

New Found Land: Lewis & Clark's Voyage of Discovery, by Allan Wolf

Allan Wolf, photo by Jerry Gentry



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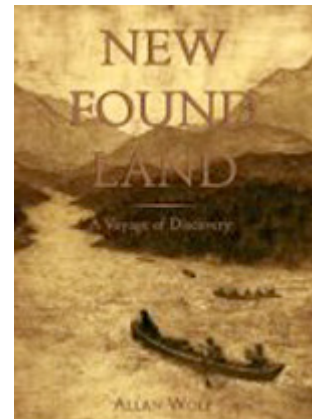
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Introduction

New Found Land is a verse novel narrated by fourteen different members of the Lewis and Clark expedition in the early 1800s. It is fourteen voyages of discovery plaited into one. *The Sacagawea Cycle* [from which the following two poems are drawn] consists of eleven monologue verses that tell the story of the Shoshone girl, kidnapped at the age of eleven from her home in the Idaho mountains and removed to slavery amongst the Hidatsa Indians living in what is now North Dakota.

Around the age of 15, Sacagawea (whose name means Bird Woman) was given or sold, to a French-Canadian trader living among the Hidatsa. His name was Touissant Charboneau. Sacagawea was one of at least two of his wives. When Lewis and Clark first met Sacagawea she was about sixteen years old and six months pregnant. Her husband, Charboneau, was soon hired as an interpreter for the expedition, but it was really Sacagawea herself that Lewis and Clark most wanted. For Sacagawea spoke the Shoshone language, and it was the Shoshone people who had possessed the horses the explorers would need to cross the Rocky Mountains once they finally arrived there.



So it was that this teenage mother, set out with Lewis and Clark in the Spring of 1805 on a nearly impossible journey to the Pacific Ocean and back. Nearly five thousand miles with an infant to keep alive. The individual pieces that make up the *Sacagawea Cycle* were not written to "stand alone," but rather to act as details from the overall narrative tapestry of the book. - Allan Wolf

Snow-White Brant

The Mandan Villages are not far
from the Hidatsa Village where I live.
If only my *own* people lived so close.
The Shoshone homeland where I come from
is located far to the west where the Missouri River ends
and the land of grass meets the Shining Mountains,
what the white men call The Rockies.
Among my people was a wise man named Swooping Eagle
who would tell tales of crossing those mountains
toward the place where the sun sets.
On the other side of the mountains, he said, was a great river.
He said the great river leads to an even greater lake
called the Lake of the Bad Tasting Waters.
Swooping Eagle said that this lake
marked the place where the world ended.
He said there was nothing beyond its shore.
Many of my people thought that Swooping Eagle was lying.

But I believed.
Of course I would never leave my people
 of my own free will
but in my heart I knew something magical
waited on the other side of those endless mountains.

I knew, because when I was a very young girl
I looked into the sky and saw a vision.
I saw a snow-white brant flying west.
Then I leaped into the sky, and I *became* the bird.
And I flew over the Shining Mountains
in search of the place where the world ended.
But before I reached my destination
I was standing once again on the earth.
And I could see once again the white brant in the sky.
No matter how far up the white brant flies
it is always in my sight.

Becoming Bird Woman

My Shoshone name was *Huichu*,
which means Little Bird,
But the main chief in the village of my captors
has given me a new name—Sacagawea.

In Hidatsa, my name means "Bird Woman."

He does not call me this because of my childhood vision.
He calls me this because my eyes show no emotion
and my mouth never smiles nor frowns.
The line of my mouth is straight and hard
as a bird's beak, he says.

I like the name.
For the night after I became Sacagawea
a dream began to visit me in my sleep.

I began to dream of the birds.

Each time it visits, the dream is the same.
I am a snow white brant among a small motley flock
of eagles and sparrows and starlings,
of magpies and vultures and wrens.
And all of us are flying west
toward the Shining Mountains.

Toward my home.

Every night when I go to sleep
the birds bring hope in their beaks.

Allan Wolf is an educator, poet, and musician who lives in Asheville, North Carolina, with his wife and three children. He is the author of two books for teachers on how to implement performance poetry in the classroom. His most recent collection of poems for children is The Blood-Hungry Spleen and Other Poems About Our Parts (Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2003). The work presented here is drawn from his young-adult novel in verse, New Found Land, about the Lewis and Clark expedition. He is also the author of Immersed In Verse: An Informative, Slightly Irreverent & Totally Tremendous Guide to Living a Poet's Life (Asheville, NC: Lark Books) due out April, 2006. Another historical young adult novel, Zane's Trace (Candlewick Press) is due in spring, 2007. Before becoming a full-time writer he was the educational director for Poetry Alive!, a national touring company that presents theatrical poetry shows for all ages. Mr. Wolf is also a member of The Dead Poets poetry band, which transforms classic poetry into music.

