

Module 4: Creating a New Nation - 1788 to the 1840s

Topic 2 Content: The Louisiana Purchase Notes

Introduction



The Louisiana Purchase. Click **Start** to begin.

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Louisiana Territory

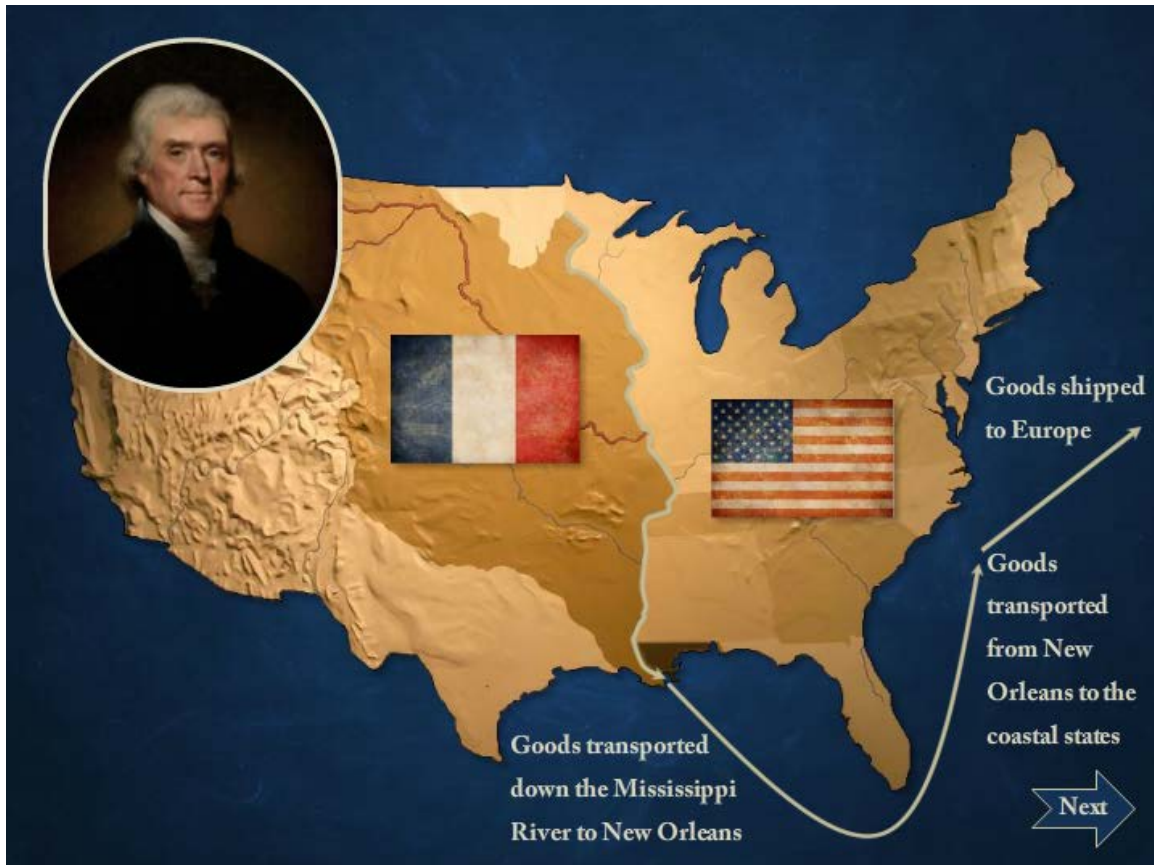


France owned a very large area of land in the middle of America known as the Louisiana Territory. Measuring approximately 827,000 square miles, the land covered the area west of the Mississippi River all the way to the Rocky Mountains. At the time, America was composed of 13 states and the Northwest Territory.

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The French



Fearing a strong French presence in the middle of the developing country, President Thomas Jefferson sought to purchase New Orleans and western Florida from the French. Owning this area of the Louisiana Territory would allow settlers to transport goods and grains down the Mississippi River and then ship them out of New Orleans to states on the coast and to England.

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Reasons for French Sale



President Jefferson sent James Monroe to France to meet with American ambassador Robert Livingston. Unknown to the Americans, Napoleon Bonaparte had made the decision to sell the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States before the representatives had even arrived. At the time, slaves had led a revolt on the island colony of Saint Dominque, now known as Haiti. French soldiers tried to reclaim the island and failed miserably, leading to more than 1,000 French casualties. After the loss of the island of Saint Dominque and the revolution against England, Napoleon decided it would be best to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States.

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Louisiana Purchase



Monroe and Livingston were able to purchase the entire Louisiana Territory for 15 million dollars. President Jefferson was unsure if the purchase was constitutional. He did not believe that the Constitution gave the national government the right to acquire new territory. After a short delay, Jefferson submitted the proposal to the Senate. The Senate ratified the purchase on October 20, 1803. With the Louisiana Purchase, the United States doubled in size.