



the expedition of Lewis & Clark

WINTER IS COMING

The encounter with the Mandan

As the last weeks of 1804 grew colder, the Corps of Discovery headed toward the Mandan villages along the Missouri River in what is today North Dakota. The Mandan people were probably not surprised by the arrival of the explorers. White traders had been visiting Mandan villages for more than 60 years by the time Lewis and Clark showed up. In fact, Mandan and Hidatsa towns were the center of trade on the Northern Plains, and drew white and Native American merchants from near and far. During trading season in the summer and early fall, Mandan markets were filled with an exciting mix of people and goods, including Spanish horses and mules, fancy Cheyenne leather clothing, meat products, English guns, and baskets of corn, beans, squash and tobacco.

The Mandan people were excellent gardeners and farmers, and planted fields of corn, beans, squash and sunflowers around their villages. They also hunted buffalo, and made pottery and baskets.

By November, ice was beginning to form on the river, and the Corps of Discovery knew they were in for a long and cold winter. The Mandan showed their friendship to the explorers by allowing them to build a winter fort nearby and visiting each day with corn, beans and squash to trade. The Mandan also brought members of the Corps along on hunting parties in search of buffalo. These winter hunts often took place over several days with temperatures below zero and snow knee-deep. Several of the explorers returned from one hunt with frostbitten feet and badly injured hips from falling on hard ground. Native medicine helped to heal their cuts and bruises.



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1. Why did the Corps of Discovery had to stop?
2. Who were they going to meet?
3. Were the Mandan people surprised to see white people? Why?
4. How can you say they knew many peoples?
5. Describe what type of population they are.
6. In what way were they different from the Lakota?
7. How did they welcome the Corps of Discovery?
8. What did the Corps of Discovery decide to do because of the cold?
9. How can you describe the relationships between the Mandan and the explorers?



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