

The Wild Wild Mid-West

Sharon Bolan, WCVE

Overview

Topic: The Louisiana Purchase. This lesson centers on the Louisiana Purchase including the important people who made it happen and the effects of the purchase on our country. Students will use reference materials and Internet sources to produce a mind map of events. Students will also identify and record the states that were included in the Louisiana Purchase.

Time Allotment

2 – 90 minute blocks

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History/Social Science
English

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the purpose of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Identify the people who played an important role in the Louisiana Purchase.
- Describe the events of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Create a map of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Create a map of the states that are a part of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Analyze the importance of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Persuade listeners that the Louisiana Purchase was necessary.

(This lesson addresses Va. SOL History/Social Science 11.5; English 11.1, 11.9)

Media Components

East of the Blue Ridge #3, Three Presidents

Materials:

Materials needed for the Introductory Activity:

- 1 large classroom map of the United States of America
- Small box of junk (empty tissue box, broken pencil, empty drink can, etc.)
- Small snack bag of pennies for each student. One bag should contain 25 pennies and all other bags should contain 20 pennies or less
- One small square of paper for each student
- One valuable item (candy bar, large pack of gum, etc.)

Materials each group of 2 students will need for the Learning Activities and Culminating Activities:

- Computer with access to the Internet (at least one computer for every 2 students)
- Outline of the Louisiana Purchase Mind Map and USA Map (see attachments)
- Internet Resource List (see attachments)
- Project Responsibilities Sheet (see attachments)
- Color pencils or crayons

Materials needed for Assessment:



- Blank Game Board (either drawn on a chalkboard, shower curtain, or overhead projector)
- One pair of dice
- Group marker for each group (magnet, sticky note, anything groups can use as men)
- List of suggested questions for the game (see attachments)

Prep for Teachers

The teacher should preview and cue the video as indicated in the Learning Activities section. The teacher could have each Internet site book marked for easier access. Please note a list of Internet sources and Reference materials can be found at the end of this lesson. The students should have prior knowledge of how to research using Resource materials and Internet sources (entering a URL to locate websites).

Day One

Introductory Activity

1. The teacher should fill a small box with worthless junk; then completely hide the valuable item within the junk. This valuable item is a secret known only by the teacher. Once the box is ready, the teacher should pull one student to the side and quietly tell him that he is to bid all of his money on the box of junk no matter what. This same student should receive the bag with the most money. Give each student a bag of pennies and a square of paper.
2. Say, “Students, today we are going to have a sealed bid auction. First you need to count the money in your bag to see how much you have to bid on this wonderful box of worthless junk.” Allow a minute for students to count their pennies. Say, “Now that you know how much you have to spend, I will walk around the room so that you may glance in the box of junk to see how badly you want it. Then I’d like you to write down your bid and your name on the piece of paper.”
3. The teacher should walk around the room with the box of junk. Do not allow the students to dig down in

the box. Make sure that the more valuable item is completely hidden from anyone looking in the box. After the students have completed their bids, collect the papers. Ask, “Do I have everyone’s bid? Good, let’s see who has made this wonderful purchase.” One at a time, unfold the bids. Read the bid and the bidder’s name out loud. Announce that the owner should come forward and pay for his or her purchase. Instruct the new owner to show the other students each item they purchased. As the new owner goes through the box, everyone will discover the more valuable item.

4. Ask, “Was this a worthwhile purchase and why?” (*listen to student responses*) “Did any of you know, for sure, that there was a more valuable item in the box of junk? What would you have done if you knew there was a more valuable item in the box?” (*listen to student responses*) You have just discovered that the true value of an item is not always obvious. Pointing to the United States of America map say, “Back in the early 1800’s the United States didn’t look quite this large. Today we will be learning about an extremely worthwhile purchase that was made by the United States at a bargain price.” Quickly take up the snack bags of pennies, and leave the USA map hanging.

Learning Activities

1. Provide students with a **Focus for Media Interaction**, and say, “Students, the real-estate deal of a lifetime has a name. I’m going to start a video with the **SOUND OFF**. The name of this real-estate deal will scroll across the screen. When you see the name, raise your hand.” **START *East of the Blue Ridge #3, “Three Presidents”*** where you see a fireplace with a mantel clock, decorated walls, and a lit candle. **PAUSE** after the words “Louisiana Purchase” scrolls across the screen. Ask, “What was the name of this real-estate deal?” (*Louisiana Purchase*) Ask, “By looking at the pictures what era or time period do you think this might be?” (*Accept responses and reasons for guesses*)
2. **Focus:** Say, “Let’s rewind the video to the same spot and turn the **SOUND ON**. You are going to hear

the names of three important Virginians who played a part in the Louisiana Purchase. Be able to tell me who these three men are and what positions they held in American politics during this time.” **REWIND** the video to the same spot last played, but with the **SOUND ON. PLAY** and **PAUSE** where the three men appear on the screen pictured together and the narrator says, “...real-estate deal of a lifetime.” Ask, “Who were these three Virginians and what political positions did they hold at this time?” (*Thomas Jefferson – President, James Madison – Secretary of State, James Monroe – Special Envoy in France*) Ask, “What did these three men know?” (*This was a great real-estate deal*) Say, “Since Monroe was the Special Envoy in France, he played a very important role in purchasing this huge block of land west of the Mississippi.”

3. Focus: Say, “You are now going to hear about how this purchase took place. Listen for this scenario and be ready to describe it.” **RESUME** and **STOP** the video when the narrator says, “...signed the agreement for the Louisiana Purchase.” Ask, “How did the Louisiana Purchase actually take place?” (*listen to responses*). Say, “Let’s rewind it and listen to it again to make sure we heard everything correctly.” **REWIND** the video to the pictures of the three Virginians. **PLAY**, then **STOP** the video when the narrator says, “...signed the agreement for the Louisiana Purchase.” Ask, “Did we leave anything out?” (*listen to added responses*) Say, “The whole idea of James Monroe and his wife in France making a real-estate deal seems very exciting.”

4. The teacher should divide students into groups of two. (students may also work individually if necessary) and then distribute blank mind maps, maps, the URL resource list, and the Project Responsibility sheet (attached) to each student. Make sure reference materials from your school library are ready for student use in the computer lab. These materials may include encyclopedias, textbooks, or atlases. Say, “We have just discovered some of the important but very basic facts about the Louisiana Purchase. We will be discovering more detailed facts by using reference materials and Internet sources. Your responsibility today is to complete the mind map and geographical map using the sources available. We

will be moving into the lab where the reference materials are waiting for us. Tomorrow, you and your partner will present the information found, show the class your geographical maps and mind maps, and explain to us why this purchase was beneficial to the growth of our nation.”

5. The teacher should then escort students to the computer lab. All students should be monitored to make sure that they are on task and are able to access the URLs necessary to complete the mind map. The teacher should allow students to use color pencils or crayons to enhance the look of their maps. At the end of the block, say, “Students, it is almost time to go. Tomorrow you will complete the oral part of the project. I will give you approximately 20 minutes to discuss with your partner the information you will present and how you will present it. Be sure to follow the Project Responsibility sheet to get full credit for your work.”

Day Two

Culminating Activity

Say, “Yesterday, we learned about the amazing land deal called the Louisiana Purchase. You have discovered important details that described the purpose of the Louisiana Purchase. You also learned about the important people who played a role in and the events surrounding the Louisiana Purchase. Today, you must present this information to the audience using your mind map and geographical maps as a guide. You must also persuade us to believe that this purchase was worthy and necessary. You have 20 minutes to discuss your oral presentation with your partner. I will collect all of your material after your presentation. Be sure to have your names clearly written on each submission.”

Assessment

1. Letter Writing. The teacher should place the name of each student on individual pieces of paper and have each student draw a name. Ask the students to write a

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letter to the name they selected describing the factual events of the Louisiana Purchase, the important people involved in the Louisiana Purchase, and why they felt this was a worthwhile purchase for the United States of America.

2. Louisiana Purchase Board Game. This game uses a blank game board with a start and a finish drawn on the chalkboard. Divide the students into groups of four. Each group should have a sticky note with a distinguishing mark on it to use as the markers for the game. (If the chalkboard is magnetic, magnets work great!) Ask each group to quickly choose a leader. The leader will be the one responsible for giving the answer decided upon by the group. If the answer the leader gives is correct, one student can roll the dice and move that amount of spaces. If the group answers incorrectly, or takes too much time, the next group has a chance to answer the question. The group that reaches the finish line first is the winner. You may want to award small prizes to the winning group. Sample questions for the game are attached.

Note to the teacher: A game board may be drawn on a shower curtain with a permanent marker and used over and over. Students can sit around the board to play the game. You can also use an overhead projector to project the board on a wall.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

English:

- Students could read and discuss literature that came from that time period. This may include the following works: What's the Deal? Jefferson, Napoleon, and the Louisiana Purchase by the National Geographic Society; The Louisiana Purchase by Gail Sakurai and Brendon January; Land Pacts by Susan Dudley Gold; Louisiana Purchase by A. E. Hotchner; and Louisiana Purchase: an American Story by John Chase.
- Students could write a poem centering on the events of the Louisiana Purchase.

Science:

- Students could research the type of soil that is found in the region where Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe settled and include a list of crops that are best grown in this region.
- Students could discover the agricultural advancements of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe.

Math: Students could research and estimate how much the land would cost if it was bought today.

Technology:

- Students could create a PowerPoint presentation of the events of the Louisiana Purchase.
- Students could create an advertisement video to sell the idea of purchasing this land.

History:

- Students could research other contributions made by Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe.
- Students could research the historical significance of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, and James Monroe living in the same area of Virginia at the same time.

Community Connections

1. Students could visit the houses of Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, or James Monroe.
2. The students could invite a real estate agent to the classroom to discuss what factors make the land more or less valuable.

About the Author

Sharon Bolan

Currently the library media specialist at Central Senior High School in Lunenburg County, this is Sharon's fifth year as an NTTI Master Teacher. She also teaches Office Skills courses at Southside Virginia Community College in Keysville. Sharon holds a Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Education for grades K-8, and is also certified to teach reading for grades K-12. Married with a five-year-old son named Hunter, Sharon and her husband Jack are celebrating the recent birth of their second child. Free time is spent reading, fishing, gardening, and spending time with her family.