

0. THE MISSION - Story Preface

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When we think about the "Louisiana Purchase," we have to think far beyond the American state of Louisiana. This map, from the *National Atlas of the United States*, depicts the significant size of territory included in the famous purchase. The map is online via the U.S. Department of the Interior and Wikimedia Commons.

Before he even knew the Louisiana Purchase would take place, President Thomas Jefferson (on June 20, 1803) charged his private secretary, Meriwether Lewis, with the task of exploring the "country of Louisiana."

Lewis, a Captain in the U.S. Army, had a specific Presidential mandate:

The object of your mission is to explore the Missouri river; & such principal stream of it, as by it's course & communication with the waters of the Pacific ocean, may offer the most direct & practicable water communication across this continent for the purposes of commerce.

The land Lewis would explore was ultimately part of the Louisiana Purchase.

Jefferson thought there might be a waterway that stretched from the Missouri River (at St. Louis) to the Pacific Ocean. There actually was no direct waterway, but the assignment which Jefferson entrusted to Lewis turned out to be one of the greatest explorations of all time.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-MISSION-Sacajawea)

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Media Stream



Country of Louisiana - Map Locator

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Country-of-Louisiana-Map-Locator>