

Document A: Jefferson's Letter to Meriwether Lewis (Modified)

The passage below is from a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis on June 20, 1803.

Considering the interest which every nation has in extending and strengthening the authority of reason and justice among the people around them, it will be useful to acquire what knowledge you can of the state of morality, religion, and information among them; as it may better enable those who may **endeavor** to civilize and instruct them. . . .

In all your interactions with the natives, treat them in the most friendly and **conciliatory** manner. . . . Assure them that the purpose of your journey is innocent. Make them acquainted with . . . our wish to be neighborly, friendly, and useful to them, and to trade with them. Find out what articles would be most desirable for both of us to trade.

If a few of their influential chiefs . . . wish to visit us, arrange such a visit for them. . . . If any of them wish to have some of their young people raised by us and taught things that may be useful to them, we will receive, instruct and take care of them. Such a mission, whether of influential chiefs or of young people, would give some security to your own party.

Carry with you some smallpox medicine . . . and instruct and encourage them to use it. This may be done wherever you spend the winter.

Source: *Thomas Jefferson to Meriwether Lewis, June 20, 1803.*

Vocabulary

endeavor: to try hard to do something
conciliatory: trying to avoid conflict

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