



LAFAYETTE'S JOURNEY THROUGH ALABAMA



RESOURCE INFORMATION

Standards Addressed:

- 2010
 - SS.5.10
 - SS.8.10
- 2025
 - SS.4.10
 - SS.4.11
 - SS.4.12
 - SS.10.5

Resources Included:

- 3-6 - Background Information
- 7-9 - Comprehension Questions
- 10-11 - Map of Alabama & Lafayette's Route
- 12-13 - Details of Lafayette's Stops
- 14-16 - Instagram style timeline templates
- 17-18 - Graphing Activity

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Enduring Legacy of Marquis de Lafayette: A Hero's Journey Across Two Revolutions

In March 2025, we celebrate the 200th anniversary of a pivotal moment in American and Alabama history—the visit of the Marquis de Lafayette to the United States, specifically to Mobile, Alabama. Lafayette's journey through the young United States represents more than just the actions of a foreign hero; it symbolizes a powerful bond between two nations—an enduring friendship built on shared ideals of freedom and liberty. His life, marked by courage and conviction, transcends time and borders, and his impact resonates even today.

A Revolutionary Life: Lafayette's Early Years

Marie-Joseph Paul Yves Roch Gilbert du Motier, known to the world as Marquis de Lafayette, was born on September 6, 1757, in Chavaniac, France. He hailed from an aristocratic family, but his early life was far from easy. Losing his father in the Seven Years' War before he was two years old, Lafayette was raised primarily by a series of family members, including two aunts, a grandmother, and a tutor. His mother eventually took him to Paris, where Lafayette excelled in his studies, learning the classics and developing a profound understanding of virtues like justice, courage, and honor.

By the time he was 13, Lafayette was commissioned as a lieutenant in the French army. At a young age, he began developing leadership qualities that would serve him throughout his life. His early military education and the vast fortune he inherited upon the death of his mother and grandfather made him a well-positioned young man with great potential. But it was not until he was 19 that his path would diverge dramatically from a life of privilege.

The Call to Revolution: Lafayette's Journey to America

In 1775, after hearing of the American colonies' struggle for independence, Lafayette was moved by the ideals of liberty and freedom. He learned that some French officers were allowed to fight for the American cause, but his family strongly discouraged the idea, fearing the political ramifications of such a decision. Nevertheless, Lafayette's conviction was unwavering. He met with Silas Deane, an American Commissioner, and signed a contract to serve in the Continental Army. Despite lacking formal military training, Lafayette's commitment to the revolutionary ideals of freedom propelled him to the shores of America at the age of 19. Upon his arrival, Lafayette quickly earned the trust of General George Washington, who made him a major-general in the Continental Army at just 20 years old. This decision reflected not only Washington's admiration for Lafayette's passion and leadership but also the value of foreign support in the American Revolution. Lafayette's journey, from a French nobleman to a trusted officer in the Continental Army, was a testament to the power of international alliances in the fight for freedom.

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A Hero's Role in the American Revolution

Lafayette's contributions to the American Revolution are legendary. He participated in several key battles, including the Battle of Brandywine in 1777, where he was wounded in combat. Despite the injury, Lafayette's bravery only strengthened his resolve to support the American cause. He became instrumental in organizing and executing strategies that would help turn the tide of the war.

One of his most significant contributions came during the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, where he played a pivotal role in blocking the British forces' escape and constructing siege works that ultimately led to the British surrender. The success at Yorktown, achieved with the assistance of the French fleet and military support, sealed the fate of the British forces in America. Lafayette's ability to maintain the crucial French-American alliance helped ensure the success of the Continental Army.

The victory at Yorktown led to the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1783, effectively ending the war and securing American independence. Lafayette's military leadership, diplomatic skill, and unyielding commitment to liberty played an indispensable role in this historic achievement.

A Continued Commitment to Freedom: Lafayette's Role in France

Lafayette's dedication to revolutionary ideals did not end with the American Revolution. Upon returning to France, he continued his advocacy for liberty and equality. In the midst of political and social upheaval, Lafayette became involved in the French Revolution, where he sought to establish a constitutional monarchy, drawing inspiration from the American Revolution. While his vision of a constitutional monarchy did not prevail, Lafayette played a key role in drafting the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen—an influential document that would inspire future movements for human rights across the world.

Though his moderate stance ultimately put him at odds with the more radical factions of the French Revolution, Lafayette's commitment to the principles of freedom and equality earned him a lasting legacy in both American and French history.

Lafayette's Visit to Mobile, Alabama: A Hero's Return

In 1824, Lafayette was invited back to America to help celebrate the nation's 50th anniversary of independence. His tour, filled with celebrations and parades, took him across the country, including a significant stop in Mobile, Alabama, in March of 1825. This visit was a momentous occasion for the people of Alabama, who greeted him as a hero and expressed their gratitude for his role in securing American freedom.

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Governor Israel Pickens invited Lafayette to visit Alabama in December 1824. Festivities were planned in Montgomery, Cahawba, and Mobile. Public funds were approved by the state legislature to pay for entertainment. Lafayette and his traveling party entered Alabama in March of 1825 through Creek Territory. The party spent time with the Creeks, which included a game of stickball and Lafayette would rest for the night just a few miles down the road at a tavern. The traveling party would make its way to Montgomery over the next few days. Lafayette arrived in Montgomery on Sunday, April 3 and after an official welcome, festivities were paused due to Sunday being the day of rest. The following evening, there was a dinner and ball to celebrate his arrival. The group would then travel by steamboat down the Alabama River making stops in Selma and in Monroe County. The tour would continue on to Mobile, where they arrived on April 7. Grand festivities were held in Mobile, including a banquet and ball. The next morning, Lafayette was escorted by Governor Pickens to Mobile Point so that he could continue his tour of the states in Mississippi.

Lafayette's visit to Mobile occurred at a time when the city was still developing. In fact, the total cost for the visit was \$17,000, which is more than it cost to build the capitol building at Cahawba. Alabama, a relatively young state, was undergoing significant growth, particularly with the rise of cotton plantations. Lafayette's presence in Mobile served as a powerful reminder of the unity that had been achieved in the United States, despite regional divisions. The warmth and admiration that the citizens of Mobile showed him was a testament to the lasting impact of his contributions to American independence.

One of the most poignant moments of Lafayette's visit was when he was greeted by local veterans of the War of 1812. These men, who had fought for the United States just a few years earlier, stood alongside Lafayette—who had fought in the American Revolution—and reflected the deep respect that Americans held for him. Though his visit was brief, it left a lasting mark on the people of Mobile, reminding them of the sacrifices made to secure the freedom they now enjoyed.

Legacy of Lafayette: A Hero Across Two Revolutions

Today, over 200 years after his visit to Mobile, Lafayette's legacy endures. His unwavering commitment to the principles of liberty, his leadership in both the American and French Revolutions, and his role in cementing the bonds between America and France continue to inspire generations. Lafayette's life serves as a testament to the transformative power of revolutionary ideals and the importance of international cooperation in the pursuit of freedom and justice.

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As we reflect on his life and legacy, we are reminded that the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity that Lafayette championed are as relevant today as they were in the 18th century. His story continues to inspire those who fight for justice and human rights across the globe, reminding us that the struggle for freedom is a timeless endeavor.

Vive la liberté! Vive l'Amérique! Vive Lafayette!

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Directions: Circle the correct answer based on the passage.

1. Who was the Marquis de Lafayette?
 - A) A famous British general
 - B) A French nobleman and military leader
 - C) A soldier from Spain
 - D) An American politician
2. What year did Lafayette visit Mobile, Alabama?
 - A) 1812
 - B) 1824
 - C) 1800
 - D) 1776
3. How old was Lafayette when he was appointed as a major-general in the Continental Army?
 - A) 20
 - B) 19
 - C) 23
 - D) 30
4. Why did Lafayette want to help the American colonies fight for independence?
 - A) He wanted to travel to America.
 - B) He believed in the American cause for freedom.
 - C) He wanted to become the King of America.
 - D) He wanted to fight the British for fun.
5. What was Lafayette's role in the Siege of Yorktown?
 - A) He was a general in the French army.
 - B) He helped lead the American forces to victory.
 - C) He was a spy for the British.
 - D) He was a civilian observer.
6. What important document did Lafayette help draft during the French Revolution?
 - A) The Declaration of Independence
 - B) The Bill of Rights
 - C) The Declaration of the Rights of Man
 - D) The U.S. Constitution
7. Why was Lafayette invited to visit the United States in 1824?
 - A) To attend a political meeting
 - B) To help with a military strategy
 - C) As a hero of the American Revolution
 - D) To start a new business

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8. How did the people of Mobile, Alabama, show their gratitude to Lafayette during his visit?

- A) They held a parade in his honor.
- B) They gave him a medal.
- C) They gave him a large estate.
- D) They held a quiet dinner for him.

9. What was the significance of Lafayette's visit to Mobile for the people there?

- A) It marked the beginning of a war.
- B) It was a time to celebrate a hero of the American Revolution.
- C) It was a chance to negotiate peace with France.
- D) It was the first time anyone from France visited Mobile.

10. How did Lafayette's life and actions impact both the United States and France?

- A) He helped the United States win independence and inspired the French Revolution.
- B) He started the first French-American trade route.
- C) He wrote books about the American Revolution.
- D) He only helped in the French Revolution.

Reflection/Opinion Questions:

1. Do you think Lafayette was brave for going to America to fight for independence, even though his family didn't want him to? Why or why not?

2. What do you think Lafayette's visit to Mobile, Alabama, meant for the people living there at the time?

3. What can we learn from Lafayette's life and how he helped both America and France?

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Answer Key:

Multiple Choice:

1. B
2. B
3. B
4. B
5. B
6. V
7. V
8. A
9. B
10. A

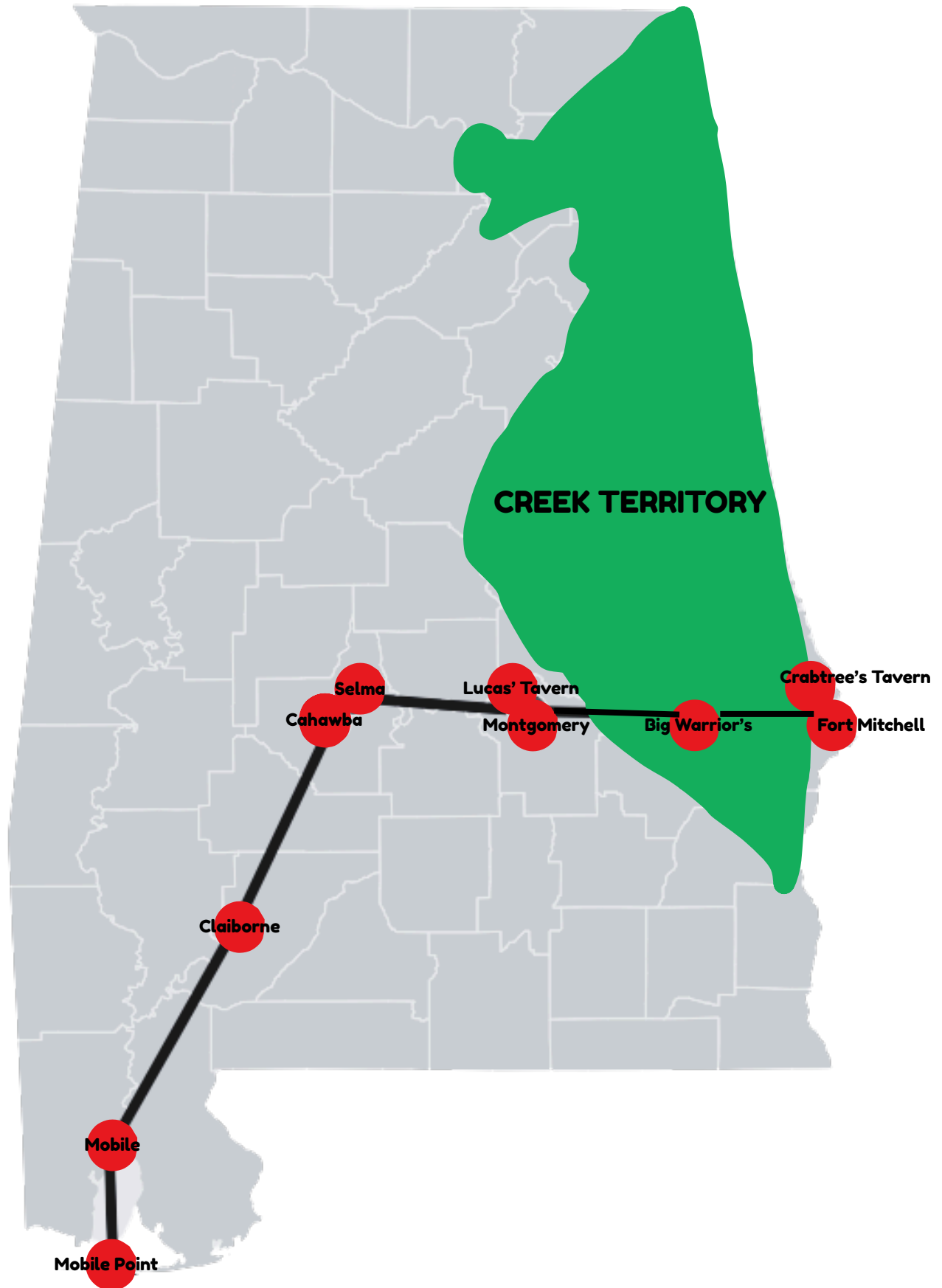
Short Answer:

1. Yes, because he believed in freedom and independence for others.
2. It was a celebration of Lafayette's heroism and connection to their history.
3. He taught us that it's important to be brave and stand up for what we believe in.

THE STATE OF ALABAMA



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- Stop 1 – Fort Mitchell
 - Lafayette started his visit to Alabama at Fort Mitchell on March 31. He was greeted by soldiers and a group of people to welcome him. Since Lafayette was entering land that belonged to the Creek people, Governor Pickens asked General Thomas S. Woodward, who was part Creek, to lead a special group to guide him safely through the area.
- Stop 2 – Crabtree's Tavern
 - When Lafayette got to Fort Mitchell, Chilly McIntosh, the son of Creek leader Gen. William McIntosh, and 50 Creek people greeted him with loud war whoops. The Creeks played a game of stickball to entertain Lafayette. After the game, Lafayette and his group traveled a little further and spent the night at a tavern owned by Haynes Crabtree.
- Stop 3 – Big Warrior's
 - On the morning of April 1, Lafayette and his group began their journey down the Old Federal Road toward Montgomery. A big parade was held as they passed through Creek land, with soldiers and 100 Creek horsemen helping to escort Lafayette, who rode in a fancy carriage. That night, some of the group stayed at Kendall Lewis's Tavern, but Lafayette traveled a bit further west to Warrior Stand, the home of the Creek leader Big Warrior, who had recently passed away.
- Stop 4 – Montgomery
 - On April 3, Lafayette arrived in Montgomery to a warm welcome from a crowd of 3,000 people and a band playing "Hail to the Chief." After being introduced to local officials, including Col. Arthur Hayne and Gov. Pickens, Lafayette enjoyed a private dinner and church service. The next day, he attended a public dinner and a ball at Freeny's Tavern. Feeling tired, Lafayette left the ball early, and he and his party boarded two steamboats to continue their journey down the Alabama River.
- Stop 5 – Lucas' Tavern
 - On April 2, the group kept traveling toward Line Creek, which was the border between Creek land and Alabama land. When they reached it, the Creek horsemen said goodbye and left the group. The rest of the travelers spent the night at Walter B. Lucas' tavern.

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- Stop 6 - Selma
 - On April 5, the group made a short stop in Selma so the people there could meet the famous Lafayette.
- Stop 7 - Cahawba
 - The group then stopped at Cahawba, which was the state capital at the time, where Lafayette received another grand welcome. A band played "Lafayette's March," and Alabama's attorney general, Henry Hitchcock, gave a speech to welcome him. It was interesting because Hitchcock was the grandson of Lafayette's friend, Gen. Ethan Allen from Vermont. Lafayette and his group enjoyed a formal reception and a big public barbecue dinner at the state house.
- Stop 8 - Claiborne
 - The group stopped at Claiborne in Monroe County, where they went to a public reception at the courthouse and attended the ceremony for the laying of the cornerstone for a Masonic Lodge. After that, Lafayette and the rest of the party continued their journey to Mobile.
- Stop 9 - Mobile
 - When Lafayette arrived in Mobile on April 7, 1825, he was welcomed just as grandly and celebrated as he had been during his journey through the state. That evening, a banquet and ball were held at a hotel on Royal Street, with more than 600 people attending to see him.
- Stop 10 - Mobile Point
 - On the morning of April 8, Governor Pickens traveled with Lafayette by steamboat across Mobile Bay to Mobile Point, where they met an official welcoming party from Louisiana. Lafayette then boarded the fancy steamer Natchez, which took him to New Orleans to continue his tour of America.

Name: _____

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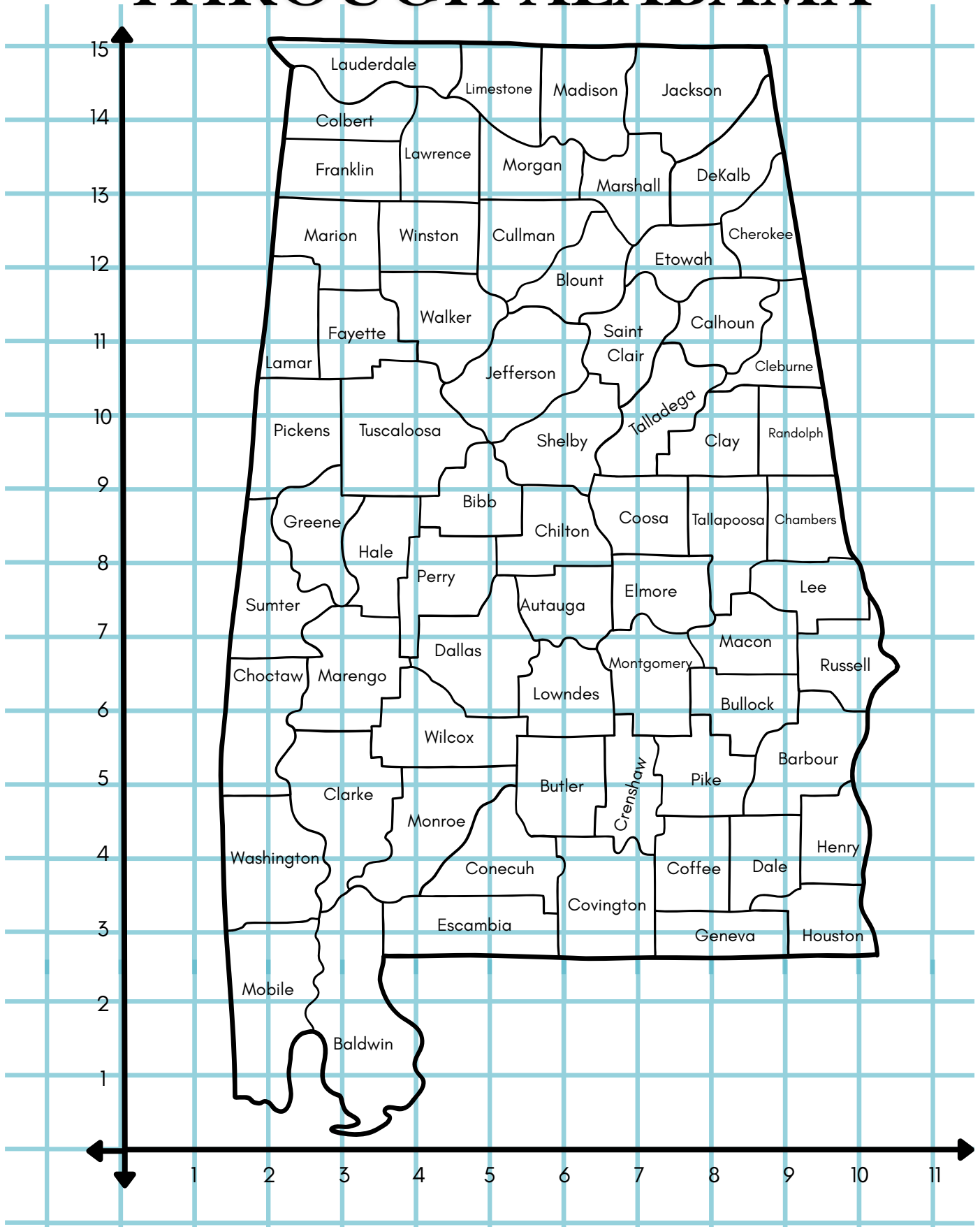
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Directions: Using the points provided below, trace Lafayette's journey through Alabama

START:

Fort Mitchell: $(10\frac{1}{3}, 7)$

Crabtree's: $(10, 7)$

Big Warrior's: $(9, 6\frac{1}{2})$

Montgomery: $(7, 6\frac{2}{3})$

Lucas' Tavern: $(7, 7)$

Selma: $(5, 7)$

Cahawba: $(4\frac{1}{2}, 6\frac{2}{3})$

Claiborne: $(3\frac{1}{2}, 4\frac{1}{3})$

Mobile: $(2\frac{1}{2}, 1\frac{2}{3})$

Mobile Point: $(2\frac{3}{4}, \frac{1}{4})$