

Louisiana Purchase

Geography Activity

25pts

Name: _____

Period: _____

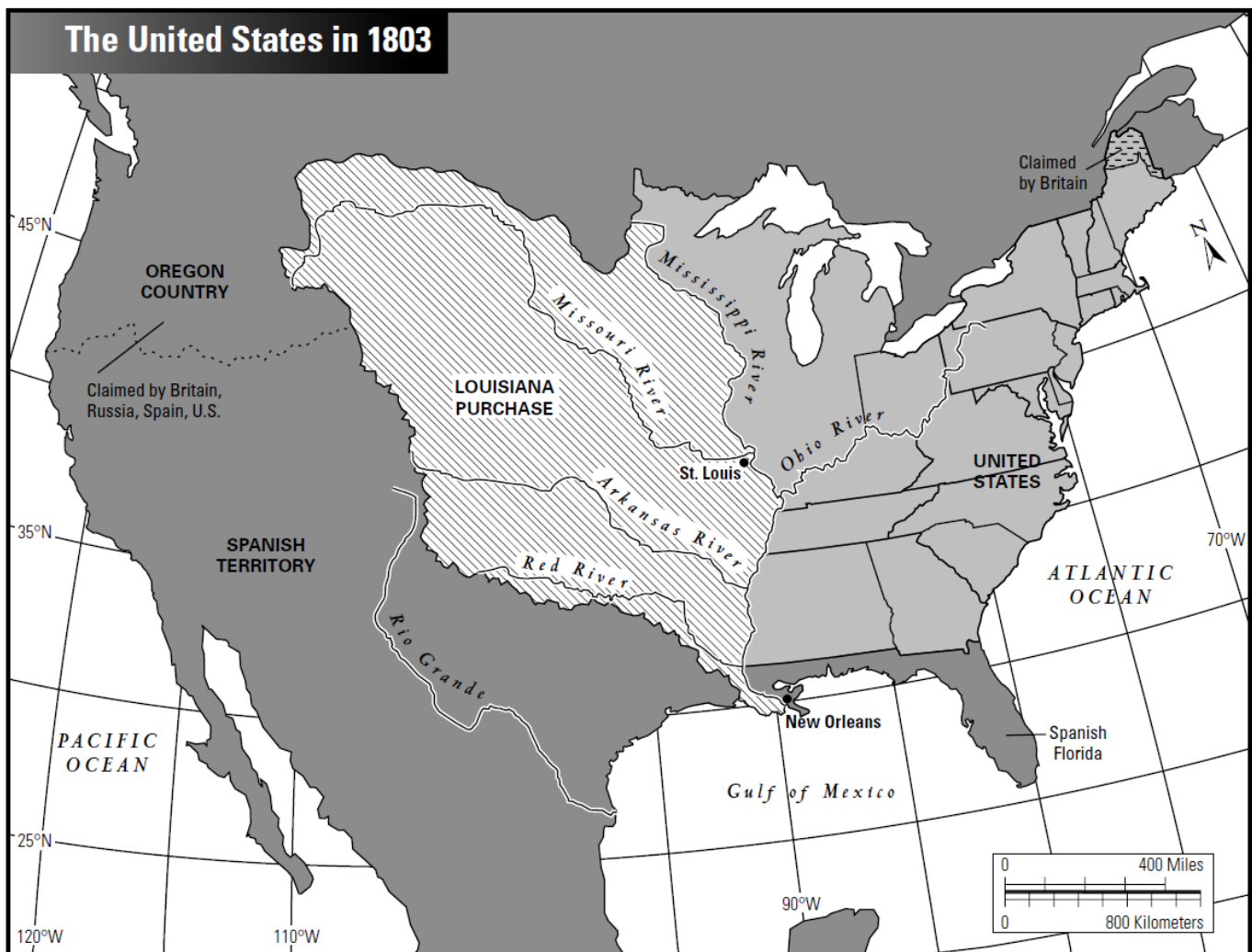
Directions: Read the paragraphs below, carefully study the map then answer the questions that follow.

In 1973 the social critic John Keats looked back to 1801, noting that at that time “the United States was politically fragile, virtually without an army or a navy, without a friend in the world.”

Indeed, President Thomas Jefferson was anxious. Foreign governments ruled the lands to the north, the entire Gulf of Mexico coastline, and the major western lands known as the Louisiana Territory. Also, in 1798, Spain had made things difficult for farmers by closing off the previously open Mississippi River to American boats carrying grain to New Orleans for export.

Then, in March of 1801, Jefferson heard a rumor that Spain had secretly given the Louisiana

Territory back to France, land that Spain had been given by France in 1762. Jefferson didn't want Spain ceding the region to anyone but the United States, but Spain would admit nothing. Finally, in 1803, Jefferson, still unsure who owned what, directed his ambassador in France to offer to buy Florida and New Orleans and sent James Madison to France to help in negotiations. Much to the men's surprise, the French suddenly proposed selling all of the Louisiana Territory to the United States, though the Florida territory was excluded, for it had remained Spanish territory. The men quickly took the offer and informed Jefferson of the unexpected bounty.



Interpreting Text and Visuals

1. What were the approximate latitude and longitude boundaries of the United States before the Louisiana Purchase? _____

After the Louisiana Purchase? _____

2. What country controlled territory to the north of the U.S. boundary? _____

To the south and west? _____

3. What seaport did the United States gain through the Louisiana Purchase? _____

4. By what proportion did the size of the United States increase as a result of the purchase?

5. After the purchase, what formed our eastern and western boundaries? _____

6. Control of which natural feature was the most important geographical advantage of the purchase? _____

7. U.S. possession of the Louisiana lands gave what four other major rivers permanent access to New Orleans and export-shipping facilities? _____

8. In addition to the advantage of increasing the nation's size, what risks do you think acquiring all this land presented? _____
