



President Jefferson

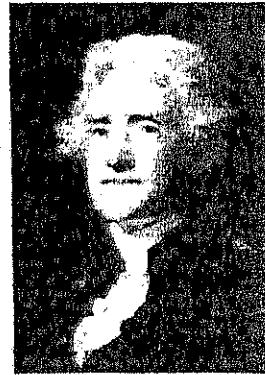
Should the U.S. buy the Louisiana Territory?

It is 1803. You are Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States.

Our new country has a chance to double in size. The French leader, Napoleon, wants to sell us a large territory called Louisiana. This territory is so large that we don't even know what it looks like. But we know it has New Orleans, the most important city on the Mississippi River. The French need money because they are going to war against England. They want \$15 million for Louisiana. They need the money soon or they won't sell Louisiana to us.

Louisiana could be very important for the United States. The Spanish used to own this territory. Sometimes, they would not let us use the port of New Orleans. Our traders and merchants on the Mississippi lost a lot of money. Now the French are in control. They are not going to let us use New Orleans,

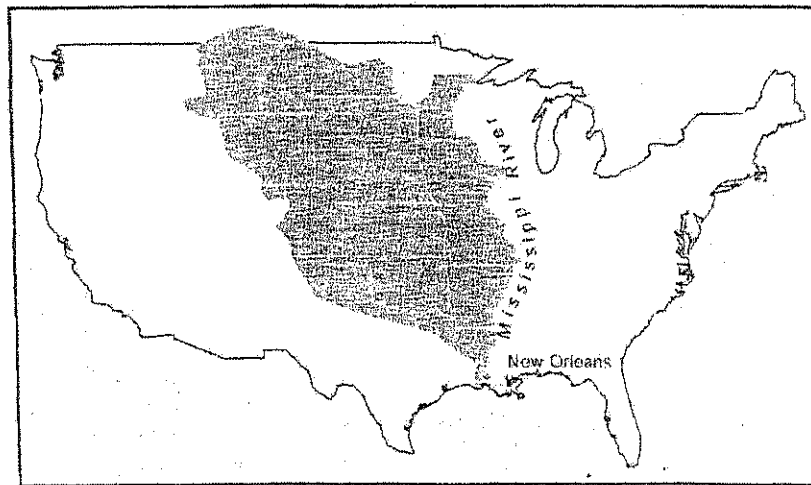
either. If we buy the Louisiana Territory, we will control New Orleans and the Mississippi and gain new territory, too.



Thomas Jefferson

We have enough money to buy Louisiana from the French. But our Constitution does not say anything about buying land from other countries. Does the Constitution give a president the power to buy land for America? Is that

legal? Maybe the Congress should amend the Constitution so that we can buy Louisiana constitutionally. But Napoleon needs the money now. Maybe he will not wait for us.



1803

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(continued)

Comprehension

1. Who are "we" in this story?
2. Who owned the Louisiana Territory before the French?
3. If the United States buys Louisiana, our country will be:
 - (a) twice as large.
 - (b) three times as large.
 - (c) half as large.
 - (d) poor.
4. Why is New Orleans important to us?
5. Why does Napoleon want to sell the Louisiana Territory?
6. What are reasons in favor of buying Louisiana?
7. What are reasons against buying Louisiana?
8. What decision do you have to make?

Decision

- *Should the U.S. buy Louisiana Territory? Choose one or more of the following options:*
 - (a) Let's wait until the Congress amends the Constitution. Maybe Napoleon will wait.
 - (b) Let's wait until the French go to war with England. Then maybe we can just take Louisiana without paying for it.
 - (c) Buy this territory today! Our population is growing rapidly. We'll need the land someday.
 - (d) Buy it today! We must control New Orleans and the Mississippi River.
 - (e) Buy it today! It's a good deal.
 - (f) Don't buy the territory. We don't have that much money!
 - (g) Don't buy it. We don't even know what it looks like. Maybe it is worthless.
 - (h) Don't buy it. We don't need it. We have enough land.
 - (i) Buy it. You are the President. Forget about what the Constitution says.
 - (j) Don't do it. It's unconstitutional. You do not have that power, because the Constitution does not say that the U.S. can buy land.
 - (k) Buy it. The Constitution says you can make treaties. This is a treaty. It is constitutional.
 - (l) Don't buy it. It doesn't really belong to France. It is Indian land, and we have no right to buy it from France.
 - (m) Other: _____
- *Why did you decide that way? Plan how you will explain your decision to your classmates. Write out your reasoning completely.*