Lewis and Clark were two explorers who changed the nation. In 1803 the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory from France. This land doubled the size of the country. It included the land we now call Kansas. Lewis and Clark were the first American explorers sent west.

President Thomas Jefferson picked Captain Meriwether Lewis to lead the journey. Lewis knew how to record information about plants and animals. Lewis selected William Clark as his co-captain. Clark knew how to make maps.

Lewis and Clark chose more than 30 people to help them on the trip. This group was called the Corps of Discovery. Most of the men were soldiers. Clark brought his slave, York, along, too. Another member of the group was a young Shoshone girl. Her name was Sacagawea. Because she could speak two languages, she was hired as an interpreter. Along the way many Native people helped Lewis and Clark. Without their help the Lewis and Clark expedition probably would have failed.

**Reason for Exploration**
President Jefferson gave Lewis and Clark three main goals. He hoped to find a water route to the Pacific Ocean. Lewis and Clark were to follow the Missouri River to find that route. The explorers were to learn about the Native Americans they met. They also were to record information on everything they learned about this new land.
Experiences and Observations
In May of 1804 Lewis and Clark started their journey in St. Louis, Missouri. The trip would take 28 months. They would reach the Pacific Ocean and then return. They faced many dangers and hardships, but only one member of the Corps died.

Lewis and Clark spent 14 days traveling up the Missouri River through Kansas. In Kansas they saw buffalo for the first time. They celebrated the first Independence Day in the West. On July 4, 1804, they fired a shot from the gun on their boat. They also named two creeks on that day. Fourth of July Creek and Independence Creek are near the present town of Atchison. The next day they visited a deserted Kansa village. The Kansa had gone on a buffalo hunt.

On the return trip in 1806, Lewis and Clark collected their last plant specimen in Kansas. It was a Raccoon Grape leaf.

Results of Exploration
Lewis and Clark made it safely back home in September of 1806. They did not find a river route to the Pacific. On their trip they had traveled 8,000 miles. They met people from more than 50 Indian tribes. They discovered 178 new plants. They discovered 122 types of animals. They had mapped their travel route. They recorded information about the land and climate. The information they collected on their trip was very helpful for future settlers in the West.