Name _____ Date _____

Louisiana Purchase and the Lewis and Clark Expedition: Words in Context

Directions: Read the passage. Then answer each question.

The Louisiana Purchase and Lewis and Clark

A Purchase and a Journey

By 1800, many American farmers lived west of the Appalachian Mountains. They floated their crops down the Mississippi River to New Orleans, a port, or city where ships load and unload goods. Spanish officials controlled the city, though Spain had secretly agreed in 1800 to give Louisiana back to France. In 1802, Spain stopped letting Americans store goods there, and western farmers were furious.

President Thomas Jefferson had his diplomats, officials who speak for their country with other nations, try to buy New Orleans from France. The French leader, Napoleon Bonaparte, surprised them. His army had failed to retake Saint-Domingue, a Caribbean colony where enslaved people had risen up and won their freedom. He also needed money for a coming war with Britain. In April 1803, France offered to sell all of Louisiana, a vast territory, or large region of land, stretching west from the Mississippi River.

The Americans agreed to pay about $15 million, and the two sides signed a treaty, a formal agreement between nations. The purchase roughly doubled the nation's size. Jefferson worried because the Constitution did not say the government could buy land from another country. Still, the Senate approved the treaty in October 1803.

The land was not empty. Many Native American nations lived there. France sold only its claim, the right it said it had to rule the land. No one asked the nations who lived there.

Jefferson had already planned an expedition, a long journey made for a purpose such as exploring. In May 1804, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark led a group called the Corps of Discovery out of the St. Louis area. They headed up the Missouri River. Jefferson wanted them to look for a water route across the continent. He also asked them to map the land, study its plants and animals and meet the Native nations living there.

Native people helped the expedition succeed. During the first winter, at the Mandan villages, the leaders hired a French trader as an interpreter, a person who translates between languages. His Shoshone wife, Sacagawea, came too. Later, she helped the group talk with the Shoshone and get horses to cross the Rocky Mountains. The Nez Perce fed the hungry travelers. The group also included York, a man enslaved by Clark. In November 1805, they reached the Pacific Ocean.

The explorers returned in 1806 without finding an all-water route to the Pacific, because none existed. But their maps and reports drew fur traders and, later, settlers west. These newcomers put growing pressure on the Native nations living there.

1. According to the passage, why did western farmers care so much about New Orleans?

A. New Orleans was where they bought land from France.

B. Mills in New Orleans ground their grain into flour.

C. They sent their crops down the Mississippi River to be shipped from New Orleans.

D. New Orleans was the capital of the United States.

2. According to the passage, what was one reason France offered to sell all of Louisiana?

A. The United States had defeated France in a war.

B. France's army had failed in Saint-Domingue, and Napoleon needed money for a war with Britain.

C. No one lived on the land, so it was worth little.

D. Spain had refused to let France keep the land.

3. Match each word to its meaning as the passage uses it.

Write the letter of the matching answer on each line.

1. _____ territory
2. _____ treaty
3. _____ expedition
4. _____ interpreter

A. A long journey made for a purpose such as exploring

B. A person who translates between languages

C. A tax paid on goods brought into a country

D. A large region of land

E. A formal agreement between nations

4. The passage says the purchase "roughly doubled the nation's size." What does this mean?

A. The country lost about half of its land.

B. The country paid twice the price it had planned.

C. The country split into two separate nations.

D. The country became about twice as large.

5. Why did Jefferson worry about the purchase, according to the passage?

A. France refused to sign a treaty.

B. Spain had already sold Louisiana to Britain.

C. The Constitution did not say the government could buy land from another country.

D. The Senate had voted against the treaty.

6. The passage says France sold only its claim to Louisiana. What does claim mean in this passage?

A. The right France said it had to rule the land

B. A fort built to guard the land

C. A list of the people who lived on the land

D. A yearly payment made for using the land

7. Complete each sentence with a word from the word bank.

Word bank
expedition • territory • port • diplomats • claim

A city where ships load and unload goods is a _____. Officials who speak for their country with other nations are _____.

8. Which three goals does the passage say Jefferson gave the expedition?

☐ A. Look for a water route across the continent
☐ B. Find gold in the Rocky Mountains
☐ C. Start farms along the Missouri River
☐ D. Meet the Native nations living there
☐ E. Study the land's plants and animals
☐ F. Buy more land from Spain

9. According to the passage, how did Sacagawea help the expedition?

A. She stayed in St. Louis to guard supplies.
B. She signed the treaty that sold Louisiana.
C. She led the Corps of Discovery from St. Louis.
D. She helped the group talk with the Shoshone and get horses to cross the Rocky Mountains.

10. The passage says the fur traders and settlers who moved west "put growing pressure on the Native nations living there." What does this phrase mean?

A. The Native nations faced more and more strain as newcomers moved onto their lands.
B. The Native nations gained more land as the explorers left.
C. The Native nations were asked to vote on the purchase.
D. The Native nations were paid for the land the United States bought.