

Lewis and Clark: Explorers or Conquerors?

General

Grade Level

Middle School

Author Info

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Type of Lesson

Challenge

Type of Project (Individual/Group/Both)

Both

Duration

60-90 minutes

Challenge Question

When Jefferson purchased the Louisiana territory from France, he commissioned Lewis and Clark to explore the new territory. What was the purpose behind this mission? Were they sent as explorers to discover the new land and record findings, or was there a hidden agenda? After you have investigated, create a digital poster to gain America's support for President Jefferson's agenda.

Rationale

Students will already have background on The Louisiana Purchase and Lewis and Clark expedition. This lesson will prepare students for the concept of Manifest Destiny. It will challenge students to consider Jefferson's motives and his attitudes towards Native Americans.

Notes to Teacher

Structure your discussion to suit the needs of this classroom. For example, the discussion could expand into more current events.

Steps

1. With your partner, explore the resources in My Collection to answer the questions below. Review all of the documents before answering the questions. Record your answers on loose leaf paper.
2. Consider the Map of North America of 1803, before the Louisiana Purchase. What do you see as the value of this land? What value do you think Jefferson saw?
3. What do all these documents reveal about Jefferson's attitude towards the Northwest Territory?
4. How does Jefferson feel about the Native Americans already living in the Northwest? Does this surprise you?
5. Why was it important for Lewis and Clark to explore this new territory?
6. Create a digital poster to demonstrate your understanding of Jefferson's agenda. On your poster you need to include a catchy slogan and an image. You may either use any image from this collection, or use Explore to locate an image of your choice.
7. After creating your poster, write a paragraph explaining your understanding of Jefferson's agenda. You will use this paragraph as a guide when you present your poster to the class.