

SOCIAL STUDIES  
History  
Grade 4  
Louisiana's Early Explorers

<b><u>Lesson Components:</u></b>	H-1C-E1	Describing the people, events, and ideas that were significant to the growth and development of our state and nation
	G-1A-E2	Locating & interpreting geographic features and places on maps and globes
	H-1A-E3	Identifying and using secondary historical sources to learn about the past

**Key Concepts:**

- \*Early Explorers (La Salle, De Soto)
- \*Continent
- \*Timeline
- \*Encyclopedia

**Lesson Duration:** 3 days

**Purpose/Introduction:** In this lesson students will learn information about early explorers Rene' Robert Cavelier Sieur de La Salle and Hernando De Soto. They will become familiar with these two men's contributions to Louisiana and why those contributions were significant to our state's development. Additionally, this lesson will enable students to understand the events of the past and to develop a historical perspective about those contributions.

## Lesson 1:

Objectives: \*TLW discuss the meaning of “explorer”.  
\*TLW recognize the importance of Hernando De Soto’s expedition in search of gold.  
\*TLW map De Soto’s exploration route.

Prior Knowledge/Pre-requisites: Before teaching this lesson, make sure students are familiar with explorers, such as Christopher Columbus.

### Materials/Resources:

- \*Classroom size world map
- \*Students maps – 1 per student
- \*Overhead transparency of map showing De Soto’s route
- \*Green Crayon

### Body of Lesson:

1. Opening: Tell the students that they are going to explore. Write the following on the board: “Let’s Explore”
2. Give each child a copy of the magnifying glass picture. Allow them time to explore items around the classroom.
3. Once they are finished finding about 5 items, discuss their findings with them. Write their responses on the chalkboard under the topic “Let’s Explore.”
4. Next tell the students that there are many ways to explore. For example, a deep-sea diver could explore the bottom of the sea floor. An astronaut could explore space.
5. Relate the following to the students: Our country and state were founded by people who came in search of various things.
6. Ask the students the meaning of the word “explorer.” (a person who travels in unfamiliar places in order to find out and learn about them)
7. Discuss with students explorers they may know and why their journeys were important to Louisiana and America’s history. (Ask questions such as: What country did the explorer come from?) After the answer is given, allow a student to locate the country on the classroom map. You may also ask, “What continent is that country part of?”
8. Tell students that they are going to study Hernando De Soto. Relate the following information: Hernando De Soto was a Spanish explorer who set sail for Florida in 1539 in search of gold.

9. Explain that De Soto traveled northward to Georgia and westward to follow the Alabama River to Mobile Bay. Show students this route on the overhead transparency.
10. Tell the students that De Soto along with 600 men and 12 priests, encountered Native Americans on their journey. Explain to them that they forced the Indians to supply them with goods and in turn tortured their chiefs. De Soto also insisted that they tell him where gold was hidden. The cruelty De Soto engaged in led to many battles with the Indians. (Ask: Why do you think De Soto was so cruel to the Indians?)
11. Continue to tell the students that in the spring of 1541, De Soto and his men reached the Mississippi River. They were the first Europeans to reach the Mississippi River. De Soto continued to search for gold for about a year and a half until he fell ill and died of a fever in 1542. The expedition reached the Gulf of Mexico; however, gold was never found.
12. After relating the information to the students, give each one a copy of North America map. Tell the students that they are going to trace the route of Hernando De Soto. Display an overhead transparency of the map marked with De Soto's route. Have students copy this route onto their maps using a green crayon.
13. Upon completion, ask the students, "What was important about De Soto's journey?" (He came in search of gold, but discovered the Mississippi River.)
14. After the discussion, collect and save the maps for the next lesson.

Evaluation: \*Map Activity  
\*Students' responses to questions

Reference Links:

[www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)

Bibliographies:

"De Soto, Hernando", Compton's Encyclopedia. Volume 6. 2001

"De Soto, Hernando", World Book. Volume 5. 1992.

"De Soto, Hernando", NSA Family Encyclopedia. Volume 5. 1992

Kent, Deborah. America the Beautiful. Chicago: Children's Press. 1988

Calhoun, Milborne(ed.). Louisiana Almanac 1997-1998 Edition.  
Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1997

## Lesson II:

- Objectives: \*TLW recognize the importance of La Salle's voyage down the Mississippi River  
\*TLW map La Salle's exploration route  
\*TLW compare De Soto's route to La Salle's route

### Materials/Resources:

- \*Venn Diagram Worksheet
- \*Venn Diagram Transparency
- \*Classroom sized World Map
- \*Map of North America
- \*Overhead transparency of LaSalle's route
- \*Blue Crayon

### Body of Lesson:

1. Orally review and discuss Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto's accomplishment. (Ask questions such as: Who was Hernando De Soto? What was he famous for? Describe what was wrong about how he conducted his expedition?)
2. Tell students that the next explorer they are going to study came from Europe. Instead of looking for gold, he was in search of a new trading route from Canada.
3. Relate the following information: Not all explorers were cruel to the Native Americans. Many French settlers traded various goods with the Native Americans in return for animal furs, vegetables, and fruits. Rene' Robert Cavelier, Sieur de la Salle was a French explorer from Canada. (Point out France on the classroom map. Ask: What continent is France on?) He decided to establish a colony at the mouth of the Mississippi River. In 1682, he was the first to voyage down the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico. (Using the classroom map point out the Mississippi River.) As a result of this exploration, La Salle claimed the entire Mississippi River Valley for France. He named the region Louisiana in gratitude to the King of France, Louis XIV and his wife Queen Anna.
4. Display an overhead transparency of LaSalle's exploration. Tell the students that the lines represent the places LaSalle traveled to during his journey down the Mississippi River. Give each student

- his/her map from the previous lesson. Have them draw the line(route) on their map using the blue crayon.
5. Upon completion, have students compare De Soto's route to LaSalle's route. Ask the following: What similarities do you see? What differences do you see?
  6. Show the students the Venn Diagram transparency and explain how it is used to compare two things.
  7. Place students in groups of 4 or 5. (ELA-4-E7) Give each group a Venn Diagram. Allow the students time to work together as a group and share ideas to complete the Venn Diagram worksheet. (ELA-4-E1)
  8. After the groups have finished, have them write a composition using the information from the diagrams. Make sure they include the similarities and differences between De Soto and LaSalle.

Evaluation: \*Group discussion  
\*Map Activity  
\*Writing assignment  
\*Students' responses to questions

Reference Links:

[www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)

Bibliographies:

"La Salle, Sieur de". World Book. Volume12. 1992

"La Salle, Sieur de". Compton's Encyclopedia. Volume13. 1990

Calhoun, Milborne(ed.). Louisiana Almanac 1997-1998 Edition.  
Gretna: Pelican Publishing Co., 1997

Assessment:

1. What is the main reason De Soto came to America?
  - a. To practice his own religion.
  - b. To search for gold.
  - c. To discover a new trading route.
  - d. To join the American army.
  
2. Why was LaSalle's expedition significant to the growth of Louisiana?
  - a. He discovered the Mississippi River.
  - b. He was the commander of the Civil War.
  - c. He forced the Native Americans of Louisiana to leave.
  - d. He claimed the Mississippi Valley for France.
  
3. Louisiana was named after \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. King Louis XIV and Queen Anna
  - b. George Washington and Martha Washington
  - c. Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln
  - d. King George and Queen Mary
  
4. Using the map below, complete the timeline.

DATE	EVENT
1539	
1539-1540	Winter Camp in Florida
	Winter Camp in Mississippi
1541-1542	Winter Camp in Arkansas
	DeSoto died
1543	

Constructed Response:

DeSoto

LaSalle

1. Choose an explorer.
2. Name his important contributions to the state of Louisiana.
3. Why was his contribution important to the development of Louisiana?