



0. BIRD WOMAN OR BOAT LAUNCHER? - Story Preface

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Edgar Samuel Paxson (1852-1919) created a mural in the lobby of Montana's House of Representatives. The mural is known as "Lewis & Clark at Three Forks." This image depicts detail of that mural (including Paxson's interpretation of Sacagawea (right) with Lewis and Clark at the Three Forks. Online via Wikimedia Commons.

Most of the details of Sacajawea's life are shrouded in mystery. Her name, for example: Is it correctly transcribed in English as "Sacagawea" or "Sacajawea?" Did she die in childbirth, at age 25, or did she live to be an old woman? There are different versions of the story.

The *Journals of Lewis and Clark* always spell her name with a "g" which means "Bird Woman." But the woman who lived to old age spelled her name with a "j." The English translation of that name is "Boat Launcher." (It is worth noting that while Lewis and Clark were great explorers, their journals are replete with misspelled words.)

What is not a mystery is the outcome of the expedition. It was one of the most brilliant ever recorded. And Sacajawea greatly contributed to that result in August of 1805.

The teenager had been away from her family and the Shoshone tribe for many years, since the Hidatsa kidnapped her as a child. As the Corps of Discovery continued west, leaving the Mandan village where Jean Baptiste had been born, they followed the Missouri River to Shoshone territory.

Sacajawea would interpret for Lewis and Clark when they reached her hometown.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BIRD-WOMAN-OR-BOAT-LAUNCHER-Sacajawea>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BIRD-WOMAN-OR-BOAT-LAUNCHER-Sacajawea>

BIRD WOMAN SACAGAWEA'S OWN STORY



as recorded by
James Willard Schultz

Bird Woman: Sacajawea's Own Story

Image online courtesy, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) website.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Bird-Woman-Sacajawea-s-Own-Story>