



Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West

By Stephen Ambrose

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Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West By Stephen Ambrose

From the bestselling author of *Band of Brothers* and *D-Day*, the definitive book on Lewis and Clark's exploration of the Louisiana Purchase, the most momentous expedition in American history and one of the great adventure stories of all time.

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson selected his personal secretary, Captain Meriwether Lewis, to lead a voyage up the Missouri River to the Rockies, over the mountains, down the Columbia River to the Pacific Ocean, and back. Lewis and his partner, Captain William Clark, made the first map of the trans-Mississippi West, provided invaluable scientific data on the flora and fauna of the Louisiana Purchase territory, and established the American claim to Oregon, Washington, and Idaho.

Ambrose has pieced together previously unknown information about weather, terrain, and medical knowledge at the time to provide a vivid backdrop for the expedition. Lewis is supported by a rich variety of colorful characters, first of all Jefferson himself, whose interest in exploring and acquiring the American West went back thirty years. Next comes Clark, a rugged frontiersman whose love for Lewis matched Jefferson's. There are numerous Indian chiefs, and Sacagawea, the Indian girl who accompanied the expedition, along with the French-Indian hunter Drouillard, the great naturalists of Philadelphia, the French and Spanish fur traders of St. Louis, John Quincy Adams, and many more leading political, scientific, and military figures of the turn of the century.

High adventure, high politics, suspense, drama, and diplomacy combine with high romance and personal tragedy to make this outstanding work of scholarship as readable as a novel.

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Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West By Stephen Ambrose Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #4437 in Books
- Brand: Simon & Schuster
- Published on: 1997-06-02
- Released on: 1997-06-02
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.25" h x 1.20" w x 6.12" l, 1.26 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 521 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

A biography of Meriwether Lewis that relies heavily on the journals of both Lewis and Clark, this book is also backed up by the author's personal travels along Lewis and Clark's route to the Pacific. Ambrose is not content to simply chronicle the events of the "Corps of Discovery" as the explorers called their ventures. He often pauses to assess the military leadership of Lewis and Clark, how they negotiated with various native peoples and what they reported to Jefferson. Though the expedition failed to find Jefferson's hoped for water route to the Pacific, it fired interest among fur traders and other Americans, changing the face of the West forever.

From Publishers Weekly

Ambrose has written prolifically about men who were larger than life: Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Colonel Custer. Here he takes on half of the two-headed hero of American exploration: Meriwether Lewis. Ambrose, his wife and five children have followed the footsteps of the Lewis and Clark expedition for 20 summers, in the course of which the explorer has become a friend of the Ambrose family; the author's affection shines through this narrative. Meriwether Lewis, as secretary to Thomas Jefferson and living in the White House for two years, got his education by being apprenticed to a great man. Their friendship is at the center of this account. Jefferson hand-picked Lewis for the great cross-country trek, and Lewis in turn picked William Clark to accompany him. The two men shook hands in Clarksville, Ohio, on October 14, 1803, then launched their expedition. The journals of the expedition, most written by Clark, are one of the treasures of American history. Here we learn that the vital boat is behind schedule; the boat builder is always drunk, but he's the only one available. Lewis acts as surveyor, builder and temperance officer in his effort to get his boat into the river. Alcohol continues to cause him problems both with the men of his expedition and later, after his triumphant return, in his own life, which ended in suicide at the age of 35. Without adding a great deal to existing accounts, Ambrose uses his skill with detail and atmosphere to dust off an icon and put him back on the trail west. History Book Club main selection; BOMC split selection; QPB alternate; author tour. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From School Library Journal

YA?Though principally a biography of Meriwether Lewis, this narrative also provides fascinating portraits of Thomas Jefferson and William Clark, Sacagawea, and other members of the group of explorers who journeyed from the Ohio River to the Pacific Ocean in the years 1803-1806. While scholarly and well documented, this account is at the same time a great adventure story, and Ambrose generates a sense of excitement and anticipation that mirrors, at least to some degree, the feelings Lewis and Clark must have had as they began their journey. Lewis's intense curiosity about the world around him, his training as a naturalist, and his ability to record what he saw and experienced provide YAs with a fascinating picture of the American frontier in the 19th century. The subject's strengths and weaknesses as a leader are revealed as he and his loyal followers meet every kind of challenge in their search for a navigable water route from the Mississippi to the Pacific. Ambrose incorporates recent research and new material on the expedition into this history, and includes detailed maps and examples of Lewis's journal entries. An eminently readable resource.?Molly Connally, Kings Park Library, Fairfax County, VA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

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In this 21st century, people become competitive in most way. By being competitive currently, people have do something to make these people survives, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice by surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yep, by reading a reserve your ability to survive boost then having chance to stand up than other is high. To suit your needs who want to start reading some sort of book, we give you this Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, and the Opening of the American West book as beginning and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Allison Sala:

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