

VIII. Louisiana Purchase: 1803

Program Summary

By 1803 the United States was a nation growing westward. Americans were settling lands as far west as the Mississippi River. As farmers and merchants were producing goods, they needed excellent shipping routes to carry their products world-wide. The Mississippi River was the perfect solution, except for the fact that the port city of New Orleans was owned by France. That meant that at any time the French government had the power to stop American goods from being shipped. However, Jefferson learned that the French emperor Napoleon might be willing to sell New Orleans. Jefferson decided to make an offer for the city. When his delegation returned from France, Jefferson discovered an offer he simply could not refuse.

Americans were offered the entire territory France claimed in the New World. It was a vast territory that doubled the size of the country. It was filled with natural resources. Because President Jefferson was certain that the future of the United States rested in an agricultural economy, meaning he envisioned a country built around farming, he wanted all the land he could get for America. Today we enjoy the fruits of Jefferson's vision.

1803 was also the year the great composer Beethoven was writing his third symphony. It was a whole new kind of symphony and it was dedicated to the leader of the French people, Napoleon. At the time Beethoven was writing the symphony, he was experiencing a great curse. He was growing deaf. Many musicians consider his third symphony his finest work. It was an incredible accomplishment for a man who was losing his hearing.

Vocabulary:

Emperor- The supreme leader of a land

Right to Deposit- An agreement between two parties that allows one party to store its goods before shipping them

Port- A city, usually a coastal city, that takes in and stores goods for shipping.

Acre- A plot of land just smaller than a football field.

Eroica- The name given to Beethoven's third symphony, meaning the Heroic Symphony.

Liberator- A leader who sets people free from domination by others.

Pre-viewing Discussion:

Locate the Mississippi River on a map of the United States. Point out all the major rivers to the East of the Mississippi that flow into the great river. Include the Ohio, the Tennessee. Show how flour milled in the Pittsburgh area could flow all the way to New Orleans, then shipped world-wide. Have students

Have students step outside the classroom or school building. Assign one student to be a gatekeeper who decides who can and who cannot get back into the building or classroom. Now ask them how powerful they think the gatekeeper is. Use this as an illustration to explain the dilemma of American farmers around 1800 who hoped to ship their goods through the city of New Orleans.

Ask students to tell what they already know about these people: Sacajawea, Lewis and Clark, Beethoven, Napoleon, Thomas Jefferson. Explain that all these people become involved in the story of the Louisiana Purchase.

Learning Objectives:

After viewing the film *Louisiana Purchase: 1803*, students will be able to:

1. Name Thomas Jefferson as America's third president.
2. Locate the Mississippi River and several of its tributaries on a map of the United States.
3. Name Napoleon as the French leader in 1800.
4. Name the major players in the exploration of the territories of the Louisiana Purchase.
5. Name at least five states which were created from lands of the Louisiana Purchase.
6. State that America paid three cents per acre for over 500,000,000 acres.
7. State that an acre is a bit smaller than a football field.
8. State one reason why Napoleon was willing to sell its French claims in the New World.
9. Recall that the third symphony of Beethoven is called the "Eroica Symphony."

Follow-up Activities:

The Indian guide Sacajawea was seven months pregnant when she agreed to guide Lewis and Clark in their exploration of the Louisiana Purchase. She gave birth on their journey westward. Have students imagine they are Sacajawea. Ask them to write a journal entry written by Sacajawea when she describes a particularly difficult day she had both as a new mother and as a guide.

Divide the class into two groups. One group is to write a short essay describing all the fantastic natural resources the men of the expedition discovered in the lands of the Louisiana Purchase. The second group is to write of the immense problems the men encountered on their trip. Have them read their essays aloud. Compare and contrast them their experiences.

Have students design a poster that entices people to settle the lands west of the Mississippi River. Using as few words as possible, the poster should describe one or two enticing features of the West. These might include the good soil for farming, the many opportunities of the west, the beauty of the land or how much privacy it offered.