

Sacagawea

"Everything I do is for my people". -Sacagawea. This was one of Sacagawea's many quotes, and shows just what type of person she is, hardworking and determined, but also kind.

Sacagawea was a very important person in U.S history. Without her help, support, and guidance, the corps of discovery, (Lewis and Clark's expedition group), wouldn't have been able to interpret other tribes that they needed to communicate with in order to trade for horses and supplies. Sacagawea also saved Lewis and Clark from possibly being killed by other tribes.

Sacagawea was born in either 1788 or 1789, no one really knows the exact date for sure. While growing up, she was a member of the Lemhi band of the Shoshone tribe in the Salmon river region in modern Idaho, surrounded by the Rocky mountains. She was a very skilled gatherer and foraged for wild licorice, prairie turnips, wild artichokes, tubers, (also called white apples by settlers), nuts, and berries. Then, one day, the enemies of the Shoshone tribe, the Hidatsa, attacked them during a buffalo hunt and stole Sacagawea. Her captors then brought her to Bismarck North Dakota, and in 1803 or 1804, she was either traded, purchased, or gambled to a French-Canadian man two years older than Sacagawea named Toussaint Charbonneau. Toussaint had lived with the natives so long that he knew some of their language and customs. Soon, at the age of sixteen, Sacagawea became one of two of his wives, and was soon pregnant. Sacagawea's name in Hidatsa means *"bird woman"*. *"Sacaga"* means bird, and *"wea"* means woman. Today, the Shoshone argue that her name means "boat pusher".

During the period of time when Sacagawea was being held captive or was with Charbonneau, Thomas Jefferson, the president of the United States at that time, had just made the Louisiana Purchase from France, and wanted to explore it. So he chose Merriwether Lewis to lead the expedition of forty-five men, accompanied by William Clark as his co-captain. The groups orders, (the corps of discovery), where to explore the newly-purchased area and bring back detailed journals, crates of plants and animals, and other specimens. The whole expedition took two years and four months there and back. Then, while stopping to provision and to buy horses, they met Sacagawea's husband, and asked him to be their interpreter along the way because he spoke the native tongue, as well as English. Toussaint agreed to come along, and it wasn't long before they invited his 16 year old wife Sacagawea along as well, for she spoke both languages far better than her husband.

As they went along, she prevented attacks on the corps of discovery by being there. How? Because nearby tribes that were thinking about attacking them did not due to the fact that

they knew that no one would bring a woman and child to a war party. Sacagawea served as the main interpreter, and also helped by knowing what was and was not edible. At one point along the way, a boat that Sacagawea was in nearly capsized, as many other people panicked, Sacagawea had the presence of mind to collect all these precious items that they needed, including journals, instruments, and food and other supplies. As she did this, she protected her baby son, Baptiste, or Pompey. After the incident, Lewis and Clark realized how important Sacagawea is to their expedition. Finally, in the summer of August 14, 1806, the corps of discovery returned, although many people thought they were dead. The total journey lasted 2 years and 4 months. They faced famine, flash floods, heat, cold, and diseases, and trekked a total of 8,000 miles of rough and rocky terrain. Along this trip, only one member of the corps of discovery died, and that was Sergeant Charles Floyd, and he died of appendicitis. After the expedition, Clark offered Sacagawea and her family a farm if he could educate Baptiste. Sacagawea and Toussaint agreed to this and let him educate him, for Clark was very fond of him. In August 1812, Sacagawea gave birth to her daughter Lisette. After that, her health declined and by December, she was extremely ill with putrid fever. Then, on December 22nd, 1812, at the age of 25, Sacagawea passed away in Fort manual. Sacagawea was a very important person in our U.S. history, and without her Lewis and Clark could've been killed, along with their whole expedition.

" You cannot change the people around you, but you can change the people that you choose to be around". -Sacagawea

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