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.

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