Name_____

Independence

The thirteen colonies wanted independence from British rule. Although the colonists had valid reasons for wanting their freedom, they understood that the act would be considered treason to the crown. Thomas Paine wrote a pamphlet called *Common Sense* that attempted to explain the common-sense reasons why the colonies should no longer belong to England. He felt England was a part of Europe and that the land across the Atlantic Ocean should have no hold over those in America.

The Patriots had already been fighting the British for nearly a year before the document now known as the Declaration of Independence was drafted. The Continental Congress agreed a formal piece of writing was needed to declare the independence of the colonies to British rulers. Thomas Jefferson was chosen to pen the words that would declare the colonies' freedom. July 4, 1776 is the date that the Continental Congress approved Jefferson's document, and thus, the date is the one celebrated each year as the country's Independence Day.

George Washington became the military leader of the Patriots. Believing the Americans could win, the French would eventually join the side of the Patriots and help to win the cause by providing much needed supplies. The war would continue until 1781. The Battle at Yorktown was the victory that gained the final surrender of British troops and gained the colonists their freedom. The original thirteen colonies were now thirteen independent states. The road to a united country would be rocky, but the independent states would eventually form one united country.

Text Questions

1. The first paragraph states the colonists had "valid" reasons for wanting their freedom. Which statement below would be an example of a "valid" reason?
   a. The colonists did not like being in North America.
   b. The colonists did not like being ruled by a country that was not even on the same continent.
   c. The colonists did not want England to have other colonies.
   d. The colonists wanted to be under French rule.
2. How did the French help the colonists win their independence?
   a. by sending threatening letters to the British forces
   b. by giving passage to colonists back to Europe
   c. by giving the Patriots much needed supplies
   d. by providing guards to help protect George Washington
3. Once the colonies won their independence, what happened next?
   a. The colonies became the United States of America.
   b. The colonies turned themselves over to French rule.
   c. The colonies fought amongst themselves and started a Civil War.
   d. The colonies became thirteen independent states.
4. To the original colonists, why was the Declaration of Independence an important document?
   a. The document was written by the famous politician Thomas Jefferson.
   b. The document was the first written work agreed upon by the entire Continental Congress.
   c. The document declared the colonies' wish to be independent from British rule and the reasons for this desire to be free.
   d. The document was used to persuade the French to help the colonists win the war.
5. Which paragraph in the text best explains the reasons the colonists wanted to be free from British rule?
   a. first paragraph
   b. second paragraph
   c. third paragraph
   d. none of the paragraphs

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LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

The Louisiana Purchase

The Louisiana Purchase occurred in 1803 and was mainly the decision of President Thomas Jefferson. The purchase of what was then known as the Louisiana territory from France more than doubled the land area of the new country. The purchase added 800,000 square miles to America. The entire cost of the Louisiana territory was fifteen million dollars. The purchase was especially important because the new land left control of the Mississippi River in the hands of the United States rather than France. Once the purchase was complete, however, there was much land to be explored. Jefferson hired Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore and document this vast new land.

In May of 1804, Lewis and Clark began their now famous exploration from St. Louis. The area west of the Mississippi was basically unknown, and Jefferson hoped the men would be able to return with information including maps of the territory. Forty-five people were a part of this exciting and dangerous expedition.

To help the explorers communicate with the many natives they would encounter, a Shoshone Indian, Sacagawea, was also part of the group. Sacagawea was only seventeen when the explorers began their trip. She traveled with her husband and infant son, and the journals from the trip tell of the times her skill as an interpreter and guide helped save the explorers as they trekked through the unchartered lands.

The entire journey lasted over two years. Many people were surprised by their returning, believing the explorers had most likely perished. Yet Lewis and Clark did return and gave the president many journals filled with details about the new land. They told of plants and animals that most had never seen. The expedition was approximately 8,000 miles round-trip and became a journey that will forever be remembered as the Lewis and Clark expedition.

Text Questions

1. What was the most likely reason Jefferson wanted to purchase the Louisiana territory from France?
   a. to help the French gain funds for future wars
   b. to gain control of the Mississippi River
   c. to be able to send Lewis and Clark on an expedition
   d. to stay on friendly terms with the French
2. Which paragraph from the text helps you to explain your answer for question one?
   a. first paragraph
   b. second paragraph
   c. third paragraph
   d. fourth paragraph
3. What was the main purpose of the Lewis and Clark expedition?
   a. to take notes about the new land and to create maps of the territory
   b. to give Sacagawea a chance to act as guide
   c. to help solidify Thomas Jefferson's place in history
   d. to reach the Pacific Ocean
4. What was the author's purpose in writing this text?
   a. to explain
   b. to persuade
   c. to entertain
   d. to inform
5. If Lewis and Clark had not safely returned, what might have most likely happened next?
   a. No one would have ever ventured back into the territory.
   b. Another expedition would have been sent into the territory.
   c. Lewis and Clark would have lived the rest of their lives with a tribe of Indians.
   d. Sacagawea would have led the next expedition into the Louisiana Purchase.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Name_____

The Wild West

From the mid 1800s to the early 1900s, the land west of the Mississippi River became known as the American Wild West. Much about the Wild West has been romanticized over the years by authors and the entertainment industry. Real life in the West was often very different than these glamorous portrayals. Some well-known figures definitely evolved from this time in America's history. People such as lawmen Wild Bill Hickok and Wyatt Earp or outlaws such as Jesse and Frank James are often written about in American history books. The exploits—some real and some fictitious—of these men and others like them have helped the term "Wild West" to live on.

Another important part of the West was the cowboys and cattle drives. The completion of the railroads helped turn cattle drives into a profitable venture for those living west of the Mississippi. Cattle could be driven to cattle towns located at railroad depots and then shipped by train in stock cars where they could be sold for larger sums of money in urban areas. This profitable business lead to the establishment of railroad towns such as Dodge City and Abilene. Many of the people arriving in these towns spent their money gambling and at local saloons, making the towns unsavory and unsafe for those who lived there; however, the money from the cattle drives was a double-edged sword because the money kept the economy of these towns booming.

One famous cowboy of the Wild West was Nat Love. Love was a former slave from Tennessee. He became a star in the rodeo and was well-known even in his lifetime.

Many former slaves moved away from the South and to the West hoping to find a better way of life. Regardless of anyone's reasons for moving to the West, this unique time in America's history is filled with stories that are worth remembering.

Text Questions

1. What does the word *romanticized* mean as it is used in the first paragraph?
   a. glamorized
   b. belittled
   c. loved
   d. minimized
2. Which paragraph explains how the completion of the railroads helped the growth of the West?
   a. first paragraph
   b. second paragraph
   c. third paragraph
   d. none of the paragraphs
3. Which statement in the fourth paragraph best explains why former slaves might have moved to the West?

   _____

   _____

   _____

4. The second paragraph states that money from the cattle drives was often a "double-edged sword." What does this expression mean?
   a. Spending the money caused people extreme pain.
   b. Spending the money led to both good and bad results.
   c. The money was only spent on buying weapons.
   d. Cowboys stopped using guns and spent money only on swords.
5. What type of figurative language is the phrase "a double-edged sword"?
   a. metaphor
   b. alliteration
   c. personification
   d. idiom

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