Westward Decisions

How a purchase and an expedition advanced U.S. expansion

8.C.6.3.A "promote a western expansionist policy through the acquisition of the Louisiana Territory and authorization of the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the trade concern Jefferson wanted to solve, and circle the two federal decisions that advanced western expansion. Write 1 beside a sentence that shows a limit to U.S. claims in the West.

A Purchase and a Journey

1. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson faced a problem at the edge of the United States. Farmers west of the Appalachian Mountains sent crops down the Mississippi River to the port of New Orleans. If another nation blocked that route, their trade could suffer. France controlled New Orleans and claimed a vast territory west of the Mississippi. Jefferson sent negotiators to seek access to the port, but France offered to sell the entire Louisiana Territory. The United States agreed to pay $15 million, and the Senate approved the treaty.

2. The Louisiana Purchase expanded the United States' claim to a huge area and strengthened its access to the Mississippi trade route. It also roughly doubled the nation's size, advancing Jefferson's western expansionist policy. Yet leaders in Washington knew little about the land, its rivers, or the peoples who lived there. Jefferson asked Congress for money to send an expedition west. Congress approved the funds in 1803, and Jefferson put Meriwether Lewis in charge. Lewis chose William Clark to help lead the group called the Corps of Discovery.

3. From 1804 to 1806, the Corps of Discovery traveled up the Missouri River, crossed the Rocky Mountains, and reached the Pacific Ocean. Its members recorded plants, animals, and possible routes for trade, then reported what they had learned to Jefferson. The journey helped the government plan future travel and trade across the West. But the purchased territory was not empty: many Indigenous nations already lived there and governed their own communities. The expedition relied on Indigenous knowledge and assistance, while United States expansion later threatened Indigenous control of their lands.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Mississippi River trade concern help lead to the Louisiana Purchase?

2. How did buying the Louisiana Territory advance Jefferson's western expansionist policy?

3. Why did Jefferson seek funding for the Corps of Discovery after arranging the purchase?

4. Why did the purchase not mean the West was empty land for the United States to use?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence memo to Jefferson in 1803. Explain how the purchase and the authorized expedition could advance western expansion, name one limit to U.S. claims, and suggest one responsible action.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 8 · 8.C.6.3.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the trade concern Jefferson wanted to solve, and circle the two federal decisions that advanced western expansion. Write 1 beside a sentence that shows a limit to U.S. claims in the West. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Mississippi River trade concern help lead to the Louisiana Purchase?	**Jefferson wanted to protect farmers' route to New Orleans. When France offered the entire territory instead of only access to the port, the United States bought it.**
2	How did buying the Louisiana Territory advance Jefferson's western expansionist policy?	**The purchase roughly doubled the nation's size and expanded its claim to land west of the Mississippi.**
3	Why did Jefferson seek funding for the Corps of Discovery after arranging the purchase?	**U.S. leaders knew little about the land, rivers, and peoples there. The expedition could gather information to help plan travel and trade.**
4	Why did the purchase not mean the West was empty land for the United States to use?	**Many Indigenous nations already lived in the territory and governed their own communities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

President Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase gives the United States a claim to land that could support western trade. The authorized Corps of Discovery should study routes and report what it learns so future travel can be planned. Indigenous nations already govern communities in this region, so a purchase from France does not erase their rights. Instruct the expedition to seek peaceful meetings and listen to Indigenous leaders rather than treat the land as empty.

Accept responses that connect both the purchase and the expedition to expansion while recognizing that Indigenous nations already occupied and governed the land. Responsible actions may include listening to Indigenous leaders or seeking peaceful relations.