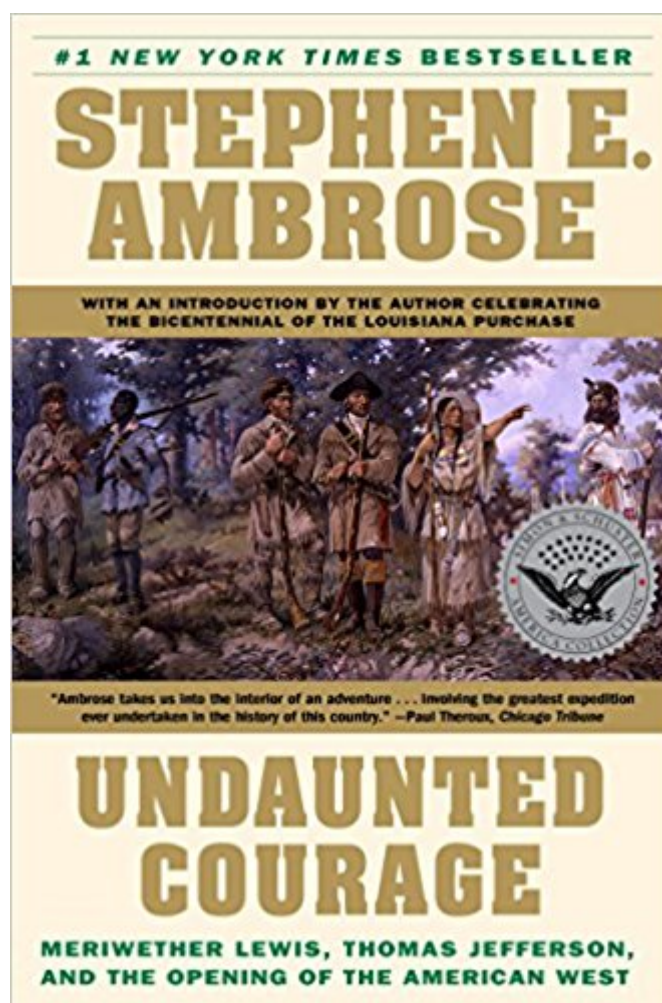


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# Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, And The Opening Of The American West



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

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. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

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. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

As someone who has recently been fascinated by the Expedition, I found this book to be an incredibly easy read. The pages flew by and flowed together very well. In my opinion, the book was somewhat slow in the beginning but that was probably more me than the book as I was more interested in the Expedition itself than the early life of Meriwether Lewis. This book puts into

perspective how difficult the trip was and how even with modern technology, this trip would've still been difficult. I learned a few things such as what a sextant is. It was interesting to read Lewis's descriptions of the Native Americans describing them as savages while also admiring them. I think a lot of history books gloss over the Expedition with only minor details. It was interesting to learn of his fight against the Blackfeet as well as the medical issues endured by the men via the weather and also medical conditions brought on by themselves through intercourse with Native American women. We also see a glimpse into the tight relationship between Lewis and Clark. Lewis was very much a scientist and reading about what wildlife he saw as the first American to do so was really cool. With some locations, Ambrose frequently tells us around where the present day location is and being a Google Maps lover, I would look it up. It was fascinating to see places where I could visit myself that Lewis and Clark had visited. In all, I can see myself coming back to this book to read again. I won't spoil the ending for those who haven't read it but it was also sad to read of the battle Lewis had with alcoholism and malaria(?)

purchased this for my Kindle, I love reading about history and events that shaped the modern world, and had read many great reviews of this book. I have loved most of the books related to WWII written by S. Ambrose, but for some reason I just couldn't get into this book. I found it slow going to begin with and after the first 140 pages it still didn't pick up my interest enough to even try to finish it. So I moved onto another book, maybe I will try it again later on.

Normally, I'm not one to read much nonfiction, but my sister recommended that I read this book, because it is among her favorite books. I called her tonight, after I finished reading chapter 39, genuinely distraught, because I didn't know Lewis's life ended in that way, plus I was in awe by how eloquently that chapter was written, describing what was possibly going through Lewis's mind before his death. Thanks so much to my sister for the recommendation, who recommends that I read Clay Jenkinson next and listen to his "Jefferson Hour" podcast.

Ambrose brings the magic of the Lewis & Clark expedition alive with this magnificent book. A great author can struggle with a pedestrian story and a great story be tarnished by an unskilled author. However, *Undaunted Courage* is the re-telling of a classic story from the heart of America by a great author who also loves and lives the material. There are so many mini-stories woven into the book that it helps to stimulate entertaining discussions of this historic accomplishment. The book also brought to me a far greater appreciation of Jefferson's great impact on art and science in the young

republic. While we think of the expedition in terms of its impact on our political history, it was equally important in gaining an understanding of the biological and geographical wonders of the uncharted wilderness. It is a wonderful gift to young people to help them understand the foundation of our westward growth. Reads with the excitement of a novel and the enlightenment of good history. It is hard not to repeat the many good things said about this book other than to mention that if I were to be allowed only 5 books to take for a year of isolation this would be one. It's easy, but rewarding reading. Highly recommended and a book that's filled a lot of Christmas stockings and birthday packages in our family.

This is an actual historical event that Ambrose brings to life in the form of an adventure story; it's not a dry history lesson. It starts a bit slow with the early lives of Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, but becomes an adventure in the wilderness. I think the most remarkable character is Sakajawea, their guide and interpreter. She went on the trail pregnant, gave birth in the field, then carried the baby on her back. Another remarkable aspect of the expedition is that for the entire treacherous journey, only one man was lost; this attests to the excellent leadership of Lewis and Clarke.

Very well researched and written book! I now have a real understanding & appreciation for what the L&C expedition was felt like for those that were a part of it. Reading behind the scene details about Lewis & Clark as people and explorers gives this book that human element. It gives insight into the politics of the expedition as well as details of river system exploration, the recording & illustrations Native Americans encountered, flora & fauna & wildlife. This book is a must read for any history buff or interested person wanting to know what life on the American frontier was really like.

Author Stephen Ambrose tells an amazing story about Meriwether Lewis and William Clark's expedition across North America. Can you imagine the COURAGE it took to make this journey. Imagine, it's early 1800, there are no roads and it's your job is to cross the American frontier to discover the land we bought via the Louisiana Purchase. *Undaunted Courage* is a fascinating book because 1) it is written well; 2) it tells a very interesting story about a historic event and; 3) at times you get to feel like you are the trip with Lewis & Clark. These men were truly amazing. All in all, this book is informative and a worthwhile read. I recommend it highly.

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