



# Exploring Lewis and Clark: Reflections on Men and Wilderness (Lewis & Clark Expedition)

*Thomas P. Slaughter*

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Most Americans know that Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led our nation's first trans-continental exploratory expedition, which was sent west by President Thomas Jefferson in 1803. Their journey is one of the most celebrated events in American history and one of the most written about. But most of us do not know any more than what the explorers told us, or what they wanted readers of their voluminous journals to know, or anything other than what they understood about themselves and their wilderness experiences.

*Exploring Lewis and Clark* probes beneath the traditional narrative of the journey, looking beyond the perspectives of the explorers themselves to those of the woman and the men who accompanied them, as well as of the Indians who met them along the way.

It reexamines the journals and what they suggest about Lewis's and Clark's misinterpretations of the worlds they passed through and the people in them. Thomas Slaughter portrays Lewis and Clark not as heroes but as men—brave, bound by cultural prejudices and blindly hell-bent on achieving their goal.

He searches for the woman Sacajawea rather than the icon that she has become. He seeks the historical rather than the legendary York, Clark's slave. He discovers what the various tribes made of the expedition, including the notion that this multiracial, multiethnic group was embarked on a search for spiritual meaning.

Thomas Slaughter shines an entirely new light on an event basic to our understanding of ourselves. He has given us an important work of investigative history.

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