that the five smaller groups traveled alone through the vast distance and did not suffer any casualties.

Conforming to the earlier novel, each chapter begins with a topical segment of text. Chapters 26, 28, and 30 present outtakes from Clark's journals that match the events described in the chapters. Chapters 27, 29, and 31 present Indian folktales or myths that are topically appropriate to the chapters.

Chapter 32 - Five Fingers Parted through Chapter 35 - The Final Word and Author's Note

Chapter 32 - Five Fingers Parted through Chapter 35 - The Final Word and Author's Note Summary

In Chapter 32 - Five Fingers Parted, Clark describes the rationale that leads to the expedition reorganizing into five separate parties, each with a specific goal. One small group carries a letter to a British agent and transports most of the horses to the Mandan villages. Lewis takes another group to search for the Blackfoot Indians and seek an enduring peace settlement. Clark takes another group to search for a better passage across the mountains. Yet another group would take the canoes and equipment by river. The five smaller groups plan to meet again at the Mandan villages. Clark's portion of the expedition is uneventful. Lewis' overture to the Blackfeet Indian is refused and ends in bloodshed and violence. Lewis, however, is shot during a hunting accident. The men transporting the letter and horses had been raided, the horses stolen, and they had then rejoined Lewis' portion of the expedition. Finally, the individual parties reunite. In Chapter 33 - This Journey's End, Sacajawea discusses the final stages of the expedition. Lewis' injury is severe and his recovery is difficult and lengthy. With the return of the expedition a large council is held at the Mandan villages and the local Indians relate that the peace accord established by Lewis and Clark the previous year has not held. A few days later Sacajawea, Charbonneau, and Pomp remain at their home while the remainder of the expedition continues on. Upon departure, Clark offers to raise and educate pomp when he is old enough to travel away from his parents. In Chapter 34 - Old Friends No Longer With Us, Clark relates some events that transpired after the expedition left the Mandan villages. The voyage from the Mandan villages to Saint Louis largely is uneventful. After the expedition formally reports to President Jefferson, Clark engages in politics while Lewis continues to edit his journal. Both men live in a house in Saint Louis. Lewis drinks heavily and becomes depressed. On a voyage to Washington, D.C., Lewis commits suicide. Clark prepares Lewis' journals for publication. In Chapter 35 - The Final Word, Sacajawea and Charbonneau take Pomp, after a few years, to Saint Louis and entrust him to Clark's care. Clark arranges land for Charbonneau but Sacajawea knows that her husband's wanderlust will prevent him from ever settling down. In the Author's Note, Joseph Bruchac considers the difficult question of writing a historical novel. He asserts that the current novel is fully based on historical events and that even the dialogue presented is taken nearly verbatim from the journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Chapter 32 - Five Fingers Parted through Chapter 35 - The Final Word and Author's Note Analysis

The concluding chapters of the book are fairly short. Events are described in the very compressed narrative that initially occurred in Chapters 32 through 35. For example, on the map included in the frontispiece these few short chapters detail traeling from the Bitterroot mountains to Saint Louis—nearly half of the entire journey. Historically, the return expedition was much more complicated than the westward voyage because the returning party broke up into several smaller parties and each one had unique experiences. However, in keeping with the novel's notion that only an eyewitness can relate a story, most of the events in the return expedition are related only in summary (or not at all). The resulting narrative suggests, however, that the return trip was merely 'returning home' without incident. Clark and Sacajawea, the only two eyewitnesses speaking in the novel, were both in the same sub-party. Their return voyage is merely noted as uneventful. Chapters 32 and 34 begin with excerpts from Clark's journal—Chapter 34's excerpt is taken from a journal entry written after the conclusion of the expedition. Chapter 33 begins with an Indian folktale; Chapter 35 begins with a word of caution about traveling on water. As most of the novel focuses on the Corps of Discovery's expedition, Chapter 33 can be viewed as the end of the primary narrative. Chapters 34 and 35 are thus viewed as the trailing action, wrapping up several lose ends of narrative and explaining how it came that Pomp was living in Saint Louis with Clark.

The author's note addresses what is perhaps the most difficult aspect of the novel—what is mean by historical fiction? The characters in the novel are based on historic persons and the author asserts that all events in the narrative, even including most of the dialogue, are based closely on true events. The reader must decide whether the book is a novel (the book is classified as juvenile fiction by the Library of Congress), a novelization of historical events, or history with interpretation. Properly, the book is a work of fiction but it is sometimes difficult to talk about e.g. the "character" Sacajawea when in fact Sacajawea was a real person who really participated in the events described in the novel. This is made even more uncertain by other aspects of the book, including the testimonial on the back cover from Eileen Charbonneau—the testimonial considers the book to be a "beautiful telling of my cousin's story" (back cover).

Characters

Sacajawea

Sacajawea, the titular character of the novel, acts as the meta-fictional narrator for about one half of the novel. She is presented as one of two principle protagonists in the novel. Her exact date of birth is not offered in the novel but can be assumed to be c. 1788; she is living at the novel's conclusion c. 1810. Sacajawea was born a Lemhi Shoshone near the Three Forks region (today near Salmon, Idaho). In c. 1800 at the age of about twelve she was kidnapped by a group of Hidatsa, or Minnetaree, Indians. Several Shoshones were killed in the action and several girls and women beside Sacajawea were kidnapped. She was transported as a captive to the region of the Mandan Indian villages. After about one year of captivity doing slave labor, Sacajawea was won in a gambling match by Toussaint Charbonneau, a Quebec-born trapper living in the village. At the same time Charbonneau won Otter Woman, Sacajawea's closest Shoshone friend. Charbonneau takes the thirteen-year-old Sacajawea and the slightly older Otter Woman as his plural wives. During the winter of 1804-05 the Corps of Discovery arrived at the village where Charbonneau and Sacajawea lived. At this time, at the age of about sixteen, Sacajawea was pregnant with her first child, an infant son named Jean Baptiste Charbonneau but referred to throughout most of the novel as Pomp. When Charbonneau is hired as an interpreter for the Corps of Discovery it is decided that Sacajawea will accompany the expedition as well. After joining the expedition, Sacajawea is renamed, or nicknamed, Janey by William Clark. Just prior to the spring start of the expedition, Sacajawea gives birth to her infant. Sacajawea and Pomp accompany the expedition to the Pacific Ocean and then remain with the expedition on the return trip to the Mandan Villages—making her probably the most-traveled woman of her day. After the expedition, Sacajawea remained with Charbonneau until c. 1810 when the couple traveled to Saint Louis to entrust their son's education to Clark.

William Clark

William Clark, born 1770, acts as the meta-fictional narrator for about one half of the novel. He is presented as one of two principle protagonists in the novel. Biographical information about Clark's life is not detailed in the novel. He served in the military and was the commanding officer of Meriwether Lewis for a brief period of time. During this military service the men became close friends. When Lewis was commissioned to lead the Corps of Discovery by President Thomas Jefferson he requested that Clark act as his co-captain on the voyage. Ordinarily an arrangement of "two in command" might prove problematic to an organized expedition but Lewis and Clark apparently were such close friends with such shared opinion that they did not have difficulty with the arrangement. In the novel, Clark narrates every-other chapter and his narration is fairly dry and straightforward. While Sacajawea relates feelings and personal experience, Clark tends to relate facts about what happened. Clark pays close attention to details

such as time, place, and those involved in events. During the expedition Clark keeps a journal; excerpts from the historic journal are presented at the introduction to the chapters narrated by Clark. Clark is an excellent leader of men and proves exceptionally level-headed during the expedition. He makes generally correct assumptions about geography and people, and displays a consistently friendly and open attitude toward native peoples. Clark remains on excellent terms with Lewis and the other expedition members throughout the novel. He appears to tolerate the bumbling Charbonneau and develops a great fondness for Sacajawea whom he treats more or less as a daughter. When Jean Baptiste Charbonneau is born Clark acts as an informal godfather to the child. At the end of the expedition he asks Charbonneau and Sacajawea to allow him to become the child's guardian when it becomes old enough. By the end of the novel, Jean Baptiste is living under Clark's care in preparation to receive a formal education. Subsequent to the Corps of Exploration's expedition, Clark appears to become wealthy and politically significant though this is not much dwelt upon in the novel.

Meriwether Lewis

Meriwether Lewis, born 1774, is a minor but tragic protagonist in the novel. Very little biographical data are offered about Lewis' life. For a brief period of time he performed military service under the command of William Clark—during which time the two men became close friends. Lewis works as a secretary to President Thomas Jefferson and, under the Jefferson's tutelage, becomes something of a scientist, explorer, botanist, zoologist, and linguist. Jefferson grooms Lewis to lead the great exploration of the newly acquired Louisiana Territory and then commissions Lewis to travel to the Pacific Northwest, establish peace with the warring Indian tribes, scout out passages and trails, and—in essence—claim the territory for the United States of America. Lewis leads the provisioning and staffing of the expedition and also enlists his friend William Clark as co-captain for the voyage. During the expedition Lewis demonstrates constant curiosity about nearly everything. For most of the voyage he maintains a detailed journal of daily events. Lewis, however, is given to bouts of melancholy and from time to time he seems to lose his attention and lapses his journal writing. While Clark is the principle leader of men, Lewis is the principle investigator into the geography, botany, and so forth. After the expedition concludes, Lewis is appointed to significant political offices and has a very bright future ahead of him. However, his melancholy masters him. Lewis never completes the editing of his journals and shortly after the end of the expedition he takes his own life, alone, in an inn.

Toussaint Charbonneau

Toussaint Charbonneau, born 1767, was a French-Canadian explorer, trapper, and trader. He lives in the Mandan village area during most of the novel. In c. 1803 Charbonneau wins two Indian women in a game of chance—one of the women is Sacajawea. He takes both women as his plural wives. By c. 1804, Sacajawea is pregnant with Charbonneau's child (she is about sixteen, he is thirty-seven). Charbonneau's son, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, is born in early 1805. During late

1804 Charbonneau is hired by the Lewis and Clark expedition to act as a translator. Charbonneau asserts that he knows many Indian languages and customs and that he also can act as a guide. He accompanies the expedition to the Pacific Ocean and then returns with the expedition to his home at the Mandan villages. After the expedition Charbonneau remained with Sacajawea until c. 1810 when the couple traveled to Saint Louis to entrust their son's education to Clark. Clark also obtains for Charbonneau a large tract of arable land but Charbonneau remains fairly uninterested in farming. In the novel, Charbonneau is presented as fairly incompetent and often bumbling. He is not a brave man and can always be counted on to flee from perceived danger. Also, he has an inflated sense of his own self-worth. In some respects, Charbonneau provides comic relief within the novel. Sacajawea, as narrator, presents herself as the long-suffering but nominally devoted wife to an older and barely competent man. Clark, as narrator, presents Charbonneau rather more sympathetically as a well-meaning but unskilled explorer.

Jean Baptiste Charbonneau

Jean Baptiste Charbonneau is the son of Sacajawea and Toussaint Charbonneau; he is born in early 1805 just a few weeks before both of his parents join Lewis and Clark on the Corps of Discovery expedition. After joining the expedition William Clark renames, or nicknames, him Pomp or Little Pompy—a corruption of the Indian word for bundled infant. From his birth until the next year, Jean Baptiste travels with the Corps of Discovery. Clark informally becomes a sort of godfather to the boy and develops a strong paternal bond with him. A few years after the expedition Jean Baptiste is taken by his parents to Saint Louis where his upbringing largely is entrusted to Clark—with a special focus on an exceptional education. In c. 1811, when he is at an age of just six years old, Jean Baptiste's parents depart Saint Louis. Jean Baptiste is, correctly, the sole narrator of the novel. He narrates the novel during 1833 but alternates between using the voices of Sacajawea and William Clark during his narration. This gives the novel an artificial feel but does allow versions of events to be related from alternate points of view. As an infant, Jean Baptiste plays virtually no active part in the events described in his narrative.

York

York was an African American slave of William Clark, owned since boyhood. He was born c. 1770 and lived until c. 1832, dying shortly before Jean Baptiste Charbonneau narrates the novel. As a slave, York had no part in deciding whether or not he would participate in the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Nevertheless, he was a valuable asset to the journey. A common Indian folktale in the regions covered by the expedition appears to have been that great warriors had dark skin—York always excites much attention from the Indians when he first appears. The novel portrays York as a dedicated servant of Clark who served willingly—historically, this appears fairly inaccurate. York remained a slave until c. 1815 when Clark finally freed him. York is a compelling character in a

novel that features extensive race relations, but he remains essentially a minor and undeveloped character.

George Drouillard

George Drouillard was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Born c. 1773, Drouillard was half Indian, spoke several Indian languages, and was familiar with Indian customs. The novel portrays him as a fearless adventurer, a great hunter, an excellent cartographer, and a superior boatman. On several occasions in the novel he provides nearly all of the game consumed by the expedition. Although he remains a minor character in the novel, he is mentioned more frequently than nearly any other member of the expedition. He never complains, is always at the forefront of the action, and on several occasions his heroic actions save others in the expedition.

Otter Woman

Otter Woman was born a Lemhi Shoshone near the Three Forks region (today near Salmon, Idaho). In c. 1800 at the age of perhaps fifteen she was kidnapped by a group of Hidatsa, or Minnetaree, Indians. Several Shoshones were killed in the action and several girls, including Sacajawea, and women beside Otter Woman were kidnapped. She was transported as a captive to the region of the Mandan Indian villages. After about one year of captivity doing slave labor, Otter Woman was won in a gambling match by Toussaint Charbonneau, a Quebec-born trapper living in the village. At the same time Charbonneau won Sacajawea, Otter Woman's closest Shoshone friend. Charbonneau takes Otter Woman as a wife but leaves her at the Mandan villages when he and Sacajawea depart on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Otter Woman is there when the return but she is not subsequently mentioned in the narrative. Otter Woman is interesting inasmuch as she shares a very similar history with Sacajawea—except for participation in the expedition—and yet today Sacajawea is famous and Otter Woman is virtually unknown.

Cameahwait

Cameahwait was the brother of Sacajawea. When the Lewis and Clark Expedition returned to the area of Sacajawea's birth, they discover that Cameahwait is the chief of the Shoshone Indians. Cameahwait first meets Meriwether Lewis traveling in advance of the remainder of the expedition—the meeting is formal and not particularly cordial. When William Clark arrives, however, he brings Sacajawea and the brother and sister recognize each other with a joyful reunion. Cameahwait is the only member of Sacajawea's immediate family still surviving at the time of their reunion. In the novel, Cameahwait succumbs to Sacajawea's entreaties and treats Lewis and Clark as trusted friends. He provides them with food, forage, and most importantly, many horses. Cameahwait has a major influence on the novel's development though he appears only in a few chapters. Sacajawea refers to Cameahwait by the name Stays Here.

Chief Twisted Hair

Chief Twisted Hair is the chief of a band of Nez Perce Indians that meet Lewis and Clark during their descent into the Bitterroot Mountains. When the expedition meets Twisted Hair, they are very short on food and most of the men are violently ill from consuming large amounts of a disagreeable tuber called quamash. Clark notes that Twisted Hair easily could have taken advantage of the expedition by robbing weapons or equipment, or even by taking scalps. Instead, Twisted Hair and his and care for the travelers, provide food, and nurse them back to health. Thereafter they provide forage and care for their horses and help them construct canoes to continue their journey. Clark refers to Twisted Hair as an honorable and dependable man. Later on, when the expedition runs into thieving Indians, Clark laments that all of them can't be like Twisted Hair. When the expedition returns west the next spring, Twisted Hair again assists them.

Objects/Places

Bitterroot Mountains

The Bitterroot Mountains are a small spur range of the Rocky Mountains; they run along the border of Montana and Idaho. The mountains were the area of Lewis and Clark's crossing of the Rocky Mountains and provided the most difficult terrain encountered by the expedition. The lack of game or other food, the lack of forage, and the rocky, freezing terrain made both the east-to-west and the return west-to-east passages miserable and dangerous.

Columbia River

The major drainage route of the Northwest United States and British Columbia, the Columbia is the largest river flowing into the Pacific Ocean from the Western Hemisphere. The Columbia River was one of the principle destinations of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and forms the setting of about one third of the novel.

Continental Divide

A theoretical line along elevated terrain which forms the border between the two great watersheds of North America; thus, water on the east of the Continental Divide will drain into the Atlantic while water on the west will drain into the Pacific. Crossing the continental divide was a major task for the Corps of Discovery given that it lies amidst the difficult terrain of the Rocky Mountains.

Corps of Discovery

The Corps of Discovery is the name given to the group of men and one woman who successfully executed the Lewis and Clark Expedition. The Corps of Discovery is commonly held to include Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, York, Charles Floyd, Patrick Gass, John Ordway, Nathaniel Pryor, Richard Warfington, John Boley, William Bratton, John Collins, John Colter, Pierre Cruzatte, John Dame, Joseph and Reubin Field, Robert Frazer, George Gibson, Silas Goodrich, Hugh Hall, Thomas Howard, François Labiche, Hugh McNeal, John Newman, John Potts, Moses Reed, John Robertson, George Shannon, John Shields, John Thompson, Howard Tunn, Ebenezer Tuttle, Peter Weiser, William Werner, Isaac White, Joseph Whitehouse, Alexander Willard, Richard Windsor, Toussaint Charbonneau, Sacagawea, Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, and George Drouillard. Not all of those listed completed the entire voyage or appear directly in the novel.

Fort Clatsop

Fort Clatsop was the fort on the shore of the Columbia River in the territory of the Clatsop Indians. It was constructed by the Corps of Discover as their over-winter location after completing the first leg of their overland voyage of discovery. The fort consisted of two facing buildings joined on each end by a log palisade. The buildings were divided into quarters and storage. Due to the constant rain, wind, cold, and lack of game the enforced and prolonged stay at the fort was unpleasant and devastating to morale.

Fur Trade

The fur trade was an immensely lucrative commercial endeavor that had wide political and economic implications. Trappers such as Toussaint Charbonneau would voyage through vast wilderness regions and collect animal furs—principally beaver pelts—and then sell them at trading posts. The fur trade of much of North America was dominated by the British through the period of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. One of Jefferson's principle reasons for financing the expedition was as an attempt to help capture the fur trade for the United States and this is one of the reasons that the expedition split up on the return trip.

Journals of the Lewis & Clark Expedition

Jefferson instructed Lewis to keep a daily journal of the expedition. Lewis did keep a personal journal which he augmented with scientific and geographic observations. He also instructed the men of the expedition to keep personal journals. Lewis apparently felt that the responsibility for keeping a daily journal could be shared with William Clark; for lengthy period Lewis would not make entries but Clark would. On other occasions Clark would copy Lewis' entries verbatim. In any event, the expedition produced a voluminous set of journals. Upon the return of the expedition the public clamored for the publication of the journals. Inexplicably, Lewis did nothing to get the journals edited for publishing—instead carrying them about packed in trunks until his death a few years later. Clark subsequently obtained the journals and published them.

Arms and Ammunition

Like most Americans before and since, the men of the Corps of Discovery absolutely relied upon their firearms for success. Lewis and Jefferson realized this would be the case and secured the finest-built American firearms available; the U.S. Model 1803, .54-caliber, with a thirty-three inch barrel, manufactured at Harper's Ferry. Lewis apparently hand-selected the individual weapons for the trip. The arms were accurate enough that Lewis hit a small mark at 220 yards during a marksmanship competition. In addition, Lewis had the powder measured into units and then sealed in airtight lead containers made of the proper weight of lead such that, when fashioned into balls, the contained

powder was in the correct proportion to the resultant projectiles. This ingenious packaging insured that the expedition had enough ammunition in the proper proportions, and that the powder was kept absolutely dry through the most vigorous rapids.

Louisiana Purchase

In 1803, the United States acquired from France about 830,000 square miles of territory for the price of fifteen million dollars. The territory was nearly completely unknown and political opponents of President Thomas Jefferson claimed the purchase was the height of folly. One of the primary goals of the Corps of Discovery was to explore the northern range of the territory and produce a map of the navigable waterways. An interesting note is that the land involved in the purchase today comprises about ¼ of the territory of the modern United States.

Missouri River

The Missouri River is the major tributary of the Mississippi River and drains about 1/6th of North America. It begins at the confluence of the Madison, Jefferson, and Gallatin Rivers (the so-called Three Forks) in Montana and joins the Mississippi near present-day St. Louis. Depending on how it is measured, it is either the longest or the second-longest river in the United States. The Missouri River was the primary waterway used by the Corps of Discovery on that portion of their voyage which was on the east of the Rocky Mountains. The Three Forks region was the original home of Sacajawea.

St. Louis

The city of St. Louis lies at the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. During the time considered by the novel it was the westernmost major city in the United States and was considered the gateway to the frontier. Indeed, the Lewis and Clark Expedition began and ended in St. Louis. Later, Lewis (and still later, Clark) were appointed Governor of the Louisiana Territory and established themselves in the city of St. Louis.

Themes

Heritage

The dominant theme of the novel is heritage—where one comes from and how one lives. The novel features three principle individuals and explores their heritage in great detail. First and foremost is the heritage of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, whose life literally began with the Corps of Discovery. As a weeks-old infant, Jean Baptists informally joined the exploration as a babe-in-arms. He completed the voyage to the Pacific Ocean and completed the return voyage to the Mandan Indian villages, the place of his birth, becoming in the progress surely the most widely-traveled newborn of the time. Jean Baptiste, as participant, derives his heritage from the exploration—but does not remember any of it because of his age. It is for this reason that he seeks out the stories told by his mother Sacajawea, his father Toussaint Charbonneau, and his so-called uncle William Clark. In the novel, Jean Baptiste reconstructs these stories, chapter by chapter, to narrate his early heritage. Likewise, Sacajawea's narrative-within-the-narrative largely focuses on her heritage as a Shoshone Indian, her captivity and enslavement, and her marriage to Charbonneau. This is related as biography; what follows is a personalized expression of joy at being reunited with her tribe and family during the voyage westward with the Corps of Discovery—Sacajawea returns to her heritage and in many ways eclipses it. Finally, Clark—to a much lesser extent—relates his own biography and essentially founds his future heritage by his seminal participation in what is perhaps the greatest adventure story in American history.

Exploration

The fundamental rationale for the entire voyage was exploration of the unknown. As such, exploration is a dominant theme of the text. The expedition, as envisioned by the polymath Jefferson and executed by Lewis and Clark, was intended to be an exploration of many frontiers. Primarily, of course, it was an exploration of geographic terrain—the vast interior spaces of the North American continent were unmapped and unexplored by white men. Quite simply, no white man knew what existed between St. Louis and the mouth of the Columbia River. Jefferson wanted to know as did many others. The expedition explored the vast reaches of terrain and produced an accurate map of what is today regarded as America's heartland. But additionally, the expedition was an exploration of the commercial potential of the region, an exploration of its agricultural potential, and an exploration of its suitability for homesteading.

The superbly-educated Lewis explored the botanical and biological aspects of the new frontier, explored the cultures and societies of the Indian nations, recorded their languages, and investigated their ideals. He catalogued species, made exact drawings, preserved samples, and recorded copious field notes. He took accurate celestial observations, fixed locations, and explored alternative routes. Aided by Clark he produced maps, gathered local knowledge, and developed methodologies of exploration

which set the standard for years to come. Finally and most-importantly, along with Clark and others he recorded what was new and exciting. The various journals, maps, manuscripts, and letters created during the voyage survive as a vast bank of knowledge gathered by the wide-net of exploration cast by Lewis and Clark.

Friendship

One of the fundamental tenets of military organization is that command is absolute; military decision-making is not a shared responsibility. Indeed, so many military catastrophes can be traced back to indecisive or unclarified command structures that the necessity of a monolithic and obvious chain-of-command has been considered an indisputable requirement by all military organizations essentially since national armies have existed. Lewis chose to violate this basic principle by inviting his friend William Clark to act as co-captain on the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Why he did so is not recorded; that he did so is an unparalleled but undisputed historical fact. That decision alone should almost have guaranteed the complete failure of the expedition; indeed, it is easy enough to imagine a casual disagreement leading to an irrevocable sundering of the Corps of Discovery in the earliest days of the expedition.

Why did this not occur? Simply put, because Lewis and Clark were friends. In all their actions they were considerate of each other's skills and talents. They were able to place their personal egos aside for the betterment of the group. Through many desperate months and situations both men seemed able to support the other in all events and their intimate friendship enabled the strong support which allowed success and forged that most-famous of American partnerships.

The text also includes discussions of other friendships—principally, that between Clark and Sacajawea. Additionally, Sacagawea's friendship with Jumping Fish is commented upon, and the collective friendship between the Corps of Discovery and the Mandan Indians supports the text's theme of friendship. The theme of friendship extends beyond the novel; it was a vital component of the historical expedition as envisioned by Jefferson—note the text on the obverse of the Jefferson Peace Medals handed out by Lewis and Clark to the Indian nations as a symbol of the distant United States Government—the medals read "Peace and Friendship".

Style

Point of View

The novel's point of view appears simple but in fact is quite complex. The narrator proper is Jean Baptiste Charbonneau but after introducing the novel in the first-person, limited, point of view, he transitions to an alternating sequence of narratives-within-the-narrative. These interleaved chapters are narrated in the voices of Sacajawea and William Clark. While both these individuals were closely associated with Jean Baptiste, they also were deceased by the time he wrote the novel. Thus it can be seen that the presentation of their narratives in the novel is a meta-fictional device that yields an intimate familiarity to the events at the cost of some awkwardness of construction. The novel asserts that events may only be described by eyewitnesses to those events—but this is in fact not the methodology adopted by the novel where events are described in the words of eyewitnesses but not by the witnesses themselves. Finally, occasional variances occur when, for example, Clark relates events that he was not present to witness. This complex point of view is one of the novel's distinctive hallmarks of construction and sets it apart from other novels of the same type. Whether it aids in the conveyance of the narrative is open for dispute; in some ways it is rather affected.

Setting

In one sense, the novel does not feature a distinctive or specific geographical setting. Instead, the novel's setting is a constantly-changing milieu of geography, culture, language, and weather. This of course is highly appropriate to a novel that primarily focuses on the exploration of unknown lands. In a second sense, the novel's setting can be interpreted as an epic setting of the interior of a new nation being created—that vast area of unknown (to white men) land comprising the Louisiana Purchase. Thus, the novel's principle settings are the Missouri and Columbia Rivers and the Bitterroot Mountains—these are the major geographical features along which the exploration travels. Likewise, the novel begins and ends in Saint Louis. However, an understanding of the city of Saint Louis is not needed to access the narrative; nor is an understanding in detail of any of the geography covered by the novel. Readers instead should look for a sense of setting among the friendships and familial relationships that are developed within the narrative. These portable aspects of setting persist after the physical travel has completed. Indeed, they form the backbone of the novel and, in many ways, the backbone of the historical events upon which the novel is developed.

Language and Meaning

The novel is written in standard English though several words of various Indian languages (primarily Shoshone words) are included. When these words are used, their translation is given and they form no barrier to comprehension. The novel's dialogue is

taken primarily from transcriptions of the historic journals of Lewis and Clark and thus feature some forms of speech that would not commonly be encountered today. Again, these form no special difficulty to reading and comprehension. Meaning within the novel is derived from the typical methods of narrative fiction with a few exceptions. First, each chapter is introduced with either a historical excerpt from the historical journals of the expedition or—more significantly—with what are presumably Indian folktales or folk wisdom. These introductory paragraphs are usually fairly concise and are always set apart from the narrative by presentation in italic type face. The Indian folk wisdom is particularly instructive in forming meaning as it presents things from a perspective that most readers probably would not otherwise share. The second major source of meaning deals with the curiously complex interplay between narrative fiction and historical fact—in this case, the so-called historical fiction of the narrative. Nearly every event described in the novel, and every character described, is based upon historic events that happened when the novel presents them as happening, and happened essentially as the novel presents them as happening. In this sense, meaning within the novel can be created through fictional narrative or through interpreting the novel as historic events.

Structure

The 199-page historical novel is divided into thirty-five named and enumerated chapters and includes a prologue and an author's note. Each chapter is noted as being in the voice of a particular character: the prologue is presented in the voice of Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, the formal narrator; the remaining chapters alternate between being related in the voice of Sacajawea, Jean Baptiste's mother, or William Clark. The prologue establishes the purpose and construction of the novel. The author's note considers the difficult question of what is meant by 'historical fiction' in some detail. Each chapter of the fictional narrative is introduced by an excerpt from the historical journals of the Lewis and Clark expedition or by an Indian folktale or Indian folk wisdom. These introductory segments are set apart by being presented in italic type face; generally, they are a concise paragraph or two. The journal extracts are given with the exact date of the extract and these always correspond closely to the same event in the novel. The Indian folk wisdom presentations are unattributed; they are generally topically related to the events described in the chapter which they introduce. Most of the narrative is arranged chronologically with events following their historic nature. Occasionally, the same events are described both by Sacajawea and Clark, from their disparate points of view. The novel's chronology is not particularly even—some events are described in great detail while other major periods of time are simply summarized quickly.

Quotes

But I cannot tell the whole of my story, for I was only a baby during those years. It is the custom of my mother's people, the Shoshones, that one can tell only what they have seen. When the Shoshones come to something they do not know, one who was there must tell the tale. (p. 2)

What was it like to be a captive? I can tell you this, I was soon sorry that I asked the river what it was like to travel...For when I was given what I asked for, it was not something that I wanted at all. (p. 15)

When the world was new, Wolf made it so that it was easy to travel the rivers. Wolf made it so the rivers flowed both ways. On one side of the river, the water flowed upstream. On the other side, it flowed downstream...Then Coyote came along. (p. 27)

The road to peace, said the Arikaras, was open among them. They were good people, they said. But the Mandans, they said, were not. Those Mandans that we hoped to spend out winter among, the Arikaras told us, were not trustworthy. (p. 47)

Three moons passed. Though the snow was still deep, the days were growing longer. Your motions inside my belly told me that you were restless. You wanted to start your own journey.
Your birth was not an easy one. (p. 59)

Though there had been some difficulty, all in all that first day was a good one. We were on our way toward the undiscovered country. (p. 73)

He cradled his rifle in his arm as he pushed me ahead of him with his elbow. I held your cradleboard tight and reached out my other hand to grasp you father's sleeve, pulling him with us as we scrambled down the slope. (p. 97)

"How shall we decide about the way death shall be?" Gray Wolf said.
"Let's do it this way," said Coyote. "You speak first about death, and I will speak last." (p. 121)

It took us a full month, but that journey down the rivers to the Pacific Ocean seemed far swifter as I remember it. Just as there was one rapid after another, so were there many different nations along the rivers. (p. 142)

The great fish? Ah, Pomp, your mother mentioned that to you. But you want me to tell you about it again, eh?
Part of the trade on that coast was in whale blubber and whale oil. (p. 155)

Your uncles always were so certain that they would succeed, Firstborn Son. Even when

they seemed to make mistakes, their spirit helpers always showed them the way to go. But then there were times when I almost doubted their judgment. (p. 168)

It was happy and sad when our parties came back together on the Great Muddy River that day. There was sun in our hearts to see friends we might never have seen again. But the bad wound Captain Lewis had suffered put a cloud over that sunshine. (p. 181)

We have had a good stay at this place. Captain Clark's wife has been kind to us. She has always placed plenty of food on her table. She has made it clear that there is plenty of room in her home for you. But your father and I both know the life in a city or on a white man's farm is not the life he and I were meant to live. Charbonneau wishes to travel again. (p. 193)

Topics for Discussion

Thomas Jefferson is widely regarded as a champion of liberty and an advocate of freedom. However, he also owned slaves. How do you reconcile his public memory with his personal behavior? Does the Declaration of Independence's famous second-paragraph ("We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness") mean anything to you? What do you think Jefferson meant when he wrote that "all men" are created equal? Does "all men" include African American men? Does "all men" include women?

Discuss the extensive planning Lewis conducted prior to beginning his voyage of discovery. Did he plan correctly? What items did he take that he never used? What items should he have taken? After the expedition Lewis remarked that he should have taken only rifles and blue glass beads as baggage—of what use were blue beads on the expedition?

The men on the expedition suffered from constant mosquito and gnat bites; infection with syphilis, malaria, and influenza; were chronically malnourished and frequently undernourished; performed dangerous and exhausting physical labor all day, every day; lived in constant fear of Indian attack; and lived without access to medical facilities, entertainment, or personal care items. Would you like to have been one of the men of the Corps of Discovery? Why or why not?

Private Pierre Cruzatte had only one eye and didn't see very well. Nevertheless he was invited along hunting by the usually-intelligent Captain Lewis. During one hunt Cruzatte fired at what he thought was an elk; instead he shot Lewis through the buttocks causing a serious but not fatal injury. Cruzatte, realizing his mistake, ran off and pretended complete ignorance of the event even after being presented with the U.S. military-issue ball extracted from Lewis' buttocks. Given that he had just shot his commanding officer in the ass, do you think Cruzatte did the right thing? What would you do if you realized you had just shot your commanding officer?

In c. 1808 York was treated incredibly poorly and fundamentally unjustly by Clark (and completely ignored by the government), yet he was an indispensable element of the success of the voyage of discovery. Discuss how corrosive the vile practice of human slavery can be on otherwise intelligent and insightful men such as Clark, Lewis, and Jefferson. How does Clark's treatment of York diminish him (Clark) as a human being?

Sacagawea was a slave girl of sixteen with a month old infant when she embarked on the voyage of discovery at Lewis' request. Needless to say, her husband probably didn't ask her opinion or permission before instructing her to join the expedition. That she survived is amazing; that her infant was subjected to the journey is appalling. She never received remuneration for her participation and aside from verbal complements was completely unknown within her lifetime. At the end of the 1990s the United States government recognized her participation in the Corps of Discovery by issuing a $1

golden coin bearing her likeness. Since no image of her exists, the face on the coin is a fictive composite likeness. Do you feel that the coin honors her to a sufficient degree?

What do you find to be the most fascinating aspect of the expedition?

Of all the Indian nations described in the text which do you find the most interesting? What aspect of their culture is particularly fascinating?

Of the few enlisted men or non-commissioned officers in the Corps of Discover described in the text, which do you find the most interesting? What aspect of their personality is particularly fascinating?

John Colter participated in the entire Lewis and Clark Expedition and then left early to once again proceed into the western wilderness where, among other accomplishments, he discovered portions of what is today Yellowstone National Park. In popular culture, Colter's subsequent description of volcanic areas nearby Yellowstone earned him the reputation of being a lunatic and the distant land, thought to be imaginary, was referred to derisively as 'Colter's Hell'. Have you ever heard of John Colter? Why do you think he remains such an obscure historic figure?

The novel presents characters of three major races—Caucasian, African American, and American Indian. Do you think the novel does an adequate job of exploring the issue of race in early America?