

# The Louisiana Purchase

## What You Will Learn...

### Main Ideas

1. As American settlers moved West, control of the Mississippi River became more important to the United States.
2. The Louisiana Purchase almost doubled the size of the United States.
3. Expeditions led by Lewis, Clark, and Pike increased Americans' understanding of the West.

### The Big Idea

Under President Jefferson's leadership, the United States added the Louisiana Territory.

### Key Terms and People

Louisiana Purchase, p. 274  
 Meriwether Lewis, p. 275  
 William Clark, p. 275  
 Lewis and Clark expedition, p. 275  
 Sacagawea, p. 276  
 Zebulon Pike, p. 276

### TAKING NOTES

As you read, take notes in a graphic organizer like the one below on the events leading up to the Louisiana Purchase and the exploration that followed.

Events Leading to Louisiana Purchase	Exploration that Followed Louisiana Purchase

## If YOU were there...

You and your family live on a small farm in Kentucky in about 1800. Raised on the frontier, you are a skillful hunter and trapper. One day at the trading post, you see a poster calling for volunteers to join the Corps of Discovery. This expedition will explore the vast region west of the Mississippi River. You think it would be exciting—but dangerous. You might never come home.

## Would you volunteer to join the Corps of Discovery?

**BUILDING BACKGROUND** As the 1800s began, the United States was expanding steadily westward. More lands were opened, and settlers moved in to occupy them. Americans were also curious about the vast lands that lay farther West. Adventurous explorers organized expeditions to find out more about those lands.

## American Settlers Move West

By the early 1800s, thousands of Americans settled in the area between the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. As the region's population grew, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio were admitted to the Union. Settlers in these states depended upon the Mississippi and Ohio rivers to move their products to eastern markets.

New Orleans, located at the mouth of the Mississippi, was a very important port. Its busy docks were filled with settlers' farm products and valuable furs bought from American Indians. Many of these cargoes were then sent to Europe. At the same time, manufactured goods passed through the port on their way upriver. As American dependence on the river grew, Jefferson began to worry that a foreign power might shut down access to New Orleans.

“There is on the globe one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy. It is New Orleans, through which the produce of three-eighths of our territory must pass to market.”

—Thomas Jefferson, quoted in *Annals of America*, Volume 4, 1797–1820

# The Louisiana Purchase and Western Expeditions



New Orleans was founded by the French in 1718. Over time, it became home to many languages and cultures.

## GEOGRAPHY SKILLS

## INTERPRETING MAPS

- Location** What major port city was located at the southern tip of the Louisiana Territory?
- Human-Environment Interaction** Why might Lewis and Clark have followed the Missouri River?

Spain controlled both New Orleans and Louisiana. This region stretched west from the mighty Mississippi River to the great Rocky Mountains. Although Spain owned Louisiana, Spanish officials found it impossible to keep Americans out of the territory. "You can't put doors on open country," the foreign minister said in despair.

Years of effort failed to improve Spain's position. Under a secret treaty, Spain agreed to trade Louisiana to France, passing the problem on to someone else. One Spanish officer expressed his relief. "I can hardly wait to leave them [the Americans] behind me," he said.

### READING CHECK Analyzing Information

Why was New Orleans important to settlers in the western regions of the United States?

## Louisiana

In 1802, just before handing over Louisiana to France, Spain closed New Orleans to American shipping. Angry farmers worried about what this would do to the economy. President Jefferson asked the U.S. ambassador to France, Robert R. Livingston, to try to buy New Orleans. Jefferson sent James Monroe to help Livingston.

## Napoléon and Louisiana

France was led by Napoléon (nuh-POH-lee-uhn) Bonaparte, a powerful ruler who had conquered most of Europe. He wished to rebuild France's empire in North America.

Napoléon's strategy was to use the French colony of Haiti, in the Caribbean, as a supply



base. From there he could send troops to Louisiana. However, enslaved Africans had revolted and freed themselves from French rule. Napoléon sent troops to try to regain control of the island, but they were defeated in 1802. This defeat ended his hopes of rebuilding a North American empire.

### Jefferson Buys Louisiana

The American ambassador got a surprising offer during his negotiations with French foreign minister Charles Talleyrand. When the Americans tried to buy New Orleans, Talleyrand offered to sell all of Louisiana.

With his hopes for a North American empire dashed, Napoléon had turned his attention back to Europe. France was at war with Great Britain, and Napoléon needed money for military supplies. He also hoped that a larger United States would challenge British power.

Livingston and Monroe knew a bargain when they saw one. They quickly accepted the French offer to sell Louisiana for \$15 million.

The news pleased Jefferson. But as a strict constructionist, he was troubled. The Constitution did not mention the purchase of foreign lands. He also did not like spending large amounts of public money. Nevertheless, Jefferson agreed to the purchase in the belief that doing so was best for the country.

On October 20, 1803, the Senate approved the **Louisiana Purchase** agreement, which roughly doubled the size of the United States. With the \$15 million in the French treasury, Napoléon boasted, "I have given England a rival who, sooner or later, will humble her pride."

#### READING CHECK Making Inferences

Why was the Louisiana Purchase important to the future of the United States?

## The Journey West

The time line and photographs you see here show some of the key events and places of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Read the journal entries to get an idea of what the explorers faced.



A large keelboat and two smaller boats were needed to get the supply-heavy expedition moving west.



Small boats helped the travelers move supplies across the Great Plains.

**May 14, 1804**

The expedition begins near St. Louis.

**August 3, 1804**

The first official council between representatives of the United States and Plains Indians is held.

**October 1804 – April 1805**

The expedition establishes Fort Mandan to spend the winter. There, the explorers meet a French fur trader and his wife, Sacagawea.

*April 7, 1805 We are about to penetrate a country at least 2,000 miles in width, on which the foot of civilized man had never trodden (walked upon).  
—Meriwether Lewis*

## Explorers Head West

Americans knew little about western Native Americans or the land they lived on. President Jefferson wanted to learn more about the people and land of the West. He also wanted to see if there was a river route that could be taken to the Pacific Ocean.

### Lewis and Clark Expedition

In 1803 the president asked Congress to fund an expedition to explore the West. To lead it, he chose former army captain **Meriwether Lewis**. Lewis then chose his friend Lieutenant **William Clark** to be the co-leader of the expedition.

To prepare for the journey, Lewis spent weeks studying with experts about plants, surveying, and other subjects. This knowledge would allow him to take careful notes on what

he saw. With Clark, Lewis carefully selected about 50 skilled frontiersmen to join the Corps of Discovery, as they called their group.

In May 1804 the **Lewis and Clark expedition** began its long journey to explore the Louisiana Purchase. The Corps of Discovery traveled up the Missouri River to the village of St. Charles. Once past this village the men would receive no more letters, fresh supplies, or reinforcements.

Lewis and Clark used the Missouri River as their highway through the unknown lands. As they moved upstream, a lookout on the boats kept a sharp eye out for sandbars and for tree stumps hidden underwater. When darkness fell, the weary explorers would pull their boats ashore. They cooked, wrote in their journals, and slept. Swarms of gnats, flies, and mosquitoes often interrupted their sleep.



The expedition relied on 24 horses to cross the Rocky Mountains.



The explorers paddled down the Columbia River toward the Pacific in five canoes.

**August 12, 1805**

Lewis climbs the first ridge to the Continental Divide.

**September 1805**

The expedition nearly starves. Local peoples help the explorers.

**November 7, 1805**

The expedition reaches a bay of the Pacific Ocean.

*August 23, 1805 The hills or mountains were not like those I had seen, but like the side of a tree straight up.*  
—William Clark

**ANALYSIS SKILL**

**READING TIME LINES**

On what date did the explorers reach the westernmost point of their journey?



## Primary Source

### JOURNAL ENTRY

## September 17, 1804, Great Plains

While traveling across the Great Plains, Meriwether Lewis marveled at the richness of the land.

*"The shortness . . . of grass gave the plain the appearance throughout its whole extent of beautiful bowling-green in fine order . . . this scenery, already rich, pleasing, and beautiful was still farther heightened by immense herds of Buffalo, deer Elk and Antelopes which we saw in every direction feeding on the hills and plains. I do not think I exaggerate when I estimate the number of Buffalo which could be compre[hend]ed at one view to amount to 3000."*

—Meriwether Lewis, quoted in *Original Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, edited by Reuben Bold Theriault



### ANALYZING PRIMARY SOURCES

What did Lewis find so impressive about the Great Plains?

Insects were not the only cause of sleeplessness for the Corps of Discovery. As weeks passed without seeing any Native Americans, the explorers wondered what their first encounter would be like.

### Contact with Native Americans

During the summer of 1804 the Corps of Discovery had pushed more than 600 miles upriver without seeing any Native Americans. But when the men spotted huge buffalo herds in the distance, they guessed that Indian groups would be nearby. Many Indian groups depended on the buffalo for food, clothing, and tools.

Lewis used interpreters to talk to the leaders of each of the peoples they met. He told them that the United States now owned the land on which the Native Americans lived. Yet the explorers relied on the goodwill of the people they met. **Sacagawea** (sak-uh-juh-wee-uh),

a Shoshone from the Rocky Mountains, accompanied the group with her husband, a French fur trader who lived with the Mandan Indians and served as a guide and interpreter. Sacagawea helped the expedition by naming plants and by gathering edible fruits and vegetables for the group. At one point, the group met with Sacagawea's brother, who provided horses and a guide to lead the expedition across the mountains.

After crossing the Rocky Mountains, Lewis and Clark followed the Columbia River. Along the way they met the powerful Nez Percé. Like the Shoshone, the Nez Percé provided the expedition with food. At last, in November 1805, Lewis and Clark reached the Pacific Ocean. The explorers stayed in the Pacific Northwest during the rough winter. In March 1806 Lewis and Clark set out on the long trip home.

Lewis and Clark had not found a river route across the West to the Pacific Ocean. But they had learned much about western lands and paths across the Rockies. The explorers also established contact with many Native American groups and collected much valuable information about western plants and animals.

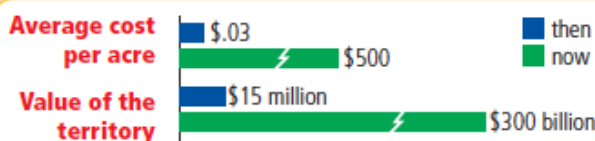
### Pike's Exploration

In 1806 a young army officer named **Zebulon Pike** was sent on another mission to the West. He was ordered to find the starting point of the Red River. This was important because the United States considered the Red River to be a part of the Louisiana Territory's western border with New Spain.

Heading into the Rocky Mountains, in present-day Colorado, Pike tried to reach the summit of the mountain now known as Pikes Peak. In 1807 he traveled into Spanish-held lands until Spanish cavalry arrested him. They suspected Pike of being a spy. When he was finally released, he returned to the United States and reported on his trip. Despite his imprisonment, he praised the opportunities for doing business with the Spanish in the Southwest. Pike's

# The Louisiana Purchase

Lewis and Clark would be surprised to see what has become of the lands they explored. The lands of the Louisiana Purchase are rich with natural resources and support enormous agricultural production.



**Natural Resources** oil, natural gas, coal, gemstones, copper, iron ore, lead, zinc, silver, limestone, sulphur, diamonds, helium

**Major Agricultural and Livestock Production** rice, cattle, chicken, hogs, corn, wheat, sugarcane, cotton, dairy products, hay



**ANALYSIS SKILL**

## ANALYZING INFORMATION

Other than agricultural goods, what types of valuable resources are found in the former Louisiana Territory?

report offered many Americans their first description of the Southwest.

### READING CHECK Supporting a Point of View

What would you do if you were Pike and found yourself in Spanish territory?

**SUMMARY AND PREVIEW** The Louisiana Purchase nearly doubled the size of the United States. In the next section you will learn about increasing tensions between the United States and Great Britain.

## Section 2 Assessment

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**Online Quiz**

KEYWORD: SC7 HP8

### Reviewing Ideas, Terms, and People

- a. Identify** What new states were added to the Union by the early 1800s?

**b. Explain** Why were New Orleans and the Mississippi River important to settlers in the West?
- a. Recall** What two reasons did Napoléon have for selling Louisiana to the United States?

**b. Summarize** Why was the Louisiana Purchase important to the United States?

**c. Predict** What are some possible results of expansion into the Louisiana Purchase?
- a. Describe** What areas did the Lewis and Clark expedition and the Pike expedition explore?

**b. Draw Conclusions** Why were Meriwether Lewis and William Clark chosen to lead the exploration of the Louisiana Purchase?

### Critical Thinking

- Sequencing** Review your notes on the Louisiana Purchase. Then copy the graphic organizer below and use it to rank the three most important effects of the Louisiana Purchase, from most important to least important, and explain why you chose that order.

Importance	Why
1.	
2.	
3.	

### FOCUS ON WRITING

- Gathering Information about a Person's Actions** Make a list of Jefferson's actions—the ones that would put him on that top-ten list. Add any new character traits you have discovered.