

## Robert de la Salle

Robert de La Salle, also called Robert Sieur de la Salle, was a famous French explorer. He was born on November 21, 1643, in Rouen, France. He spent nine years as a Jesuit student and teacher before renouncing his vows and traveling to the New World.

La Salle's career in exploration began in 1666, when he traveled to Quebec, Canada as a French colonist. In 1667, he was granted a seigneurie (a large plot of land) on Montreal Island, which he sold two years later in the hopes of jump starting his career as an explorer. Eager to find the fabled Northwest Passage to Asia, La Salle set up an impulsive expedition with nine canoes from Montreal, Quebec in 1669. La Salle and his crew, however, were ill-prepared for the exploration, but did reach Lake Ontario. The expedition turned back to Montreal two months later without reaching the river that La Salle believed led to China - the Ohio. La Salle made several other smaller expeditions between 1671 and 1673.

In 1677, in pursuit of his own glory, he returned to France and got permission from the King to explore all lands between Florida, Mexico, and New France. After stockpiling supplies and building a ship on the Niagara River, La Salle and his men explored parts of Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake Michigan and the surrounding land (including Green Bay, Wisconsin) in 1679 and 1680.

On February 6, 1682, La Salle and 40 men reached the Mississippi River and began their journey south. On April 9, La Salle claimed the entire Mississippi River Basin for France when he reached the mouth of the river near Venice, Louisiana. The claim included not only the Mississippi River, but all land where its branches extended - approximately two thirds of the entire United States. La Salle named the region Louisiana, after his King. On the return trip, La Salle and Henri de Tonti, one of his lieutenants, oversaw the construction of Fort St. Louis in 1682 on a butte above the river in modern-day Illinois. Today, the park is known as Starved Rock and is the most visited state park in the state of Illinois. Tonti stayed as commander of the fort, while La Salle returned to France for more supplies.

In 1684, La Salle and 300 hopeful colonists returned to North America in the hopes of establishing a large French colony along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. The trip, however, was a nightmare. It was plagued by pirate attacks, hostile Indians, and poor navigation. One of La Salle's supply ships became shipwrecked and members of the expedition killed local Indians who had taken supplies from the wreck, making dangerous enemies. The expedition ended up in Texas where they founded another Fort St. Louis, far from their target - the Mississippi River. During one of several searches for the river, 36 of La Salle's men mutinied near present-day Navasota, Texas. It was here where La Salle was murdered by one of his own men on March 19, 1687. The colony of Fort St. Louis would persist until 1688, when its remaining residents were killed by Indians.

**1.) Robert de la Salle believed \_\_\_\_\_ led to China.**

- A. Quebec
- B. the Ohio River
- C. Montreal Island
- D. Lake Ontario

**2.) Which of the following was NOT a place la Salle explored by 1680?**

- A. Lake Huron
- B. Niagara River
- C. Green Bay
- D. Lake Superior

**3.) When did la Salle start exploring the Mississippi River?**

- A.) Before he explored Lake Erie
- B. 1679
- C. After establishing Fort St. Louis
- D. 1682

**4.) When did la Salle claim the whole Mississippi River for France?**

- A. When he reached the mouth of the river
- B. When he started exploring the river
- C. 1680
- D. On his way back to Lake Ontario

**5.) What did la Salle really claim for France?**

- A. Only the Mississippi River
- B. Part of the Mississippi River
- C. The Mississippi River and the Great Lakes
- D. The Mississippi River and all of the land it and its branches extend

**6.) Which of the following best describes la Salle's return trip to the Gulf of Mexico in 1684?**

- A. It was a successful trip in which la Salle and his men established new forts.
- B. It was an unsuccessful trip because la Salle and his men could not establish a fort.
- C. It was a successful trip because la Salle named the area Louisiana
- D. It was an unsuccessful trip because of Indian and pirate attacks, poor navigation, and shipwreck.

**7.) La Salle was killed by...**

- A. One of his own men
- B. Indians
- C. Pirates
- D. Shipwreck

**8.) Circle all of the following that are true.**

- A. La Salle and his men established two separate Fort St. Louis's
- B. La Salle and his men made a fort in modern-day Illinois
- C. La Salle and his men enjoyed friendly relations with most of the Indians they met
- D. La Salle's return trip to the Gulf of Mexico included hopeful colonists.

**9.) Which of the following would make the best title for this passage?**

- A. A Complete History of the Mississippi River
- B. The Crews of de la Salle
- C. The Tale of Two Trips: the Success and Failure of Robert de la Salle Along the Mississippi River
- D. The Founding of Fort St. Louis

**10.) Why is Robert de la Salle important?**

- A. He searched for the Northwest Passage
- B. He explored the Great Lakes
- C. He established Fort St. Louis (now Starved Rock State Park)
- D. He claimed all of Louisiana for France