A Land Deal

Weigh costs, benefits, incentives, and consequences in a historic choice.

S.USII.g "using an economic decision-making model to analyze the costs and benefits and explain the incentives and consequences of a specific choice made in U.S. history;"

NAME ______________________ DATE ______________

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each benefit, circle each cost, and number the incentives and consequences you find. These details show why people made a choice and what happened afterward.

Jefferson Weighs a Purchase

1 In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson faced a difficult choice. France offered to sell the Louisiana Territory to the United States for $15 million. The land stretched west from the Mississippi River and included the port of New Orleans. American farmers depended on that port to ship crops. Jefferson had long supported a limited federal government, and the Constitution did not clearly say that a president could buy new land. He had to weigh reasons for and against the purchase before acting as president.

2 Buying the territory had important benefits. Control of New Orleans could protect trade for farmers and merchants. The purchase would also give the nation more land for settlement and resources. Napoleon had an incentive to sell because France needed money for wars in Europe and had trouble defending its North American claims after a revolt in Saint-Domingue. Jefferson had an incentive to accept because another country might control the river and port. These incentives pushed both leaders toward a deal.

3 The costs were serious. The price was a large share of the federal government's yearly spending, so the government had to borrow money. Some people worried that adding so much land would make the country harder to govern. Others feared conflict with Native nations already living on the land. Jefferson decided the benefits were greater than the costs, and he asked the Senate to approve the treaty. The purchase doubled the nation's size, encouraged westward settlement, and led to further disputes and removals involving Native peoples.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What choice did President Jefferson have to make in 1803?

2. Name one benefit and one cost of buying the Louisiana Territory.

3. What was one incentive for Napoleon to sell, and what was one incentive for Jefferson to buy?

4. State one consequence of the purchase. Explain whether it was helpful or harmful for a group named in the passage.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Choose a specific choice in United States history that you have studied, other than the Louisiana Purchase. Write four sentences that name the choice, give one cost and one benefit, explain an incentive, and state one consequence.

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline each benefit, circle each cost, and number the incentives and consequences you find. These details show why people made a choice and what happened afterward. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What choice did President Jefferson have to make in 1803?	**He had to decide whether the United States should buy the Louisiana Territory from France.**
2	Name one benefit and one cost of buying the Louisiana Territory.	**A benefit was protecting trade through New Orleans or gaining land and resources. A cost was the $15 million price and borrowing money, or the risk of a harder-to-govern country and conflict with Native nations.**
3	What was one incentive for Napoleon to sell, and what was one incentive for Jefferson to buy?	**Napoleon needed money for wars in Europe and had trouble defending French claims. Jefferson wanted to prevent another country from controlling the Mississippi River and the port of New Orleans.**
4	State one consequence of the purchase. Explain whether it was helpful or harmful for a group named in the passage.	**Answers may name doubled national size or westward settlement as helpful to the United States, or disputes and removals as harmful to Native peoples.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

In 1867, Secretary of State William Seward supported buying Alaska from Russia. The United States paid $7.2 million, a cost, but gained land and potential resources, a benefit. Leaders had an incentive to gain land and resources in the North Pacific. A consequence was that Alaska became a United States territory, while its Indigenous peoples faced stronger United States control.

Accept historically accurate choices that clearly distinguish a cost from a benefit and identify an incentive and a consequence. Consequences may be positive, negative, or mixed when the student names an affected group.