

# Soldiers & Warriors

**T**o both the Corps of Discovery and the various Indian cultures they encountered, a warrior's clothing was his identity. Since the expedition was a military one, the men wore uniforms during the official councils with the Indians. The Indians, too, came to meet in their finest clothing.



1804 Infantry captain's uniform (reproduced 2002) — Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

## Captain's Uniform

This is a reproduction captain's uniform like the one Meriwether Lewis would have worn for ceremonial occasions. It includes a sash, gorget and a sword belt. The U.S. Army was so small in 1804 that no complete uniforms, and few components, survive.

Bravery was something that needed no translation between cultures. Young men all over, in Virginia and Pennsylvania, in the Plains, or in the Rocky Mountains, admired men who acted bravely and

honorably. Meriwether Lewis instantly understood that Indian warriors received honor by achieving great deeds. Yet there were some differences in how they approached their clothing. The dress of Indian warriors showed records of bravery and individual accomplishments in battle; the uniforms of the Corps of Discovery showed military rank and were designed to portray a unified force.



War shirt, pre-1819 — Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University, ©President and Fellows of Harvard College, photo by Hillel Burger (90-17-10/49309; T1481)

Leggings, mid-1800s — Cat. #403344b, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, photo by D.E. Hurlbert

**B**oth Indian and Euro-American men went into battle dressed in clothing that symbolized their deeds and status. The leader of a Plains war party often wore a painted shirt that detailed his war record and leggings with horizontal stripes that symbolized the enemies he had killed. On such war



Split-horn bonnet, c. 1875-85 — State Historical Society of North Dakota, photo by Sharon Silengo

## Split-horn Bonnet

Only the "bravest of the brave" could wear headdresses like this Mandan or Hidatsa one. They were worn only for the visits of other chiefs, at celebrations of a war victory, at public festivals, or on war parties where they served as "a symbol of power." It is made from split cow horn, ribbons, horsehair and ermine fur.

## War Shirt

This war shirt was probably worn by either a Crow or Mandan warrior. Can you see the images on the front of the shirt? Both the back and front show images of enemy warriors killed with a lance. The shirt and the leggings below have fringes made with hair.

## Leggings

These leggings were made to go with a painted war shirt. Often made of antelope skin, leggings could show the war record of the wearer. This pair is fringed with human hair.



Bear claw necklace, mid-1800s — Cat. #403347, Department of Anthropology, Smithsonian Institution, photo by D.E. Hurlbert

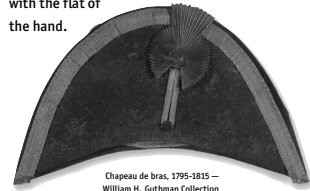
## Bear Claw Necklace

Lewis wrote that "the warriors or such as esteem themselves brave men" wore necklaces of grizzly bear claws. Killing a grizzly was often seen as equal to killing an enemy in battle. Both were considered acts of great bravery. *How might you feel about a person wearing this necklace?*

shirts, the contours of the animal skin were often left intact as a sign of respect to the animal, so that it would lend its qualities to the wearer. The most powerful shirts were fringed with locks of human hair that symbolized enemy scalps but that could be given by relatives and supporters to represent the man's responsibilities to his relations.

## Chapeau de bras

Lewis and Clark most likely wore military hats similar to this. Called by the French term, "chapeau de bras," the hat style was known as a bicorne or cocked hat and was worn only by officers. It is made with wide brims turned up to form flaps called the cock (on the front) and the fan (rear), with a cap or crown in the center. It is designed to be compressed flat for carrying under the arm and there is a socket for a plume behind the cockade. The military salute was originally a broad sweeping gesture of removing one's hat, combined with a bow. But by 1801 it had been simplified to the motion of touching the hat brim with the flat of the hand.



Chapeau de bras, 1795-1815 — William H. Guthman Collection

**T**o Plains Indians, eagle tail feathers symbolized bravery and were worn by the most distinguished warriors. The United States had adopted the eagle into its seal in 1782. To the soldier, the eagle symbolized patriotism and loyalty to one's nation.

*What are some symbols people use today to show bravery and heroism? Clothing tells something about the person wearing it. What do your clothes tell people about you?*