

Resource Sheet #01

Real Estate Deal of the Century: The Louisiana Purchase

Thomas Jefferson was president when the United States completed the Louisiana Purchase. The United States purchased approximately 524,800,000 acres of land from France for only \$15 million dollars, or roughly \$216 million today.

This deal almost doubled the land area of the United States, increasing net resources and power. Jefferson has been positively credited for this purchase, although some people – then and now – have condemned the purchase as a direct contradiction of Jefferson’s usually strict interpretation of the Constitution.



Source: Map Showing Political Boundaries of North America in the Era of the Louisiana Purchase. Global Gateway, Library of Congress. Accessed 5/25/14.
<http://international.loc.gov/intldl/fiahtml/map8.html>

1. How could this new land acquisition increase productivity and power for the United States?
2. Make a list of beliefs Jefferson held before becoming president. Do you think his beliefs could change once he became President of the United States? Explain.
3. The Constitution does not explicitly state whether the federal government may purchase new lands. If you were Jefferson, would you have authorized this purchase? Explain your reasoning.