

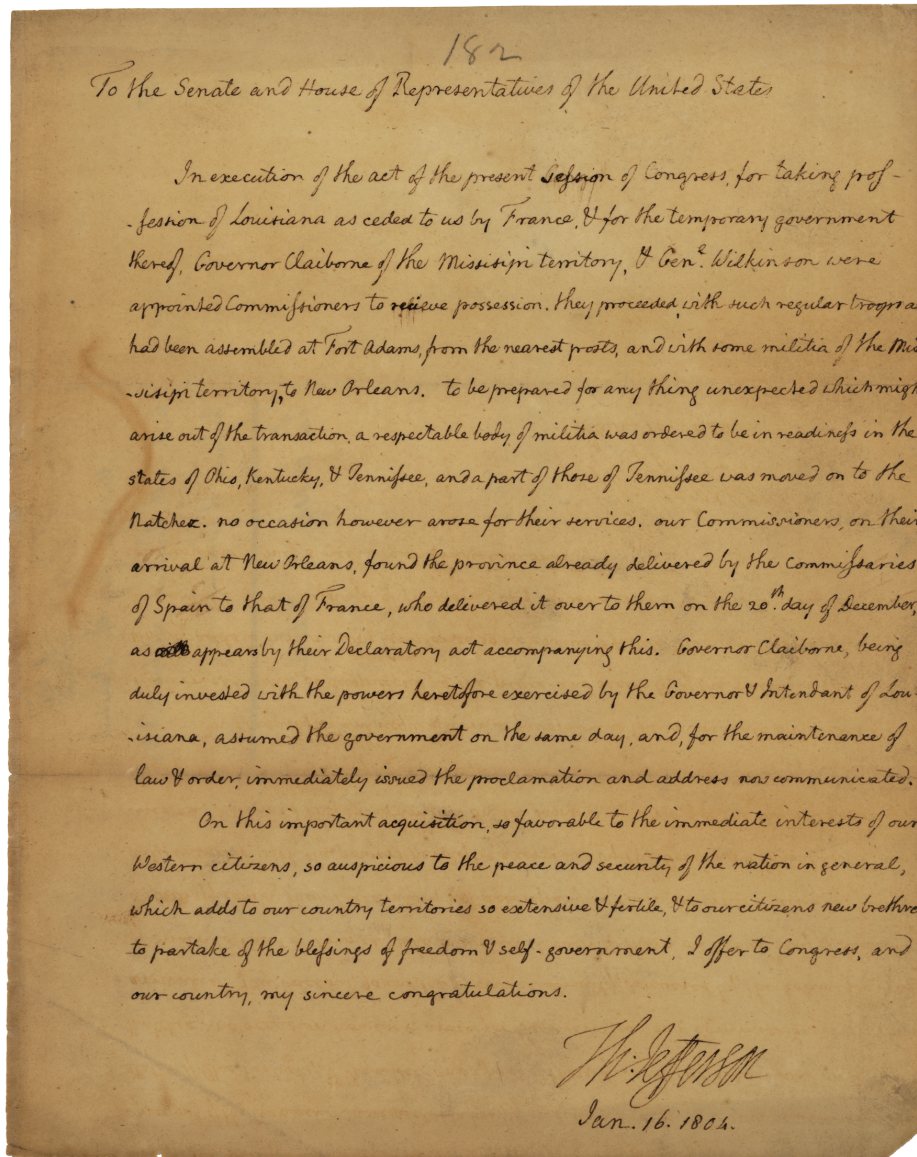
THOMAS JEFFERSON

A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

PRESIDENT THOMAS JEFFERSON'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS CONCERNING LOUISIANA, JANUARY 16, 1804.

Records of the U.S. Senate, National Archives. Transcript courtesy of the Avalon Project at Yale Law School.



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THOMAS JEFFERSON

A P R E S I D E N T ' S V I S I O N

TRANSCRIPTION

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States

In execution of the act of the present session of Congress for taking possession of Louisiana, as ceded to us by France, and for the temporary government thereof, Governor Claiborne, of the Mississippi Territory, and General Wilkinson were appointed commissioners to receive possession. They proceeded with such regular troops as had been assembled at Fort Adams from the nearest posts and with some militia of the Mississippi Territory to New Orleans. To be prepared for anything unexpected which might arise out of the transaction, a respectable body of militia was ordered to be in readiness in the States of Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee, and a part of those of Tennessee was moved on to the Natchez. No occasion, however, arose for their services. Our commissioners, on their arrival at New Orleans, found the Province already delivered by the commissioners of Spain to that of France, who delivered it over to them on the 20th day of December, as appears by their declaratory act accompanying this. Governor Claiborne, being duly invested with the powers heretofore exercised by the governor and intendant of Louisiana, assumed the government on the same day, and for the maintenance of law and order immediately issued the proclamation and address now communicated.

On this important acquisition, so favorable to the immediate interests of our Western citizens, so auspicious to the peace and security of the nation in general, which adds to our country territories so extensive and fertile and to our citizens new brethren to partake of the blessings of freedom and self-government, I offer to Congress and our country my sincere congratulations.

TH. Jefferson
Jan. 16, 1804

QUESTIONS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. When was this letter written? Who wrote it? Who was the intended audience?
2. For what purpose was the letter written?
3. Which forces had Jefferson sent to Natchez to be ready for “anything unexpected”?
4. Which country legally possessed Louisiana when the United States bought it from France? On what date did France take possession of Louisiana? How long did France control Louisiana before formally handing it over to a representative of the United States? Use your textbook if necessary.
5. By what process did the United States demonstrate that it had taken possession of the territory?
6. Why did Governor Claiborne post his proclamation in three languages?
7. Why does Jefferson feel he should congratulate Congress and the nation?
8. List three things this letter tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.

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