

Thinking Skills



Making Conclusions

VOCABULARY

conclusion

WHY THE SKILL MATTERS

As you read in the previous lesson, in 1682 the French explorer Robert La Salle reached the mouth of the Mississippi River. He had the help of the Quapaw people. When the Quapaw first saw him, they needed to know if he was friendly or not. They saw that La Salle's face did not look angry. He did not reach for a weapon. A peace pipe was in his hand. From what they saw, the Quapaw made a **conclusion** that La Salle was friendly.

When you make a conclusion, you look at all the pieces of information and

figure out what they mean. Suppose you want to buy a gift for a friend and know your friend likes to read about science. You might conclude that a book about robots would be a good gift.

USING THE SKILL

You have also read about two other French explorers, Marquette and Jolliet, who searched for a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. They had heard about a river that the Native Americans called "big river," or "Mississippi." Marquette and Jolliet thought that it might flow into the Pacific Ocean. But when they paddled down the Mississippi, they saw that it flowed south. They concluded that the river could not be the Northwest Passage. Marquette and Jolliet turned back at the mouth of the Arkansas River and headed north.

Helping yourself

To make a conclusion, first identify the subject of all the information. Here the subject is the Mississippi River. Next, look for connections between the pieces of information and what they mean. Marquette knew the Mississippi was a wide river. But he later saw that the Mississippi flowed south. From this information he concluded that he had not found the Northwest Passage.

• A **conclusion** is a final statement based on information about something.

• First gather different pieces of information about a topic.

• Next, look for a common idea behind all the pieces of information considered.

What conclusion do you think they made from this? Explain how and why they might have made it. For help, refer to the Helping Yourself box on this page.

REVIEWING THE SKILL

1. What is a conclusion?
2. What do you need to do before you can state a conclusion?

TRYING THE SKILL

You have seen how to make a conclusion. Now try to make a conclusion on your own. Marquette and Jolliet paddled down the Mississippi for two months. Finally they saw that the speed of the water slowed. They tasted the water and found it was salty.

3. Was La Salle expecting to meet Native Americans on his journey? What information did you use to draw your conclusion?
4. Marquette and Jolliet concluded that the Mississippi River was not a Northwest Passage. How did they do this?
5. What are some examples of how making a conclusion can help make sense out of a lot of information?

Marquette and Jolliet (right) were the first Europeans to reach the Mississippi. In the painting by George Catlin on page 270, La Salle feasts with Native Americans. The feast took place in what is now Illinois.

