

Peachtree Pointers

📖 SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS 📖

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SEAMAN

The Dog Who Explored the West with Lewis & Clark

Written by **Gail Langer Karwoski**

Illustrated by **James Watling**

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6 x 9 / 148 pages / 12 black & white illustrations, 2 maps
Juvenile Fiction, History, ages 8–12 / Spring 1999



A Peachtree Jr. Book

About the Book

Purchased by Meriwether Lewis in the Summer of 1803, Seaman, a 150-pound Newfoundland dog, accompanied Lewis and Clark and the Corps of Discovery on its legendary exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. This fictionalized biography, based closely on the journals of the expedition and on scholarly works, follows the dog as he serves Lewis and the Corps. Seaman was an integral part of the Corps, catching and fetching game and watching over the camp, warning the explorers of any threatening grizzlies or buffalo.

An Author's Note discusses the factual and fictionalized elements of the book. SEAMAN was carefully reviewed by experts on the Lewis & Clark Expedition and on working Newfoundland dogs.

Themes

- Jefferson's America
- Louisiana Purchase, Westward expansion
- Explorers, Heroism, Courage, Loyalty
- Animal companions



Awards

- South Dakota Prairie Pasque Children's Book Award (nominee) 2001-2
- Volunteer State (Tennessee) Master Reading List 2001-2
- Georgia Book Award (nominee) 1999
- ABA Children's Pick of the Lists 1999

Praise for SEAMAN

"No story from our nation's history is more enduring—or exciting—than the epic saga of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. In this well-researched and finely written book for young readers, Gail Karwoski brings the story to life through the expedition's most unlikely and endearing hero: Lewis's brave and loyal companion, Seaman, the first dog to cross the continent."

—Dayton Duncan, co-author with Ken Burns of
LEWIS AND CLARK: THE JOURNEY OF
THE CORPS OF DISCOVERY

"This book chronicles the exploration of Lewis and Clark, focusing on the part played by a Newfoundland dog named Seaman. This approach works beautifully, giving a personal interest angle to the expedition. The prose style flows easily and the reader gains a good understanding of the tribulations as well as the excitement of the trip."

—ABA 1999 Children's Pick of the Lists

A Note to the Teacher

These reproducible lesson plans may be used before, during, and after your study of the Lewis and Clark expedition. They were provided to help you extend your social studies unit into other curricular areas and to enhance your students' understanding of this period of history.

If your students are in upper elementary grades, read *SEAMAN* aloud to them when your study of American history focuses on Jefferson's America, the Louisiana Purchase, and/or the Lewis and Clark expedition. If you have class sets of the book, encourage your students to read along silently, since research shows that students increase reading speed as well as comprehension by this procedure. The novel is divided into 15 chapters. As you read, stop to discuss unfamiliar terms. Read a chapter each day, keeping a list of new words on the board.

If your students are in middle school, you might want to read the opening chapter or two aloud, then assign subsequent chapters as silent reading or homework. After reading the Author's Note at the end of the novel, discuss how much of the book is factual and how much is fiction.

Before you begin reading the novel, use the **creative writing** activity, "The Story from History: Using a Primary Source as a Springboard for Writing," as an introduction to historical fiction. The **science** activity, "Writing a Description of a Plant," works well while you are reading the novel.

SEAMAN can apply to **geography** by using detailed maps to read, plot latitude and longitude, and learning to use map legends. The book can apply to **math** by computing distance from the distance scales.

Extending the Unit

Encourage your students to keep journals of their family journeys during vacations or over weekends. Tell them to record dates, distances, landmarks, as well as new animals or plants that they encounter. Remind them to write sensory descriptions and clear explanations. Since a journal is an "interior photo album," urge them to express how they felt as well as

what they saw and heard. They may illustrate their journals with sketches as well as photographs.

Many teachers have found that students are eager to write to an author after they read his or her work. This establishes a student's personal relationship with a book, enhances a student's involvement with reading, and provides a legitimate vehicle for practicing the skill of writing the friendly letter. Your students may write to Gail Karwoski care of Peachtree Publishers.

Many students respond to stories about pets, like *Seaman*. They will be eager to write biographies of their own family pets.

Resources for Further Study

In addition to the many books and videos about the Lewis and Clark expedition, your students can use the internet to dig deeper. "Lewis & Clark on the Information Superhighway," a reviewed and alphabetized listing of Lewis and Clark on-line sites, is an excellent place to begin. Its web address is www.vpds.wsu.edu/LCExpedition/Resources.

The Lewis and Clark expedition greatly expanded the frontiers of science as well as geography. The explorers collected and shipped back many samples of plants, animals, minerals, and Indian artifacts that were new to the scientists of their day.

Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences houses most of the plants that Lewis and Clark collected. Some of these plants are on display at their website: www.acnatsci.org/lewis&clark/index.html.

Most of the Indian artifacts are owned by Harvard University's Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology and can be seen on their website: www.peabody.harvard.edu/Lewis&Clark. The Peabody Museum's on-line exhibit includes a Mandan buffalo robe painted with a battle scene, a deer hide shirt, dresses, a Pacific Coast cedar bark rain hat, a beaded otter-skin pouch, and a ceremonial pipe or Calumet.

During the bicentennial celebration of the Lewis and Clark Expedition (2003–2006), an exhibit of many of the objects that the explorers used and collected will visit several cities. For information about this traveling exhibit, sites along the trail, or other information, contact the Lewis and Clark Trail

Heritage Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 3434, Great Falls, Montana 59403, or visit their website: www.lewisandclark.org.

Creative Writing: The Story from History, Using a Primary Source as a Springboard for Writing

In this lesson, students begin with primary source material. By adding their own details, they will expand the facts into a historical fiction story.

Materials

- two excerpts from the Journals of Lewis and Clark
- (optional: use the internet to download or view additional journal entries)
- (optional: teabags; large, flat pan with sides; india ink; turkey feathers)

Procedure

Distribute copies of the two excerpts from the Journals of Lewis and Clark or display them on an overhead projector. Read them aloud with your students, and ask what details would need to be added to expand them into a complete story. (Answers might be dialogue; characters' feelings; information about the setting, such as weather, time of day, plants, etc.)

Discuss primary sources, such as these journal entries. What are the benefits of using primary sources to learn about history? The disadvantages? Tell students that historians begin with primary sources, but these are sometimes difficult to understand or incomplete. Discuss the genres of historical fiction vs. nonfiction.

Tell the students they will be creating historical fiction based on a primary source. They should choose one of the excerpts below to use as the basis of their stories. (Or use the internet to find other journal entries for this exercise. See note at bottom.)

Have each student write a gripping beginning to start his or her story; add details, such as dialogue and characters' feelings, to the facts in the journal entry; and write endings that leave the reader satisfied. (Although the journal entries are written in first person, students may prefer to write in a thirdperson

narrative voice.)

Share the stories by reading them aloud, or publish the stories by copying them onto tea-stained paper. (To make tea-stained paper, heat several teabags in a kettle of water, let cool, then pour into a large pan with sides. Soak white sheets of paper in the tea water for few minutes, then hang to dry. The paper will dry brownish and wrinkly, like old parchment.) If time allows, let the students write their stories Lewis and Clark style, with ink and pens made from cleaned poultry feathers. (Turkey feathers work well. Soak the feathers in a tub of soapy water, rinse, dry, then cut the tips of the quills into points.)

Read aloud the scenes from SEAMAN that were developed from these excerpts. (The scene with Seaman and the squirrels is found on pages 7–10 in the novel. The scene with the Native American who offers to purchase Seaman is on pages 16–18.) After writing their own historical fiction stories, students will be eager to analyze the author's work. Discuss: What details were added by the author? Did these details come from her imagination or her research? Would you change any of her details? If so, how and why?

Note: One website that displays entries from Lewis and Clark's journals can be accessed at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/JOURNALS>. Go to the Table of Contents ([toc.html](#)) to locate entries from the expedition. Here are some entries corresponding to scenes in the novel:

Chapter 12, Gathering Information

May 19, 1805 - Seaman is bitten by the beaver (pages 74-76 in the novel)

May 29, 1805 - Seaman chases a buffalo out of the sleeping camp (pages 79-80)

Chapter 21, Our Houses Dry and Comfortable

April 11, 1806 - Seaman is kidnapped by Native Americans (pages 147-149)

Excerpts from the Journals of Lewis and Clark

11th September 1803 (Meriwether Lewis): "Set out about sunrise, passed Sunfish creek 1 mile & c

entered the long reach, so called from the Ohio running in straight direction for 18 miles in this reach there are 5 Islands from three to 2 miles in length each—observed a number of squirrels swimming the Ohio and universally passing from the W. to the East shore they appear to be making to the south; ... I made my dog take as many each day as I had occasion for, they were fat and I thought them when fried a pleasant food—many of these squirrels were black, they swim very light on the water and make pretty good speed—my dog was of the Newfoundland breed very active strong and docile, he would take the squirrel in the water kill them and swimming bring them in his mouth to the boat.”

16th November 1803 (Meriwether Lewis): “Passed the Mississippi this day and went down on the other side after landing at the upper habitation on the opposite side. we found here some Shawnees and Delaware Indians incamped; one of the Shawnees a respectable looking Indian offered me three beaver-skins for my dog with which he appeared much pleased, the dog was of the Newfoundland breed one that I prized much for his docility and qualifications generally for my journey and of course there was no bargain, I had given 20\$ for this dog myself.”

(Reprinted from *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ed. Gary E. Moulton [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983–1997]).

Science: Writing a Description of a Plant

During their expedition, Lewis and Clark encountered many plants and animals that were unknown to scientists living in the United States. Although they sent home samples of many of their discoveries, the explorers also described their findings in detailed notes and sketches. In this lesson, students will attempt to describe a plant that is found near their school.

Materials

- an excerpt from the Journals of Lewis and Clark
- overhead projector
- field guide to plants, trees, shrubs, etc., that grow near your school
- leaves, small branches from several plants near your school

Procedure

Before the lesson, you should gather some leaves or a small branch from several plants. (Note: The lesson will work better if you can identify the plants used!)

Display an entry from the Journals of Lewis & Clark on an overhead projector. Read over the entry with the students. Ask how the explorers have described the plant so that the scientists of their time could “see” the new species. Look for precision in color (What shade of green?), measurement (How many leaves on a stem? How large is a leaf?), as well as sensory details (How does the leaf smell?).

Divide the students into groups. Give each group a leaf or branch from a local plant. Tell the groups to write a description of this plant. Note: The students may also include a sketch or diagram of their plant. Instruct the students to include enough detail so that a reader can identify their plant from the description.

When all the groups have completed their descriptions, place each of the leaves/branches on a numbered paper, and display these on a table. Distribute copies of the student-written descriptions to each of the groups. Have the groups examine the numbered samples and decide which description belongs with which plant.

Go over the correct answers. Discuss which groups were the most successful in describing their plants, and why.

Using a field guide from the media center, read aloud a contemporary description of these plants. How is this description different from the students' work? From the description in the Journal of Lewis & Clark?

Excerpt from the Journals of Lewis and Clark

(Meriwether Lewis, description of snow-on-the-mountain, *Euphorbia marginata*): “No. 27. taken 4th of August, and first observed at the bald prairie—it is a beautiful plant with a variegated leaf—these leaves encompass the flowers which are small and in the center of them; at a small distance they resemble somewhat a white rose the leaf near the large stem is green and is edged with white; they grow smaller and more numerous as they approach the flower or

the extremity of the limb. The plant is much branched; the leaf is smooth on both sides and edge, of an ovate form and pale green colour, rises to five or six feet, is annual at every point that it branches it has a pair of opposite leaves and from three to four branches.”

(Reprinted from Vol. 3, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, ed. Gary E. Moulton [Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983–1997].)

Notes



About the Author

Gail Langer Karwoski received her B.A. from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and her M.A. from the University of Minnesota, later earning her elementary and gifted teaching certificates at the University of Georgia. She has taught elementary, middle, and high school students.

Karwoski also co-authored *THE TREE THAT OWNS IT-*

SELF, a collection of stories from Georgia history. That book won the Storytelling World Award and the 1996 Georgia Authors of the Year for Juvenile Literature. Look for her upcoming book *QUAKE!*, in stores Spring 2004.

Karwoski lives with her family in Watkinsville, Georgia and does many school visits throughout the year. Please visit her website at www.gailkarwoski.com.

About the Illustrator

James Watling was born in England and lives in Canada, where he is professor of Art Education at McGill University. He has illustrated numerous books, including *THE TREE THAT OWNS ITSELF*, *THE*

DEVIL'S HIGHWAY, and *NATCHEZ UNDER-THE-HILL* for Peachtree Publishers, as well as *ARROW OVER THE DOOR*, *THE CHILDREN OF THE SKY*, and *ALONG THE SANTA FE TRAIL*

Peachtree Pointers for SEAMAN was prepared by Gail Langer Karwoski.



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