



**DIRECTIONS: Round robin read the passage below, and then answer the three questions with your team.**

On April 30, 1803 the nation of France sold 828,000 square miles of land west of the Mississippi River to the young United States of America for less than five cents per acre at \$15 million in a treaty commonly known as the Louisiana Purchase. President Thomas Jefferson, in one of his greatest achievements, more than doubled the size of the United States at a time when the young nation's population growth was beginning to quicken. The Louisiana Purchase stretched from the Mississippi River to the beginning of the Rocky Mountains. Official boundaries were not determined, except that the eastern border ran from the source of the Mississippi River north to the 31 degrees north.

France controlled the vast stretches of land west of the Mississippi, known as Louisiana, from 1699 until 1762, the year it gave the land to its Spanish ally. The great French general Napoleon Bonaparte took back the land in 1800 and had every intention of asserting his presence in the region. Unfortunately for him, there were several reasons why selling the land was all but necessary:

- A prominent French commander recently lost a fierce battle in Saint-Domingue (present-day Haiti) that took up much needed resources and cut off the connection to the ports of North America's southern coast.
- French officials in the United States reported to Napoleon on the country's quickly increasing population. This highlighted the difficulty France might have in holding back the western frontier of American pioneers.
- France did not have a strong enough navy to maintain control of lands so far away from home, separated by the Atlantic ocean.
- Napoleon wanted to consolidate his resources so that he could focus on conquering England. Believing he lacked the troops and materials to wage an effective war, the French general wished to sell France's land to raise funds.

The United States originally wanted to purchase only New Orleans from the French. Napoleon rejected America's proposal to purchase New Orleans, choosing instead to offer the entirety of France's North American possessions as the Louisiana Purchase.

Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led a government-sponsored expedition to explore the vast wilderness of the west soon after the signing of the Louisiana Purchase. The team, also known as the Corps of Discovery, left St. Louis, Missouri in 1804 and returned to the same spot in 1806.

Traveling 8,000 miles, the expedition gathered huge amounts of information about the landscapes, flora (plants), fauna (animals), resources, and people (mostly Native Americans) it encountered across the vast territory of the Louisiana Purchase. The team first traveled northwest up the Missouri River, and traveled west from its end, all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

Bison, grizzly bears, prairie dogs, bighorn sheep, and antelope were just a few of the animals that Lewis and Clark encountered. The pair even had a couple of birds named after them: Clark's nutcracker and Lewis's woodpecker. In total, the journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition described 180 plants and 125 animals that were unknown to scientists at the time.

The expedition also led to the acquisition of the Oregon Territory, making the west further accessible to the pioneers coming from the east. Perhaps the biggest benefit to the trip, though, was that the United States government finally had a grasp on what exactly it had purchased. The Louisiana Purchase offered America what the Native Americans had known about for years: a variety of natural formations (waterfalls, mountains, plains, wetlands, among many others) covered by a wide array of wildlife and natural resources.

1. How did the purchase of Louisiana impact the United States?
2. Why was Napoleon happy to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States?
3. Why was the Lewis & Clark expedition important to the United States?