

Writing Across the Curriculum

PSSA Performance Task – 5 Paragraph Essay Format

Overview: On October 11, 1809, Meriwether Lewis of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition was found dead at Grinder’s Stand along the infamous Natchez Trace. At first, many of Lewis’ peers, including Thomas Jefferson and William Clark, believed that Lewis committed suicide. Indeed, even till this very day, many historians argue that Lewis took his own life. However, there are many uncertainties surrounding the death of Lewis that have historians and even members of Lewis’ own family questioning the suicide theory in favor of the possibility that Lewis was murdered. For years, Lewis’ relatives have been calling for the exhumation of their ancestor in order to solve the mystery once and for all of how this honored American met his demise on that fateful day.

Instructions: You are to create a *five paragraph essay (minimum of 25 sentences)* persuading a reader, based on evidence (facts) from the primary and secondary sources you are to read, that Meriwether Lewis either committed suicide or was murdered at Grinder’s Stand in 1809. You are to follow all language arts guidelines for thesis statement creation and for typed final copy expectations. You will also find that a rubric is attached so that you have clear and concise guidelines for the content of each of the five paragraphs you are to create.

Purpose:

- Identify whether or not Meriwether Lewis committed suicide or was murdered
- Differentiate between primary and secondary sources
- Identify bias in primary and secondary sources
- Fact find
- Create a cohesive argument supported by facts
- Enhance reading comprehension and written communication
- Prepare for the PSSA writing exam
- Create a foundation for high school writing assignments

Writer’s Checklist:

PLAN before you write

- Read carefully
- Read ALL the sources
- How does the information relate to/help you answer the question

FOCUS while you write

- Make sure you use evidence from the passages to support your answer
- Use precise language (quotes, vocabulary from the passages), a variety of sentence types, and transitions in your essay
- Organize your paper with an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion

Name: _____

Grade Sheet for PSSA Social Studies Writing Prompt

Paragraph 1: Introduction

- ☐ Thesis is a three pronged thesis statement (1 pt)
- ☐ Thesis is the last sentence of the opening paragraph (1 pt)
- ☐ All information is 100% accurate (1 pt)
- ☐ Paragraph contains at least 5 sentences (1 pt)
- ☐ Zero spelling or punctuation mistakes (1 pt)

Paragraph 2: Body

- ☐ 1st piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 2nd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 3rd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ Zero spelling or punctuation mistakes (1 pt)
- ☐ Paragraph contains at least 5 sentences (1 pt)

Paragraph 3: Body

- ☐ 1st piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 2nd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 3rd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ Zero spelling or punctuation mistakes (1 pt)
- ☐ Paragraph contains at least 5 sentences (1 pt)

Paragraph 4: Body

- ☐ 1st piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 2nd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ 3rd piece of evidence to support the first prong of the thesis helps answer the question & is 100% accurate (2 pts)
- ☐ Zero spelling or punctuation mistakes (1 pt)
- ☐ Paragraph contains at least 5 sentences (1 pt)

Paragraph 5: Conclusion

- ☐ Re-statement of thesis-“in other words” (synonyms) (1 pt)
- ☐ All information is 100% accurate (1 pt)
- ☐ Paragraph contains at least 5 sentences (1 pt)
- ☐ Zero spelling or punctuation mistakes (1 pt)

Other:

- ☐ NO PERSONAL PRONOUNS (NO “I, you, we, us, our, etc.”) (1 pt)
- ☐ Double spaced (1 pt)
- ☐ Times New Roman Font-size 12 (1 pt)

Suicide

Murder

Meriwether Lewis' Mysterious Death

- By Abigail Tucker
- Smithsonian.com, October 09, 2009

Captain Meriwether Lewis—William Clark’s expedition partner on the Corps of Discovery’s historic trek to the Pacific, Thomas Jefferson’s confidante, governor of the Upper Louisiana Territory and all-around American hero—was only 35 when he died of gunshot wounds sustained along a perilous Tennessee trail called Natchez Trace. A broken column, symbol of a life cut short, marks his grave.

But exactly what transpired at a remote inn 200 years ago this Saturday? Most historians agree that he committed suicide; others are convinced he was murdered. Now Lewis’s descendants and some scholars are campaigning to exhume his body, which is buried on national parkland not far from Hohenwald, Tenn.

“This controversy has existed since his death,” says Tom McSwain, Lewis’s great-great-great-great nephew who helped start a Web site, “Solve the Mystery,” that lays out family members’ point of view. “When there’s so much uncertainty and doubt, we must have more evidence. History is about finding the truth,” he adds. The National Park Service is currently reviewing the exhumation request.

The intrigue surrounding the famous explorer’s untimely death has spawned a cottage industry of books and articles, with experts from a variety of fields, including forensics and mental health, weighing in. Scholars have reconstructed lunar cycles to prove that the innkeeper’s wife couldn’t have seen what she said she saw that moonless night. Black powder pistols have been test-fired, forgeries claimed and mitochondrial DNA extracted from living relatives. Yet even now, precious little is known about the events of October 10, 1809, after Lewis – armed with several pistols, a rifle and a tomahawk – stopped at a log cabin lodging house known as Grinder’s Stand.

He and Clark had finished their expedition three years earlier; Lewis, who was by then a governor of the large swath of land that constituted the Upper Louisiana Territory, was on his way to Washington, D.C. to settle financial matters. By some accounts, Lewis arrived at the inn with servants; by others, he arrived alone. That night, Mrs. Grinder, the innkeeper’s wife, heard several shots. She later said she saw a wounded Lewis crawling around, begging for water, but was too afraid to help him. He died, apparently of bullet wounds to the head and abdomen, shortly before sunrise the next day. One of his traveling companions, who arrived later, buried him nearby.

His friends assumed it was suicide. Before he left St. Louis, Lewis had given several associates the power to distribute his possessions in the event of his death; while traveling, he composed a will. Lewis had reportedly attempted to take his own life several times a few weeks earlier and was known to suffer from what Jefferson called “sensible depressions of mind.” Clark had also observed his companion’s melancholy states. “I fear the weight of his mind has overcome him,” he wrote after receiving word of Lewis’s fate.

At the time of his death Lewis’s depressive tendencies were compounded by other problems: he was having financial troubles and likely suffered from alcoholism and other illnesses, possibly syphilis or malaria, the latter of which was known to cause bouts of dementia.

Surprisingly, he may also have felt like something of a failure. Though the Corps of Discovery had traversed thousands of miles of wilderness with few casualties, Lewis and Clark did not find the Northwest Passage to the Pacific, the mission’s primary goal; the system of trading posts that they’d established began to fall apart before the explorers returned home. And now Lewis, the consummate adventurer, suddenly found himself stuck in a desk job.

“At the end of his life he was a horrible drunk, terribly depressed, who could never even finish his [expedition] journals,” says Paul Douglas Newman, a professor of history who teaches “Lewis and Clark and The Early American Republic” at the University of Pittsburgh. An American icon, Lewis was also a human being, and the expedition “was the pinnacle of Lewis’s life,” Newman says. “He came back and he just could not readjust. On the mission it was ‘how do we stay alive and collect information?’ Then suddenly you’re heroes. There’s a certain amount of stress to reentering the world. It was like coming back from the moon.”

Interestingly, John Guice, one of the most prominent critics of the suicide theory, uses a very different astronaut comparison. Lewis was indeed “like a man coming back from the moon,” Guice notes. But rather than feeling alienated, he would have been busy enjoying a level of Buzz Aldrin-like celebrity. “He had so much to live for,” says Guice, professor emeritus of history at The University of Southern Mississippi and the editor of *By His Own Hand? The Mysterious Death of Meriwether Lewis*. “This was the apex of a hero’s career. He was the governor of a huge territory. There were songs and poems written about him. This wasn’t just anybody who kicked the bucket.” Besides, how could an expert marksman botch his own suicide and be forced to shoot himself twice?

Guice believes that bandits roaming the notoriously dangerous Natchez Trace killed Lewis. Other murder theories range from the scandalous (the innkeeper discovered Lewis in flagrante with Mrs. Grinder) to the conspiratorial (a corrupt Army general named James Wilkinson hatched an assassination plot.)

Though Lewis’s mother is said to have believed he was murdered, that idea didn’t have much traction until the 1840s, when a commission of Tennesseans set out to honor Lewis by erecting a marker over his grave. While examining the remains, committee members wrote that “it was more probable that he died at the hands of an assassin.” Unfortunately, they failed to say why.

But the science of autopsies has come a long way since then, says James Starrs, a George Washington University Law School professor and forensics expert who is pressing for an exhumation. For one thing, with mitochondrial DNA samples he’s already taken from several of Lewis’ female descendants, scientists can confirm that the body really is Lewis’s (corpses were not uncommon on the Natchez Trace). If the skeleton is his, and intact, they can analyze gunpowder residue to see if he was shot at close range and examine fracture patterns in the skull. They could also potentially learn about his nutritional health, what drugs he was using and if he was suffering from syphilis. Historians would hold such details dear, Starrs says: “Nobody even knows how tall Meriwether Lewis was. We could do the DNA to find out the color of his hair.

Some scholars aren’t so sure that an exhumation will clarify matters.

“Maybe there is an answer beneath the monument to help us understand,” says James Holmberg, curator of Special Collections at the Filson Historical Society in Louisville, Ky., who has published work on Lewis’s life and death. “But I don’t know if it would change anybody’s mind one way or the other.”

The details of the case are so sketchy that “it’s like trying to grab a shadow,” Holmberg says. “You try to reach out but you can never get a hold of it.” Even minor features of the story fluctuate. In some versions, Seaman, Lewis’s loyal Newfoundland who guarded his master against bears on the long journey West, remained by his grave, refusing to eat or drink. In other accounts, the dog was never there at all.

However Lewis died, his death had a considerable effect on the young country. A year and a half after the shooting, ornithologist Alexander Wilson, a friend of Lewis’s, interviewed Mrs. Grinder, becoming one of the first among many people who have investigated the case. He gave the Grinders money to maintain Lewis’s grave and visited the site himself. There, reflecting on the adventure-loving young man who had mapped “the gloomy and savage wilderness which I was just entering alone,” Wilson broke down and wept.

Letter from James Neelly to Thomas Jefferson—October 18, 1809

Nashville, 18 October, 1809

Sir:

It is with extreme pain that I have to inform you of the death of His Excellency Meriwether Lewis, Governor of upper Louisiana who died on the morning of the 11th Instant and I am sorry to say by Suicide.

I arrived at the Chickasaw Bluffs [Fort Pickering on the Mississippi River] on or about the 18th of September, where I found the governor (who had reached there two days before me from St. Louis) in very bad health. It appears that his first intention was to go around by water to the City of Washington; but his thinking a war with England probable, & that his valuable papers might be in dainger of falling into the hands of the British, he was thereby induced to Change his route, and to come through the Chickasaw nation by land; I furnished him with a horse to pack his trunks &c. on, and a man to attend to them; have recovered his health in some digree at the Chickasaw Bluffs, we set out together. And on our arrival at the Chickasaw nation I discovered that he appeared at times deranged in mind. We rested there two days & came on. One days Journey after crossing Tennessee River & where we encamped we lost two of our horses. I remained behind to hunt them & the governor proceeded on, with a promise to wait for me at the first houses he came to that was inhabited by white people; he reached the house of a Mr. Grinder about sun set, the man of the house being from home, and no person there but a woman who discovering the governor to be deranged, gave him up the house & slept herself in one near it. His servant [John Pernier] and mine slept in the stable loft some instance from the other houses. The woman reports that about three o'Clock she heard two pistols fire off in the Governors Room: the servants being awakined by her, came in but too late to save him. He had shot himself in the head with one pistol & a little below the Breast with the other-when his servant came in he says; I have done the business my good Servant give me some water. He gave him water, he survived but a short time. I came up sometime after, and had him as decently Buried as I could in that place-if there is any thing wished by his friends to be done to his grave I will attend to their Instructions.

I have got in my possession his two trunks of papers (amongst which is said to be his travels to The pacific Ocean) and probably some Vouchers for expenditures of Public Money for a Bill which he said had been protested by the Secy. Of War; and of which act to his death, he repeatedly complained. I have also in my Care his Rifle, Silver watch, Brace of Pistols, dirk & tomahawk; one of the Governors horses was lost in the wilderness which I will endeavour to regain, the other I have sent on by his servant who expressed a desire to go to the governors Mothers & to Monticello [President Jefferson's home]: I have furnished him with fifteen Dollars to Defray his expences to Charlottsville; Some days previous to the Governors death he requested of me in case any accident happen to him, to send his trunks with the papers therein to the President, but I think very probable he meant to you. [Editor: Madison was now president.] I wish to be informed what arrangements may be considered best in sending on his trunks &c. I have the honor to be with Great respect Yr. Ob. Sert.

James Neelly

U. S. agent to the Chickasaw Nation

The Governor left two of his trunks at the Chickasaw Bluffs in the care of Captain. Gilbert C. Russell, Commanding officer, & was to write to him from Nashville what to do with them.

Letter from Alexander Wilson to Alexander Lawson—May 28, 1811

May 28, 1811

(Note: The author of the following letter was a prominent ornithologist and friend of Governor Lewis who had agreed to do the bird illustrations for the journals. Two years after Lewis' death, Wilson had the opportunity to interview Mrs. Grinder, proprietor of the inn where Governor Lewis died. Wilson recounted their conversation in this letter to Alexander Lawson, a well-known engraver and a mutual friend of Lewis.)

...Next morning (Sunday) I rode six miles to a man's of the name of Grinder, where our poor friend Lewis perished. In the same room where he expired, I took down from Mrs. Grinder the particulars of that melancholy event, which affected me extremely. This house or cabin is seventy-two miles from Nashville, and is the last white man's as you enter the Indian country. Governor Lewis, she said, came there about sun-set, alone, and inquired if he could stay for the night; and, alighting, brought his saddle into the house. He was dressed in a loose gown, white, striped with blue. On being asked if he came alone, he replied that there were two servants behind, who would soon be up. He called for some spirits, and drank a very little. When the servants arrived, one of whom was a negro, he inquired for his powder, saying he was sure he had some powder in a canister. The servant gave no distinct reply, and Lewis, in the mean while walked backwards and forwards before the door, talking to himself. Sometimes, she said, he would seem as if he were walking up to her; and would suddenly wheel round, and walk back as fast as he could. Supper being ready he sat down, but had not eat but a few mouthfuls when he started up speaking to himself in a violent manner. At these times, she says, she observed his face to flush as if it had come on him in a fit. He lighted his pipe, and drawing a chair to the door sat down, saying to Mrs. Grinder in a kind tone of voice, "Madam this is a very pleasant evening." He smoked for some time, but quitted his seat and traversed the yard as before. He again sat down to his pipe, seemed again composed and casting his eyes wishfully towards the west, observed what a sweet evening it was. Mrs. Grinder was preparing a bed for him; but he said he would sleep on the floor, and desired the servant to bring the bear skins and buffaloe robe, which were immediately spread out for him; and it being now dusk the woman went off to the kitchen, and the two men to the barn, which stands about two hundred yards off. The kitchen is only a few paces from the room where Lewis was, and the woman being considerably alarmed by the behaviour of her guest could not sleep but listened to him walking backwards and forwards, she thinks for several hours, and talking aloud, as she said, "like a lawyer," She then heard the report of a pistol, and something fall heavily on the floor, and the words "O Lord!" Immediately afterwards she heard another pistol, and in a few minutes she hear him at her door calling out "O madam! Give me some water, and heal my wounds. " The logs being open, and unplastered, she saw him stagger back and fall against a stump that stands between the kitchen and room. He crawled for some distance, raised himself by the side of a tree, where he sat about a minute. He once more got to the room; afterwards he came to the kitchen door, but did not speak; she then heard him scraping the bucket with a gourd for water, but it appears that this cooling element was denied the dying man! As soon as day broke and not before, the terror of the woman having permitted him to remain for two hours in this most deplorable situation, she sent two of her children to the barn, her husband not being at home, to bring the servants; and on going in they found him lying on the bed; he uncovered his side and shewed them where the bullet had entered; a piece of the forehead was blown off, and had exposed the brains, without having bled much. He begged they would take his rifle and blowout his brains, and he would give them all the money he had in his trunk. He often said, "I am no coward, but I am so strong, so hard to die " He begg'd the servant [John pernier] not to be afraid of him, for that he would not hurt him. He expired in about two hours, or just as the sun rose above the trees. He lies buried close by the common path, with a few loose rails thrown over his grave. I gave Grinder money to put a post fence round it, to shelter it from the hogs, and from the wolves; and he gave me his written promise he would do it. I left this place in a very melancholy mood, which was not much allayed by the prospect of the gloomy and savage wilderness which I was just entering alone. . .

Gilbert Russell to Thomas Jefferson—January 4, 1810

Fort Pickering, Chickesaw Bluffs,
January 4th 1810

Sir,

Conceiving it a duty incumbant upon me to give the friends of the late Meriwether Lewis such information relative to his arrival here, his stay and departure, and also of his pecuniary matters as came within my knowledge which they otherwise might not obtain, and presuming that as you were once his patron, you still remain'd his friend, I beg leave to communicate it to you and thro' you to his mother and such other of his friends as may be interested. He came here on the 15th September last from whence he set off intending to go to Washington by way of New Orleans. His situation that rendered it necessary that he should be stoped until he would recover, which I done & in a short time by proper attention a change was perceptible and in about six days he was perfectly restored in every respect & able to travel. Being placed then myself in a similar situation with him by having Bills protested to a considerable amount I had made application to the General & expected leave of absence every day to go to Washington on the same business with Governor Lewis. In consequence of which he waited six or eight days expecting I would go on with him, but in this we were disappointed & he set off with a Major Neely who was going to Nashville.

At the request of Governor Lewis I enclosed the land warrant granted to him in consideration of his services to the Pacific Ocean to Bowling Robinson Esq Sec'y of the T'y [Treasury] of Orleans with instructions to dispose of it at any price above two dollars per acre & to lodge the money in the Bank of the United States or any of the branch banks subject to his order. He left me with two Trunks a case and a bundle which will now remain here subject at any time subject to your order or that of his legal representatives. Enclosed is his memo respecting them but before the Boat in which he directed they might be sent got to this place I rec'd a verbal message from him after he left here to keep them until I should hear from him again. He set off with two Trunks which contain'd all his papers relative to his expedition to the Pacific Ocean, Gen'l Clark's Land Warrant, a Port-Folio, pocket Book, and Note Book together with many other papers of both a public & private nature, two horses, two saddles & bridles, a Rifle, gun, pistols, pipe, tomahawk & dirks, all elegant & perhaps about two hundred & twenty dollars, of which \$99.58 was a Treasury Check on the U. S. branch Bank of Orleans endorsed by me. The horses, one saddle, and the check I let him have. Where or what has become of his effects I do not know but presume they must be in the care of Major Neely near Nashville.

As an individual I verry much regret the untimely death of Governor Lewis whose loss will be great to his country & surely felt by his friends. When he left I felt much satisfaction for indeed I tho't I had also been the means of preserving the life of this valuable man, and as it has turned out I shall have the consolation that I discharged those obligations towards him that man is bound to do to his fellows.

It is probable that I shall go to the City of Washington in a few weeks also. I shall give you a call and give any further information you may require that has come within my knowledge. Having had the pleasure of knowing Mr. Wm. Randolph, I pray you to tender my respects to him.

I remain Sir with the utmost veneration and respect your Ob't Servant.

Gilbert C. Russell

Thomas Jefferson

Gilbert C. Russell to Thomas Jefferson, 31 January 1810

Fort-Pickering Chickasaw Bluffs 31st January 1810.

Sir

I have lately been inform'd that James Neely the Ag^t to the Chickasaws with whom Gov^r Lewis set off from this place has detain'd his pistols & perhaps some other of his effects for some claim he pretends to have upon his estate—He can have no just claim for any thing more than the expences of his interment unless he makes a charge for packing his Two Trunks from the Nation—And for that he can not have the audacity to make a charge after tendering the use of a loose horse or two which he said he had to take from the Nation & also the aid of his Servant—He seem'd happy to have it in his power to serve the Gov^r & but for his makeing the offer which was accepted I should have employ'd the man who packed the Trunks to the Nation to have taken them to Nashville & accompanied the Gov^r—Unfortunately for him this arrangement did not take place, or I hesitate not to say he would this day be living— The fact is which you may yet be ignorant of that his untimely death may be attributed Solely to the free use he made of liquor, which he acknowledged verry candidly to me after he recovered & expressed a firm determination never to drink any more Spirits or use Snuff again both of which I deprived him of for Several days & confined him to Claret & a little white wine—But after leaving this place by some means or other his resolution left him & this Ag^t being extremely fond of liquor, instead of preventing the Gov^r from drinking or puting him under any restraint, advised him to it, & from every thing I can learn gave the man every chance to seek an opportunity to destroy himself—And from the Statement of Grinders wife where he Killed himself I can not help beleiving that Purney was rather Aiding & abeting in the murder than otherwise

This Neely also says he lent the Gov^r money which cannot be so for he had none himself & the Gov^r had more than One hund^d \$ in Notes & Specia besides a Check I let him have of $99\frac{58}{100}$ none of which it is said could be found—I have wrote to the Cashier of the branch bank of Orleans on whom the Check was drawn in favour of myself or order to stop pay^t when presented. I have this day authorised a Gentleman to pay the pretended Claim of [. . .] Neely & take the Pistols which will be held Sacrad to the Order of any of the friends of M. Lewis free from encumbrance—

I am Sir with great respect Your Obd^t Serv^t

Gilbert. C. Russell

Gilbert Russell's Statement for the Record—November 26, 1811

Governor Lewis left St. Louis late in August, or early in September 1809, intending to go by the route of the Mississippi and the Ocean, to the City of Washington, taking with him all the papers relative to his expedition to the pacific Ocean, for the purpose of preparing and putting them to the press, and to have some drafts paid which had been drawn by him on the Government and protested. On the morning of the 15th of September, the Boat in which he was a passenger landed him at Fort pickering in a state of mental derangement, which appeared to have been produced as much by indisposition as other causes. The Subscriber being then the Commanding Officer of the Fort on discovering from the crew that he had made two attempts to Kill himself, in one of which he had nearly succeeded, resolved at once to take possession of him and his papers, and detain them there untill he recovered, or some friend might arrive in whose hands he could depart in Safety. In this condition he continued without any material change for five days, during which time the most proper and efficacious means that could be devised to restore him was administered, and on the sixth or seventh day all symptoms of derangement disappeared and he was completely in his senses and thus continued for ten or twelve days. On the 29th of the same month he left Bluffs, with the Chickasaw agent the interpreter and some of the Chiefs, intending to proceed the usual route thro' the Indian Country, Tennessee and Virginia to his place of destination, with his papers well secured and packed on horses. By much severe depletion during his illness he had been considerably reduced and debilitated, from which he had not entirely recovered when he set off, and the weather in that country being yet excessively hot and the exercise of traveling too severe for him; in three or four days he was again affected with the same mental disease. He had no person with him who could manage or controul him in his propensities and he daily grew worse untill he arrived at the house of a Mr. Grinder within the Jurisdiction of Tennessee and only Seventy miles from Nashville, where in the apprehension of being destroyed by enemies which had no existence but in his wild imagination, he destroyed himself, in the most cool desperate and Barbarian-like manner, having been left in the house intirely to himself. The night preceeding this one of his Horses and one of the Chickasaw agents with whom he was traveling Strayed off from the Camp and in the Morning could not be found. The agent with some of the Indians stayed to search for the horses, and Governor Lewis with their two servants and the baggage horses proceeded to Mr. Grinders where he was to halt untill the agent got up.

After he arrived there and refreshed himself with a little Meal & drink he went to bed in a cabin by himself and ordered the servants to go to the stables and take care of the Horses, least they might loose some that night; Some time in the night he got his pistols which he loaded, after every body had retired in a Separate Building and discharged one against his forehead not making much effect—the ball not penetrating the skull but only making a furrow over it. He then discharged the other against his breast where the ball entered and passing downward thro' his body came out low down near his back bone. After some time he got up and went to the house where Mrs. Grinder and her children were lying and asked for water, but her husband being absent and having heard the report of the pistols she was greatly alarmed and made him no answer. He then in returning got his razors from a port folio which happened to contain them and Seting up in his bed was found about day light, by one of the Servants, busily engaged in cutting himself from head to foot. He again begged for water, his should be clouded by such an act of desperation was to his friends still greater cause of regret.

(Signed) Gilbert Russell

The above was received by me from Major Gilbert Russell of the [blank] Regiment of Infantry U. S. on Tuesday the 26th of November 1811 at Fredericktown in Maryland.

J. Williams

William Clark to Jonathan Clark—October 28, 1809

Mr. Shanonsl Octr. 28th 1809

Dear Brother

I proceded on verry well to Mr. Smiths and arrived there about an hour after dusk, and this day have Come on verry well to this place The man boy is not well, tho' not wors than he was when you parted with us_ when at Shelbyville to day I Saw in a Frankfort paper called the Arguss a report published which givs me much Concern, it Says that Govr. Lewis killed himself by Cutting his Throat with a Knife, on his way between the Chickaw Saw Bluffs⁷ and nashville, I fear this report has too much truth, tho' hope it may have no foundation— my reasons for thinking it possible is founded on the letter which I recved from him at your house, in that letter he Says he had Some intintion of going thro' by land & his only objection was his papers The Boats I Sent down with the pelteres [peltries], under the derections of Mr. James McFarlane must have over taken the Govr. between new madridll and the Chickasaw Bluffs, and if he was Still dis posed to go through, I is it not probable that he might have intrusted his papers to McFarlane who is a pertcular friend of his and on his way to the City of Washington? and Set out from the Bluffs with a view to pass thro' the most drect rout, which is by nashville _ I fear O! I fear the waight of his mind has over come him, what will be the Consequence? what will become of his paprs? I must write to Genl. Robinson or Some friend about nashville to enquire about him, and Collect and Send me his papers, if he had any with him _ I am quit[e] distressed about this report.

...

I am Sorry to tell you that I am not only forgetfull but neglectful & inattentive, I hope you will excuse me, and parden this hasty Scraul which is written in a room Crouded with different descriptions of people. Some drunk _

Julia joins me in Love to you Sister nancy and belev yrs to affly. [be]

yr Frend & Bra

WmClark

Thomas Jefferson to Paul Allen—August 18, 1811

...
It was the middle of Feb. 1807. before Capt. Lewis with his companion Clarke reached the city of Washington where Congress was then in session. That body granted to the two chiefs and their followers, the donation of lands which they had been <promised> encouraged to expect in reward of their toils & dangers. Capt. Lewis was soon after appointed Governor of Louisiana, and Capt. Clarke a General of it's militia and agent of the U.S. for Indian affairs in that department.

A considerable time intervened before the Governor's arrival at St. Louis. He found the territory distracted by feuds & contentions among the officers of the government, & the people themselves divided by these into factions & parties. He determined :at once, to take no side with either; but to use every endeavor to conciliate & harmonize them. The even-handed justice he administered to all soon established a respect for his person & authority, and perseverance & time wore down animosities and reunited the citizens again into one family. Governor Lewis had from early life been subject to hypocondriac affections. It was a constitutional disposition in all the nearer branches of the family of his name, & was more immediately inherited by him from his father. They had not however been so strong as to give uneasiness to his family. While he lived with me in Washington, I observed at times sensible depressions of mind, but knowing their constitutional source, I estimated their course by what I had seen in the family. During his Western expedition the constant exertion which that required of all the faculties of body & mind, suspended these distressing affections; but after his establishment at St. Louis in sedentary occupations they returned upon him with redoubled vigor, and began seriously to alarm his friends. He was in a paroxysm of one of these when his affairs rendered it necessary for him to go to Washington. He proceeded to the Chickasaw bluffs where he arrived on the 16th of Sep. 1809. with a view of continuing his journey thence by water. Mr. Neely, agent of the U.S. with the Chickasaw Indians arriving there two days after, found him extremely indisposed, and betraying at times some symptoms of a derangement of mind. The rumors of a war with England, *Be* apprehensions that he might lose the papers he was bringing on, among which were the vouchers of his public accounts, and the journals & papers of his Western expedition, induced him here to change his mind and to take his course by land thro' the Chickasaw country. Altho' he appeared somewhat relieved, Mr. Neely kindly determined to accompany & watch over him. Unfortunately, at their encampment after having passed the Tennessee one day's journey, they lost two horses, which obliging Mr. Neely to halt for their recovery, the Governor proceeded under a promise to wait for him at the house of the first white inhabitant on his road. He stopped at the house of a Mr. Grinder, who not being at home, his wife alarmed at the symptoms of derangement she discovered, gave him up the house, and retired to rest herself in an outhouse; the Governor's *Be* Neely's servants lodging in another. About 3. oclock in the night he did the deed which plunged his friends into affliction and deprived his country of one of her' most valued citizens whose valour *Be* intelligence would have been now imployed in avenging the wrongs of his country and in emulating by land the splendid deeds which have honored her arms on the ocean. It lost too to the nation the benefit of recieving from his own hand the Narrative now offered them of his sufferings & successes in endeavoring to extend for them the boundaries of science, and to present to their knolege that vast *Be* fertile country which their sons are destined to fill with arts, with science, with freedom & happiness.

To this melancholy close of the life of one whom posterity will declare not to have lived in vain I have only to add that all facts I have stated are either known to myself, or communicated by his family or others for whose truth I have no hesitation to make [myself] responsible: and I conclude with tendering you the assurances of my respect & consideration.

Priscilla Grinder's 1839 Account—Recorded in the *New York Dispatch*— February 1, 1845

We find in the *North Arkansas*, a paper published at Batesville, Ark., a communication stating some singular and not generally known facts concerning the mysterious death of Capt. George M. Lewis, one of the two persons employed by the U. S. Government to conduct the celebrated Expedition of Lewis and Clark, in exploring the region West of the Rocky Mountains. The writer is at present a teacher in the Cherokee Nation, and says that he is personally acquainted with the circumstances which he relates. The expedition, consisting of seventy or eighty person, und the guidance of Lewis and Clark, was commenced in 1803 or 1804 and completed in about three years. The writer says the remains of Captain Lewis are "deposited in the southwest corner of Maury county, Tennessee, near Grinder's old stand, on the Natchez trace where Lawrence, Maury, and Hickman counties corner together." He visited the grave in 1838, found it almost concealed by brambles, without a stone or monument of any kind, and several miles from any house. An old tavern stand, known as Grinder's, once stood near by, but was long since burned. The writer gave the following narrative of the incidents attending the death of Cap[t. Lewis, as he received them from Mrs. Grinder, the landlady of the house where he died in so savage a manner.

She said that Mr. Lewis was on his way to the city of Washington, accompanied by a Mr. Pyrna [sic] and a servant belonging to a Mr. Neely. One evening a little before sundown, Mr. Lewis called at her house and asked for lodgings. Mr. Grinder not being at home, she hesitated to take him in. Mr. Lewis informed her that two other men would be along presently, who also wished to spend the night at her house, and as they were all civil men, he did not think there would be an impropriety in her hiving them accommodations for the night. Mr. Lewis dismounted, fastened his horse, took a seat by the side of the house, and appeared quite sociable.

In a few minutes Mr. Pyrna [sic] and the servant rode up, and seeing Mr. Lewis they also dismounted and put up their horses. About dark two or three other men rode up and called for lodging. Mr. Lewis immediately drew a brace of pistols, stepped towards them and challenged them to fight a duel. They not liking this salutation, rode on to the next house, five miles. This alarmed Mrs. Grinder. Supper, however, was ready in a few minutes. Mr. Lewis ate but little. He would stop eating, and sit as if in a deep study, and several times exclaimed, „If they do prove anything on me they will have to do it by letter.“ Supper being over, and Mrs. Grinder seeing that Lewis was mentally deranged, requested Mr. Pyrna [sic] to get his pistols from him. Mr. P. replied, „He has no ammunition, and if he does any mischief it will be to himself, and not to you or anybody else.“ In a short time all retired to bed, the travelers in one room, as Mrs. G. thought, and she and her children in another.

Two or three hours before day Mrs. G. was alarmed by the report of a pistol, and quickly after two other reports, in the room where the travelers were. At the report of the third, she heard someone fall and exclaim, „O Lord! Congress, relieve me.“ In a few minutes she heard some person at the door of the room where she lay. She inquired, „Who is there?“ Mr. Lewis spoke and said, „Dear madam, be so good as to give me a little water.“ Being afraid to open the door she did not give him any. Presently she heard him fall, and soon after, looking through a crack in the wall, she saw him scrambling across the road on his hands and knees.

After daylight Mr. Pyrna [sic] and the servant made their appearance, and it appeared they had not slept in the house, but in the stable. Mr. P. had on the clothes Mr. L. wore when they came to Mrs. Grinder's the evening before, and Mr. L's gold watch in his pocket. Mrs. G. asked him what he was doing with Mr. L's clothes on; Mr. P. replied, „He gave them to me.“ Mr. P and the servant then searched for Mr. L., found him and brought him to the house, and though he had on a full suit of clothes, they were old and tattered, and not the same as he had on the evening before, and though Mr. P. had said that Lewis had no ammunition, Mrs. G. found several balls and a considerable quantity of powder scattered over the floor of the room occupied by Lewis; also a canister with several pounds in it.

When Mr. L. was brought to the house, [illegible] his shirt bosom and said to Mrs. G.: „Dear madam, look at my wounds.“ She asked him what made him do so? He replied, „If I had not done it somebody else would.“ He frequently asked for water, which was given to him. He was asked if he would have a doctor sent for, he said not. A messenger, however, went for one but did not get him. He attempted to cut his throat, but was prevented. Some of the neighbors were called in. He frequently cried out, „Oh how hard it is to die, I am so strong.“ He, however, soon expired. Major Neely was sent for, and he and Mr. P. buried him and took possession of his effects. Mrs. G. heard that Pyrna [sic] went to see Mr. Lewis' mother, and that she accused him of murdering her son; and he finally cut his own throat, and thus put an end to his existence

I make no comment on the above; it is all wrapt [sic] up in mystery. I have heard that Capt. Clarke, the worthy colleague of their tour, was highly honored and handsomely rewarded by the government, while Lewis was neglected, and that this had an effect to produce alienation of mind. If this be true, are there not some living who are acquainted with the fact?