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## **Louisiana**

Louisiana is one of the southern states that borders on the Gulf of Mexico. This location makes the coastal areas prone to hurricanes and only Florida experiences more hurricanes than Louisiana. In 2005 Hurricane Katrina devastated the city of New Orleans and the surrounding area, causing tens of thousands of residents to move to other areas of the United States. Louisiana has three neighboring states: Texas to the west; Arkansas to the north; and Mississippi to the east.

### **Early History**

Some of earliest artifacts of prior civilizations in the Western Hemisphere exist at Poverty Point State Historic Site and Poverty Point National Monument in Louisiana. Radiocarbon dating of the artifacts shows that they originated between 1800 and 1400 BCE. The city at Poverty Point once covered 400 acres. Like other such ancient civilizations, archaeologists don't know what happened to the people.

The next major known group to settle in the Louisiana area is known as the Chitimacha who lived on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The Natchez people settled on the banks of the Mississippi River around 700 CE and the Caddo people established themselves in north central Louisiana around 1200 CE. The Tunica people migrated in the northeast corner of Louisiana and adjacent parts of Arkansas and Mississippi along the Mississippi River. Meanwhile the Atakapa lived near the mouth of the Sabine River which today marks part of the border between Texas and Louisiana. These people were skilled at living in the swamplands of the area.

In 1519, the Spanish governor of Jamaica commissioned Alonso Alvarez de Pineda to create a map of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. This was the first known European exploration of Louisiana. In 1539 Hernando de Soto landed in Florida and began an extensive exploration of what today is the southern United States. His travels eventually took him to the Mississippi River just above Louisiana, where he died near present-day Natchez, Mississippi. The reports of the men in the expedition upon their return to Spain told of unfriendly Native Americans; hot, humid weather; and swamps in the area of the southern Mississippi River which lessened interest in Louisiana as an area to colonize and develop.

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Over 100 years later, French King Louis the Fourteenth sent La Salle on an expedition to locate the mouth of the Mississippi River, starting in the French territory of present-day Canada near the Great Lakes. La Salle claimed the area around the Mississippi River for France but it wasn't until 1718 that Jean-Baptiste Le Moyne established a settlement called New Orleans. The original layout for the settlement is still evident in the street pattern of the French Quarter of the city.

When the Europeans arrived they brought new diseases, like smallpox and measles, to the Native Americans who lacked immunity to them. Thousands of Native Americans died from disease while many others were killed by French soldiers. Others were forced from their lands and relocated to Texas and Mississippi. Originally there were several thousand Atakapa people but by 1805 only 175 remained.

After the Seven Years' War in Europe, which involved Great Britain, France and Spain, the peace agreement included Spain taking control of French lands in North America; Louisiana was ruled by Spain from 1763 until 1800. At that time, the territory was returned to France. The Louisiana Purchase occurred in 1803; the U.S. bought all the French land in North America, doubling the size of the country. Louisiana became a state in 1812.

### **A Mix of Cultures**

Louisiana, especially the New Orleans area, was already home to many people of French ancestry. In 1719, after the death of King Louis the Fourteenth, the French government placed John Law, a Scotsman, in charge of the Louisiana Colony for a short while. He brought 2,000 German immigrants during his tenure. While Spain ruled Louisiana, immigrants came from Spain, Great Britain, and the Canary Islands. Also in the mid-1700s, Great Britain took over French Canada and ousted French colonists, known as Acadians. By the 1760s, Acadians created new settlements in Louisiana. Acadians mixed with Spanish, English and Africans already in Louisiana; unique to Louisiana, the Cajun language, culture and way of life evolved from this mix of people.

About 2,000 people of European descent and 4,000 people of African descent came to Louisiana between 1806 and 1809. In 1810 the African slaves in Haiti, called Saint-Domingue at the time, revolted. As a result more than 10,000 people

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left the island and moved to Louisiana. The port of New Orleans became the second largest port in the United States after New York City. Louisiana continued to attract immigrants sailing from Europe because it cost less to sail to New Orleans than New York. Sailing to New Orleans also brought immigrants closer to the wagon trains heading west. About 180,000 Germans came to the United States through New Orleans between 1820 and 1860 and about 24,000 Irish lived in the city in 1860.

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

1. True False Louisiana has three neighboring states: Texas to the west; Arkansas to the north; and Mississippi to the east.
2. True False Some of earliest artifacts of prior civilizations in the Western Hemisphere exist at Poverty Point State Historic Site and Poverty Point National Monument in Louisiana.
3. True False The first known European exploration of Louisiana was at the request of the Spanish governor of Jamaica who commissioned Alonso Alvarez de Pineda to create a map of the coast of the Gulf of Mexico.
4. True False Hernando de Soto landed in Florida and began an extensive exploration of what today is the southern United States. His travels eventually took him to the Mississippi River, where he died near present-day New Orleans.
5. True False LaSalle began his explorations at the Great Lakes and traveled the length of the Mississippi River, claiming the land for France.
6. True False Thousands of Native Americans in Louisiana died from European diseases because they lacked immunity to them.
7. True False Before Louisiana became part of the United States, it had been ruled for a time by each of these countries: Great Britain, France and Spain.
8. True False Louisiana immediately became a state in the same year as the Louisiana Purchase.
9. True False The Cajun language, culture and way of life evolved from a mix of Acadian, Spanish, English and African people in Louisiana.
10. True False The port of New Orleans became the second largest port in the United States after New York City.

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### Answers

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