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## **Kentucky**

Eastern Kentucky is home to part of the western reaches of the Appalachian Mountains. These mountains became the first major obstacle that settlers encountered when expanding the colonial boundaries westward. Virginia lies east of the Appalachian Mountains in Kentucky and these mountains extend northeasterly into West Virginia which also borders Kentucky. The Ohio River forms the boundary between Illinois, Indiana and Ohio to the north while the Mississippi River forms the western boundary with Missouri. The state of Tennessee is south of Kentucky. Two large lakes, Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, are reservoirs formed by dams that span the border between Kentucky and Tennessee.

Since Kentucky contained huge deposits of coal, much of the landscape was scarred with the effects of strip mining. Environmentalists have spent decades in achieving legislation to restore the landscape and ensure that future mining is conducted in a responsible manner.

### **The History of Kentucky**

Archaeologists have found the remains of Paleo-Indians at thousands of sites in Kentucky. Paleo-Indians date back to the end of the last Ice Age, some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago. By the 1500s, before the arrival of European explorers, much of present-day Kentucky was the homeland of the Shawnees, a native people. The Cherokee tribe was located in the Appalachian Mountain area of Kentucky while the Chickasaw people occupied the southwest corner of Kentucky along the Missouri River.

In 1673, French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet traveled south from Canada along the Mississippi which took them to the western reaches of modern Kentucky. In 1749, another French explorer buried lead plates at a spot on the Ohio River border of Kentucky claiming the land for France. The legendary Daniel Boone began exploring Kentucky in 1767, where he hunted and trapped for a living while his family remained at home in North Carolina.

The Transylvania Land Company hired Boone to create a road from Virginia to the new lands in Kentucky, an undertaking he began in 1775. This was called the Wilderness Road and it crossed the Cumberland Mountains, a mountain range in the Appalachians, at Cumberland Gap. Boone and his crew founded Boonesborough at a

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fort they built on the Kentucky River at the end of the Wilderness Road. Settlers from the colonies moved into Kentucky and some settlers brought African-American slaves with them. Settlers were subject to frequent attacks from local Indians who were trying to defend their homeland.

At that time Kentucky was an extended part of the Virginia colony and at the end of 1776 the Virginia legislature recognized Kentucky as a county. By 1790 Kentucky's population exceeded 70,000 people. Leaders organized numerous constitutional conventions and finally in 1792 a constitution allowing slavery was adopted and Kentucky became the fifteenth state. By 1800 the population had reached 220,000. Most families farmed and grew labor intensive crops including tobacco and hemp, a plant whose fibers were used to make rope. By 1830 about one-quarter of Kentucky's population were African-American slaves who worked on Kentucky farms and plantations.

The pressure from new settlers took its toll on the Native American people. Many died from new illnesses brought by settlers. The Jackson Purchase of 1818 bought land east of the Mississippi River from the Chickasaw people. This tribe eventually was relocated to Oklahoma. In 1838 about 19,000 Cherokee people were moved from their homeland in the Appalachians to Oklahoma. This movement is called the Trail of Tears.

Kentucky played a crucial role in the Civil War due to its strategic location along the Ohio, Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers. Citizens in Kentucky were divided on the issue of slavery and Kentucky's governor refused the call for soldiers from both Union and Confederate army leaders. President Lincoln stated that Union troops would not enter Kentucky if it did not act against the Union, but as the war progressed Confederate troops invaded the unprotected state. By 1862, the Civil War entered Kentucky in earnest with major battles being fought in the state.

Like other states that had relied on slave labor for farming, Kentucky's economy was changed after the Civil War with the end of slavery. While tobacco remained an important agricultural crop, immigrant workers were employed as coal miners, in the timber industry and as railroad builders and workers. Kentucky was and continues to be known for fine horses; the first Kentucky Derby horse race was held in 1875.

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### **Kentucky Today**

Today over four million people live in Kentucky. While coal and tobacco continue to contribute to the economy, the government of Kentucky has cultivated new industries. Kentucky is no longer a rural state as over half the population lives in the Golden Triangle, the cities of Louisville, Lexington and the communities of Covington and Newport to the north. Kentucky ranks nineteenth in the nation in export of products to other states.

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Circle True or False after analyzing each of the following statements.

1. True False The Mississippi River forms the boundary between Illinois, Indiana and Ohio to the north of Kentucky.
2. True False Paleo-Indians like the Shawnee and Cherokee of Kentucky, date back to the early 1500s.
3. True False French explorers Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet traveled south from Canada along the Mississippi which took them to the eastern reaches of modern Kentucky.
4. True False The Transylvania Land Company hired Daniel Boone to create a road from Virginia to the new lands in Kentucky, which was called the Wilderness Road.
5. True False Kentucky was originally an extended part of the Virginia colony.
6. True False The population of Kentucky more than doubled in the decade after Kentucky became the fifteenth state.
7. True False The Jackson Purchase of 1818 bought land in Kentucky east of the Ohio River from the Cherokee people.
8. True False Citizens in Kentucky were divided on the issue of slavery and Kentucky's governor provided soldiers for both Union and Confederate army leaders to maintain neutrality.
9. True False Kentucky is known as the home of fine race horses and the Kentucky Derby is a horse race that has been a part of Kentucky culture for over one hundred years.
10. True False While Kentucky was once known for tobacco and hemp farming, today Kentucky has an economy based on manufacturing.

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**Answers**

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True
5. True
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. True