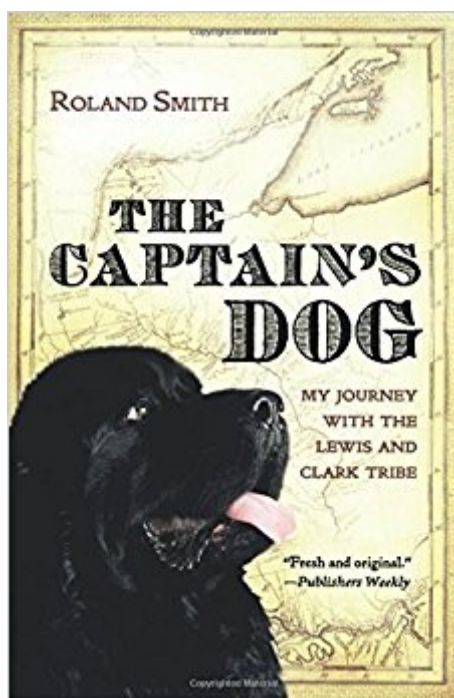


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# The Captain's Dog: My Journey With The Lewis And Clark Tribe



## Synopsis

Born the runt of his litter and gambled away to a rusty old river man, the Newfoundland pup Seaman doesn't imagine his life will be marked by any kind of glory. But when he meets Captain Meriwether Lewis, Seaman finds himself on a path that will make history. Lewis is setting off on his landmark search for the Northwest Passage, and he takes Seaman along. Sharing the curiosity and spirit of his new master, the intrepid dog proves himself a valuable companion at every turn. Part history, part science; and all adventure; this is the thrilling tale of America's greatest journey of discovery. Includes an author's note and a reader's guide.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 10 - 12 years

Grade Level: 5 - 7

## Customer Reviews

In addition to *Girl of the Shining Mountains* (reviewed above), which gives Sacagawea's perspective on Lewis and Clark's exploration, Smith's (*Thunder Cave*; Jaguar) historical novel imagines the duo's epic 1804-1806 journey through the eyes of Captain Lewis's Newfoundland dog, Seaman. The novel opens in 1808, when two former members of the expedition discover Seaman living with Nez Perce Indians; one of them presents the pair with Lewis's red-leather journal, rescued by Seaman. This opening framework may be mechanical, but the novel eventually hits its stride: as the traders read aloud the entries (actual text from Lewis's journals), they trigger Seaman's flashbacks.

The canine's perspective, both fresh and original, is most effective in objectively relating a diverse array of customs and tribes. The narration strikes a note of humor, too, especially when Seaman offers insight into a dog's life: "Dogs know humans better than they will ever know us." Seaman's voice, however, does not adhere to a canine purview as cannily as Henrietta Branford's recent *Fire, Bed and Bone*, and the narrative occasionally lapses into admonishment (e.g., when Lewis berates himself for his failed iron boat scheme, Seaman mentally recounts the man's resume of accomplishments). An author's note offers little historical perspective on the expedition, but readers may well leave with a thirst for more of Lewis and Clark's adventures. Ages 10-up. (Oct.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Grade 5-8-This is the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition as witnessed by Seaman, the massive Newfoundland dog that accompanied the two captains. Faithful to their original diaries, the novel brings to life the day-to-day challenges faced by the team charged with the task of exploring the American West and searching for the legendary Northwest Passage. Action and adventure abound: frequent attacks by grizzly bears and voracious mosquitoes, arduous crossings of nearly impassable landscapes, mutiny and desertion, and close encounters with both friendly and hostile Indians. However, while Seaman's narration is inventive, Smith has difficulty sustaining it, mainly because the dog is such a minor player in the momentous events that he describes. His point of view often seems too omniscient and introspective, resulting in a narrative that sounds uncomfortably human. Only when he recalls a purely canine memory such as marking trees does he snap readers back to the realization that this storyteller is indeed four-legged. Still, this occasional awkwardness does not diminish the scope and power of this entertaining introduction to an episode of American history rarely celebrated in fiction. For another novel about Seaman and his role in the expedition, look to Gail Langer Karwoski's *Seaman* (Peachtree, 1999), a lively account in which this brave animal is a much more central character. William McLoughlin, Brookside School, Worthington, OH Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I read this book with my 4th grade class while we were studying Lewis and Clark. I loved it and so did they. It did a wonderful job of engaging their interest in the subject. It is basically Lewis and Clark's expedition from the point of view of Seaman, Captain Lewis's dog. It starts out after the expedition is over. Seaman is living with a tribe after other believed him to be dead. He is found by

two Corps of Discovery members. The tribe had Captain Lewis's journal and ask the two men to read and translate it from them. While the dog, Seaman listens Toth journal being read, he reminisces through flashbacks. Each chapter begins with an excerpt from Lewis's journal. It is a very good read, especially for engaging interest in Lewis and Clark's expedition.

This is a fairly weak book. On the plus side, it's one of the more readable accounts of Lewis and Clark's expedition, it follows historical events reasonably well, and the use of the dog's perspective is clever and entertaining. However, the writing is nothing special and the framing story of trappers reading Lewis's journal and the dog silently commenting is not explained and not necessary. Mostly, however, the author was lazy. He based his account entirely on Lewis's personal journal, so when Lewis had nothing to say, neither does the author (or the dog). This leads to a story with no particular beginning, middle, or end and little tension other than during the initial crossing of the Rockies. Additionally, the author was uncertain what to do about Meriwether Lewis himself. Lewis was probably bipolar and committed suicide a few years after the expedition. The narrator dog frequently mentions Lewis being depressed or angry at himself, but no explanation is ever given, and no mention is ever made of Lewis's condition. As this is primarily intended for younger audiences, it's reasonable to have left that out, but I think the moments of depression should have been, too, as they added little to the story. I suspect that some of the incomplete framing story probably mentioned how Lewis died (and therefore how the journal got into the hands of trappers who had been on the expedition), and that an editor suggested that suicide was not a good topic to include here. Fair enough, but it wasn't edited well enough and the loose ends stand out.

I thoroughly enjoyed *The Captain's Dog* and felt the voice of Seaman gave the novel an added flair. Many times I was so lost in the story, I forgot Seaman was a dog. I especially like this novel because it lays a strong foundation for further research into the adventures of Lewis and Clark. Readers get to meet and know so many interesting characters. The characterization of Captain Lewis is so complete I felt as if he was an old friend. I laughed and cried when reading this novel. It has heart, adventure, and a little bit of mystery. The descriptive details give evidence to the extensive research which must have gone into writing this novel. Bravo, Roland Smith! How about a new historical novel about merchant seaman or pirates. Perhaps Seaman could come along as well.

This is my favorite book of all time. I gave my copy that I had for years to a young lady and couldn't be without it, so I ordered this one. Love the cover upgrade! Can't help but enjoy Seaman's story.

middle school reader needed a historical book, and this fit our requirement.

On our trip west, I started reading the journals of Lewis and Clark. The spelling and grammar are so bad that they are almost impossible to read. Seaman the dog writes much better! This is a fun, if not scholarly, account of the Corps of Discovery.

This book has been my Grandson's favorite book since he was 6 years old. He has just turned 10 and it was very exciting for me to provide him with a hard cover first edition. I have read this book and think it is a wonderful book for children to get started in reading. It worked wonders for my grandson. As he is now an avid reader.

My 8 year old daughter loved this book and asked that I give it 5 stars. She enjoyed reading the journal entries, learning about Lewis and Clark, and learning about North America.

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