

Who is sacagawea



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” Who Was Sacagawea “, Who Was Sacagawea, and How Did She Evolve as A Person President Thomas Jefferson in 1803 asked for funding from Congress for Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the western territories between the Mississippi River and the Pacific Ocean.

Not only to find a full trade route to the Pacific Ocean, but also to study the people and to trek new territories. Along the trek a new leader and important person in American history would emerge. While camping at Fort Mandan, Lewis and Clark encountered Charbonneau and asked him to come West with them as their interpreter. They wanted him to talk peace for them to the natives to assure them an easy trip West. It was also under the understanding that Sacagawea, Charbonneaus wife, could also come along and be recruited as the interpreter through Toussaint. It is to my understanding that they didn™ t like Toussaint much, and that Sacagawea was really the one they wanted.

They also knew that when they needed to cross the Rockies they would need help from the Shoshones, who were well known as being horseman, and they wanted someone who spoke Shoshone. They knew Sacagawea spoke Shoshoni as well as Hidatsu, which was an important trait because she could speak to the Shoshone and get horses for them. Although Sacagawea was very young, Lewis and Clark knew they would need her desperately.

Clark, more than Lewis, respected the Indians as fully human, and treated them as sources of information rather than as bothersome savages, like most explorers did. So, they both knew she would be useful. “? they knew that his wife could speak Shoshoni as well as Minitari as well as French. And

they knew that, that they needed to get horses from the Shoshoni in order to make the crossing over the Rockies, over the Bitterroots, and the Shoshoni were the Indians living closest to the Bitterroots” says Erica Funkhouser, a historian (Funkhouser, PBS online) Also, the captains were okay with the idea of having a woman interpreter for the reason that they thought a woman on board of a ship of men makes them look less barbaric and more friendly. “ A woman with a party of men is a token of peace.

” as Clark noted in his journal. Which also gave the captains a head up with the natives. “? sometimes we don™t realize and that is by carrying a woman along, especially a woman who was carrying an infant, said to tribes this is not a party that is out for aggressive reasons. This is not a war party.”

(Least, PBS online) There are many legends and stories that are believed to be true about where Sacagawea was born, grew up, and lived. This is the one that I researched through my information, to whom knows if it is true or not. To my knowledge Sacagawea was born the daughter of the Shoshone chief (Idaho) but was captured at age eleven by an enemy tribe, the Hidatsa (or Minitari) of Knife River (North Dakota). Later to be sold (or won as some believe) as the “ wife” a la facon du pays (after the fashion of the country) of Toussaint Charbonneau (a French-Canadian trapper/fur trader).

Sacagawea would then live with Toussaint at his Mandan Village home.

Sacagawea was very young at the time; one story tells me she was only fourteen. A few months after she was “ married” and she was pregnant.

Charbonneaus pregnant wife gave birth to a baby boy at Fort Mandan,

February 11, 1805, and was given the Christian name Jean Baptiste

Charbonneau. Nicknamed Pomp by Clark, Pomp was brought along to the

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Pacific and back to Mandan during 1805-1806. Later, Pomp was taken in by William Clark, who had grown fond of him; while his father, Toussaint Charbonneau, returned to work with the American Fur Company. “

Sacagawea played an important role, not as a guide as she™s been mythologized into, but as a person who could read the landscape fairly well. I think she could read rivers.

She could read a valley, you know. She had a sense of what the landscape said about direction and where they, where they were going” explains Erica Funkhouser, a historian. (Funkhouser, PBS online) When the captains reached the Pacific, in November 1805, they needed to contact the Shoshone tribe, in which to borrow horses they required in order to hike across the “ Rock Mountains”. They used Sacagawea to talk to them because they knew she knew their language. She came to find out that her older brother, Cameahwait, was the chief of the band (taken over after her fathers death). With that benefit, she talked to her brother and the Shoshone tribe and convinced them to allow Lewis and Clarks men to use the horses they needed to complete their task. Although Sacagawea could have left Lewis, Clark and her husband behind and return to her family she did not. Five months later Lewis and Clark were back at Fort Mandan where Sacajawea, Charbonneau, and their son Jean Baptiste stayed while the “ Corps of Discovery” went on to St.

Louis. “ Clearly, she was able to direct them topographically at certain key moments to help them along. It also was truly a stroke of luck that when they got on the other side of Lemhi pass and came down the western side of

the Continental Divide that she ran into her people again. To her great surprise, her brother was now the chief.

“, says William Least (Heat-Moon, PBS online). If not for Sacagawea's connections with the Shoshone tribe Lewis and Clark never would have gotten the horses necessary to continue the trip. I think that it was pure coincidence that Sacagawea ran into her brother, which in turn gave her a great advantage, and got the horses.

It would have been so much harder to get what they needed had not she known them. Without Sacagawea's knowledge during the whole trip I don't even think that they would have even reached the Shoshone tribe. Even if by chance they would have without her assistance, Toussaint wouldn't have been able to sway Cameahwait to lend the horses. As the only woman on the trip, she also cooked, searched for food, and sewed, fixed and cleaned the clothes of the men. In one important occasion written in Clark's journals, she saved records and instruments from being lost overboard during a storm.

So, all in all, without Sacagawea's guidance, knowledge, interpretations, connections, and general voice for Lewis and Clark; they would never have been able to attempt to find the water route to the west. While she was able to point out a few landmarks, and her company was greatly helpful in a lot of ways, it's clear that she didn't herself lead the explorers in their journey, but was merely an aid. The later fate of Sacagawea is uncertain. Some stories say she died in an epidemic of “putrid fever” late in 1812. Other versions say that she rejoined the Shoshone on their Wind River reservation and died

there in 1884. Yet another version is that Clark arranged for Sacagawea and Charbonneau to live in St. Louis.

Sacagawea gave birth to a daughter, and shortly after died of an unknown illness. Clark legally adopted her two children, and educated Jean in St. Louis and Europe. He became a linguist and later returned to the west as a mountain man. It is unknown what happened to the daughter, Lisette. “

Sacagawea came back to St. Louis a citizen of the West and someone who had citizenship no place. Where does she belong Where is her home Does she belong at a Hidatsa village Does she belong with her Shoshoni relatives Does she belong back at Fort Clatsop Can she ever belong in St.

Louis If ever there was a person in the expedition™s history who was displaced, who was person out of time, person out of the world, person who belonged nowhere, it™s Sacagawea.” explains Jim Ronda (Ronda, PBS online) Jim Ronda thinks that Sacagawea belongs nowhere, but in fact she belongs in so many locations that it really doesnt matter where she ends up. She indeed could return to her Shoshoni relatives and live the rest of her life with her family whom she may have not known but she loved.

She also could return to the Hidatsa village and live with the people she grew up with. Although it would be an odd situation, she could have also gone along with her husband and followed him with his fur trapping life. During her years with the Lewis and Clark expeditions she found many places she could in the end call “ home”. She was welcomed everywhere she went Im sure, as an interpreter her job is to be the peacemaker. Although Sacagawea, in the end, didnt leave any known truth about where she lived

after the expeditions were completed, Im sure it probably wasn™t very hard for her to find a place to call “ home”.-M ;,?