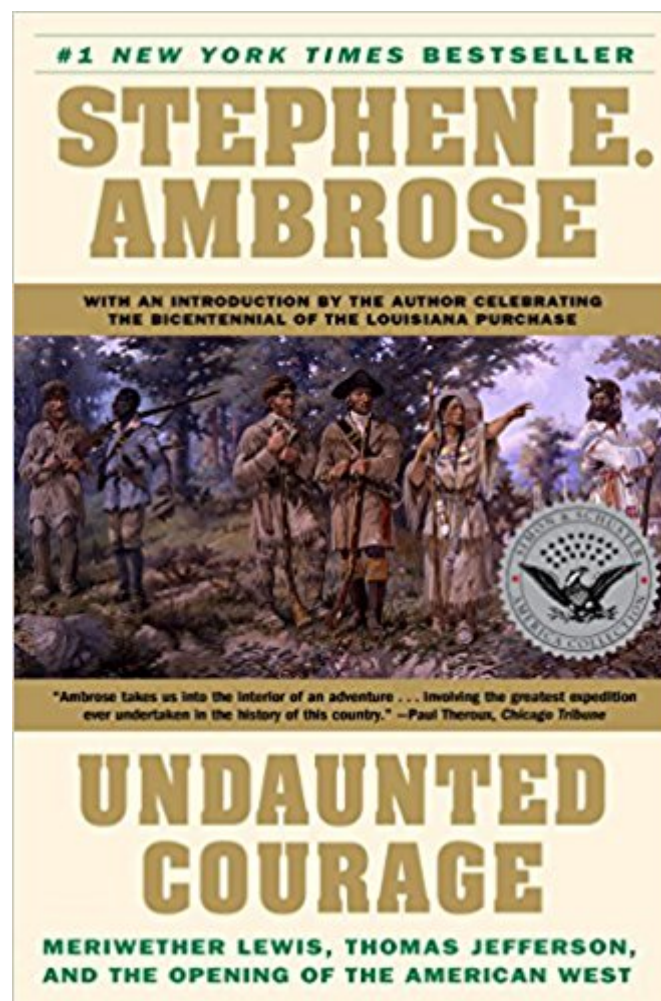




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Undaunted Courage: Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson, And The Opening Of The American West



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

This book is the most exciting piece of non fiction I've ever read. Ambrose makes the reader feel as though they are right there with the expedition as they battle disease, starvation, treacherous whitewater, hostile indians and the environment itself as they struggle to cross the unexplored interior of the United States. The Lewis & Clark expedition I learned about in school was seriously lacking in excitement when compared to this chronicle. The beginning of the book is somewhat tedious as Ambrose spends what seems like far too many pages listing off the various supplies obtained and preparations made for the voyage. Once the expedition begins, however, the book is hard to put down. The extensive use of the actual diaries of the expedition members lends a vibrance to the descriptions of the various tribes of Indians, wildlife, and natural obstacles encountered. The diaries also offer a glimpse into the personalities of these famous figures and their crew. The holes left by the diaries and other historical documents are deftly filled in by Ambrose. He further colors the characters, settings, and situations with well grounded inference. Additionally, the author's detailed treatment of the political situation in the United States at the time places this journey in great historic and political perspective. Highly recommended!

"Undaunted Courage" is a wonderful journey through the past. It is detail and detail, mixed with adventure and adventure, with a pinch of suspense added in to create the feeling that you are there. The book has led me to a keen interest in Thomas Jefferson and his many little known but great contributions to America, which in turn led me to another journey through the past involving Thomas Jefferson in the book "West Point" by Norman Remick. Like "Undaunted Courage", "West Point" is another monumental feat of research. I have to thank Mr. Ambrose for writing like the good and interesting teacher who stimulates the student and opens the doorways to further knowledge.

For a fascinating and informative journey through American lore and history, Stephen Ambrose's "Undaunted Courage" is a great choice. It's a story of daunting physical and mental courage, and, the beginning of how the West was won. I feel I would also like to add my name to those other reviewers who recommend also reading Norman Thomas Remick's "West Point: Character Leadership Education, A Book Developed From Thomas Jefferson's Readings And Writings" which is less about West Point and more the epic of America's historical and philosophical genesis.

"Undaunted Courage" is historian Stephen E. Ambrose's masterfully told and compelling account of The Lewis and Clark expedition, one of the most historically significant journeys of exploration in

American history. Relying extensively on the Journals of Lewis and Clark, Ambrose has put together a highly entertaining, meticulously researched, wonderfully readable, and fast paced narrative that interweaves a fascinating biography of Meriwether Lewis with a spellbinding account of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Ambrose captures completely with his fast-paced narrative the key events of the Lewis and Clark expedition. With a keen eye for detail, he describes the formation of the Corps of Discovery; its ascent to the headwaters of the Missouri River and its many encounters with native tribes along the way; the crossing of the "Great Portage," the Continental Divide, and the Rocky Mountains; and its encampment in November 1805 on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, at the mouth of the Columbia River. Also described is the expedition's return voyage, when the expedition once again searched in vain for a water route to the Pacific, and also when the expedition had its one and only hostile engagement with natives. Finally, Ambrose describes the aftermath of the expedition - how the Journals of Lewis and Clark came to be published, and the divergent (and, for Lewis, ultimately tragic) careers of these two great explorers. I found Ambrose's portraits of the key players in this real-life drama to be superb! Lewis is a born naturalist with a keen eye for scientific observation. He's also a gifted leader of men, ever conscious of his subordinates' welfare, and always gaining from them loyalty that is complete and willingly given. Clark, the "co-captain" (in reality the second in command), is a less gifted scientist, but equal to Lewis in leadership ability, and in many ways a more talented explorer and map maker. Jefferson, perhaps America's greatest genius of the Age of Enlightenment, is the man possessed with the vision to see that the voyage is undertaken. Sacagawea, the teenage Shoshone girl, kidnapped from her tribe, sold to Canadian traders, and the mother of a newborn son, is possessed with remarkable stoicism and diplomatic skills which become essential to the Corps of Discovery's survival. In addition, Ambrose proves himself to be a first-rate nature writer himself, with his breathtaking descriptions of the flora, fauna, and physical beauty of the American Great Plains, Rocky Mountains, and Pacific Northwest. "Undaunted Courage" is America's great adventure story, told by one of this nation's foremost contemporary historians and biographers. Highly recommended!

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