

# Sacajawea: Heroine in American History

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Grade level: 8<sup>th</sup>

Directions: Look at each document and answer related questions. When you have finished, you will write an essay based on knowledge gained from the documents and your prior knowledge.

## Document 1

### The Bird-Woman of the Lewis and Clark Expedition

Written by Katherine Chandler (1903c.), appeared as a supplementary reader for elementary school students.

The Bird-Woman was an Indian.  
She showed the white men the way into the West.  
There were no roads to the West then.  
That was one hundred years ago.  
This Indian woman took the white men across streams.  
She took them over hills.  
She took them through bushes.  
She seemed to find her way as a bird does.  
The white men said, "She goes like a bird."  
"We will call her the Bird-Woman."  
Her Indian name was Sacajawea.

1. What is the literal Indian translation for Sacajawea's name?
2. Why did that turn out to be a good name for her?

## Document 2

On May 14, a near disaster was averted. Charbonneau was at the helm of the white pirogue when a sudden squall struck and turned her. Charbonneau, in a panic, instead of putting her bow into the wind, turned her with it. The wind drew the brace of the sail out of the hands of the men attending it "and instantly upset the pirogue and would have turned her completely upside down, had it not have been from the resistance made by the oaring against the water."

Watching from the shore, the captains were in a state of near-panic themselves. Before Charbonneau and the crew could recover their wits sufficiently to bring in the sail, the pirogue was filled to within an inch of the gunnels. Fortunately, Cruzatte was able to force Charbonneau to do his duty by threatening to shoot him instantly if he did not. Charbonneau took up the tiller and the boat righted. All this time, Sacagawea was calm, collected and invaluable. As Lewis put it the following day, "*The Indian woman to whom I ascribe equal fortitude and resolution, with any person on board at the time of the accident, caught and preserved most of the light articles which were washed overboard.*"

Excerpt from *Undaunted Courage* by Stephen Ambrose. Italicized words are from Captain Lewis's journal.

Note: Charbonneau was Sacajawea's husband, an interpreter for Lewis and Clark. He was paid around \$500 for his services. Sacajawea was not paid.

3. From this passage what would you guess a pirogue is?
4. What qualities does Lewis accredit to Sacajawea?

### Document 3



The painting above shows Sacajawea guiding Lewis and Clark at Three Forks in what is now Montana. *National Archive Photo*

5. Describe the people you see in this image.
6. What does Sacajawea appear to be doing?

Document 4



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7. What new information about Sacajawea can we get from the image on the dollar coin?
8. Why might our government choose her to be on our currency?

Essay: Historians have been very generous in their recognition of Sacajawea. Write a five-paragraph essay describing the qualities she had deserving of her place as a notable woman in American history. Use details and information from the four documents as well as your prior knowledge to support your answer.