

Jefferson's Cipher to Lewis & Clark, Was It Necessary?

Title: Jefferson's Cipher to Lewis & Clark

Subtitle or Challenge question: Was Jefferson's cipher to Lewis and Clark necessary?

Grade level: Middle (6-8)

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Lesson type: Group, and Individual

Duration: 120-150 min (3 class periods of 45 minutes)

Challenge Question or Lesson plan overview:

Was Jefferson's cipher to Lewis and Clark necessary?

Prior knowledge:

Students will have background of the Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark expedition prior to the lesson. Students will understand the significance of the Lewis and Clark expedition and why President Jefferson sent them on the expedition. The goals of the expedition were: to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean, to document findings of plants and fauna (animals), as well as to have peaceful encounters with Native Americans and potentially find trading opportunities. In addition, President Jefferson hoped the findings of Lewis and Clark would lead to Westward Expansions.

Students in this lesson will study the journals of Lewis and Clark and analyze the journals, specifically looking at information in the journal entries that describe hardships faced by Lewis and Clark on their journey. After analyzing the journals, students will be instructed that President Jefferson gave instructions to Lewis to use a secret cipher as a way of communication if an injury or emergency situation arose where Lewis and Clark were going to be captured, and valuable findings of their journey

would be lost. Students will be asked to determine based on reading the journal entries of Lewis and Clark if the cipher Jefferson gave to Lewis was necessary. Meaning, did the expedition that Lewis and Clark embarked on put them in serious danger where a secret code was a good idea to have in case they needed it or was the expedition not too dangerous for Lewis and Clark where a secret cipher should not have been sent or needed. Students will answer this in a written response using evidence from the journal entries they read of Lewis and Clark to support their answer.

State or national standards:

NYSCCLS –

7.5d: Foreign and domestic disputes tested the strength of the Constitution, particularly the separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and the issue of States rights. The United States sought to implement isolationism while protecting the Western Hemisphere from European interference.

7.5d.1: Students will examine the events of the Louisiana Purchase

SOURCE – <https://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-k-12-social-studies-framework>

Objectives/Rationale:

Students will be able to determine whether Jefferson's cipher to Lewis and Clark was necessary for their expedition by writing a written statement using evidence from analyzing the journals of Lewis and Clark to support their responses.

Students will be able to practice decoding statements using Jefferson's cipher chart and then create their own ciphers as though they are Lewis and Clark writing to Jefferson that their fellow classmates will try and decipher.

Outcomes:

Students will make a claim on whether or not Jefferson's cipher was necessary to Lewis and Clark on their expedition. The students will have to complete a writing assignment stating their claim using evidence from the journals of Lewis and Clark that they will analyze and record information on their journal analysis sheets. This will be graded based on the components students need to include in their writing assignment. The writing assignment is attached to this lesson plan.

Students will also have to create their own ciphers as Lewis and Clark as though they are writing to Jefferson. Then, with a partner students will exchange their ciphers and their partner will have to use Jefferson's cipher chart to try and figure out their ciphers. This will be graded as a participation assignment.

Steps:

Day One –

1. **Bell Ringer** – Students will be given a question to answer for their bell ringer as they come into the classroom. The question will be what do all of these numbers have in common? The numbers are: 2,500, 859, 8,000, 193, 1804, 1806, 55, 227. The answer is these are all numbers relating to the Lewis and Clark expedition. 2,500 dollars was the budget approved for the expedition by Congress, 859 days was the total number of days for the expedition, 8,000 was the total miles travelled, 193 portable pounds of soup, 1804 and 1806 were the start and end to the expedition, 55 was the total number of crew members and 227 were the number of bison killed and consumed by the expedition. Give students 5 minutes to work on the question, then go over the question with them, explaining the common theme the numbers all have,
2. Next, instruct students that they will be working in 3 groups today analyzing journal entries of Lewis and Clark from their expedition. Students will be divided into three groups. Each group will get a journal entry to read and analyze. Copies of the journal entries are attached to the lesson plan. Have at least 2 copies per groups, depending on how big or small the group is. Have students in the group take turns reading the journal entry aloud to the other members in the group. After, have students answer questions based on the journal entry on a journal analysis sheet each student will get to go with each journal they have to analyze. Each student has to answer the questions on their own papers, but students in groups can help each other to answer the questions. Give students 20 minutes to do this exercise.
3. Now, have groups switch journal entries with another group. Journal entries will be labeled 1, 2, and 3. Have students do the same process as they did in step two. Give students 20 minutes to complete this part.
4. **Closure** – Give students a ticket out the door they must answer on a sheet of paper before leaving class. The question is, what hardships did Lewis and Clark face on their expedition? Students should use their journal analysis handout to help them answer the question.

DAY TWO –

1. **Bell Ringer** – Students will be asked to answer the question, what is one thing that you have found interesting when reading Lewis and Clark's journal entries so far? Give students 4 minutes to answer the question, then call on students to share their responses.
2. After the bell ringer, break up students into the groups they were in yesterday and instruct them to get out their journal analysis sheet and give groups the last journal entry to analyze that they haven't yet. Then, have students in their groups complete the process stated in step two under day one. Give students 20 minutes to complete this exercise.
3. Now, have students go back to their seats and facilitate a whole group discussion with students on the journal entries they just analyzed. Ask students based on the journal entries you read of Lewis and Clark, what were some hardships Lewis and Clark faced? Have students give the journal entry of the hardship they say when called on to answer. Hardships students should mention are: Lewis and Clark being attacked by a black bear, Lewis and Clark having trouble crossing the Missouri River, and Clark being ill. This discussion should take around 10-15 minutes.
4. **CLOSURE** – Instruct students that President Jefferson gave instructions to Lewis before he departed with Clark on the expedition that if they were ever to get in serious trouble where for example, they were going to be captured, to communicate with Jefferson using a secret code cipher. Tell students that based on the journal entries you have just analyzed on Lewis and Clark I want for you now to answer the question: Was Jefferson's cipher to Lewis and Clark necessary? Have students answer this question on a separate sheet of paper using evidence from the journal entries they analyzed to answer the question. This is on a separate handout attached to the lesson. Make sure students understand what the term cipher means, and have students start this assignment in class, and finish it for homework. Student's' written response to the question should

be 5-7 sentences.

DAY THREE –

1. **Bell Ringer** – Have students answer the question, decipher the code: eptinwicexdeilsaradn. Instruct students to rearrange the letters to figure out the code. The code when deciphered should read: Lewis and Clark expedition. Give students 5 minutes to crack the code. After, go over with students the correct answer and see if any of the students were able to figure it out.
2. Explain to students that today in class you will be using Jefferson's cipher given to Lewis to try and decode messages. Ask students why a cipher is used. For example responses they may say are, to send secret messages, send messages with important information, that if lost or stolen the person would not be able to find out what it says.
3. Put up a powerpoint presentation and go through with students step by step how to use the cipher. Model with students several examples of coded messages and show them how to use the cipher to decode them. This powerpoint is attached to the lesson plan. The powerpoint should take about 20 minutes to go over with the students.
1. Pair up students with a partner. Give to each student a copy of Jefferson's cipher. The cipher is attached to the lesson. Instruct students to make a message that they would send to Jefferson as if they were Lewis or Clark. Tell students to think about when would Lewis or Clark have used this code to Jefferson? What would Lewis or Clark have written? Why would Lewis or Clark have written it? Do not have students share with their partner what is in their coded message. After students write their own coded message they are to switch their coded message with their partner, and they will each try to decipher their partner's coded message using Jefferson's cipher. This will take 20 minutes to complete.
2. **CLOSURE** – Students will answer the question, do you think using secret codes was effective? Why or why not.
3. You may need to break this last day up into another day depending on how the powerpoint goes and how quickly your students pick up on using the cipher.

Materials:

1. Pen/Pencil
2. Journal entries of Lewis and Clark
 - April 29th, 1805, http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=1805-04-29.xml&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xsl
 - November 22nd, 1805, http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=1805-11-22.xml&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xsl
 - July 26th, 1805, http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu/read/?_xmlsrc=1805-07-26.xml&_xslsrc=LCstyles.xsl
3. Journal analysis sheet
4. PowerPoint on how to use Jefferson's cipher
5. Jefferson's cipher <http://www.sacajaweacenter.org/learning-links/activity-secret-code-lewis-clark.pdf>
6. Piece of paper (can be half a sheet)

Assessment criteria:

Students will be assessed by completing daily bell ringer and ticket out the door assignments. Also, students will be assessed by completing a journal analysis sheet on the journals of Lewis and Clark.

Additionally, students will be assessed by writing an evidence based claim assignment, where they have to state a claim on whether or not Jefferson's cipher was necessary for Lewis and Clark using information to support their response from their journal analysis sheet. Lastly, students will be assessed by trying to decipher codes written by their partner using Jefferson's cipher.

Accommodations:

Teachers may want to shorten some of the journal excerpts for their students if they have low level readers and/or students with special needs. In addition, teachers could modify the ciphers that students have to decode using Jefferson's cipher chart.

