KENTUCKY

THE BLUEGRASS STATE *Became a state June 1, 1792 (15th)*

Kentucky stretches from the Appalachian Mountains in the east to the Mississippi River in the west. It is known for horse farms, coal, caves and the pioneers who came through the mountains.



Why the Bluegrass State?

Bluegrass is green. In spring it grows tiny bluish-purple seed heads, and a whole field can look blue from far away. The grass grows over limestone, a rock rich in calcium. Horses that graze on it take in calcium that helps build strong bones. That is one reason central Kentucky became famous for raising racehorses called Thoroughbreds.



Mapping the Longest Cave

Mammoth Cave has more than 400 miles of mapped passages. One of its greatest explorers was Stephen Bishop, who came to the cave as a teenager in 1838 to guide visitors. He and a visitor were the first known people to cross a deep hole called the Bottomless Pit. Later he drew a map of the cave from memory.



A Doorway in the Mountains

The Appalachian Mountains stood like a wall between the eastern colonies and Kentucky. The Cumberland Gap is a low notch in that wall. Bison, and then Cherokee and Shawnee travelers, used it for ages. In 1775, Daniel Boone and about 30 men cut a trail through it. By 1810, more than 200,000 settlers had followed.



America's Gold Vault

In the 1930s the government wanted a safe place for its gold, far from the coasts where an enemy might attack. It built a vault at Fort Knox and began moving gold there by train in 1937. The vault door weighs more than 20 tons. During World War II, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were kept there.



A Rainbow at Night

A rainbow appears when sunlight shines through drops of water. At Cumberland Falls, the same thing can happen at night. When the moon is full and the sky is clear, moonlight passes through the mist of the waterfall and makes a pale arc called a moonbow. It is one of the few places in the world where one appears regularly.



The Bat That Made a Name

In 1884, Bud Hillerich was a teenager working in his father's woodworking shop in Louisville. The story goes that he watched a star player named Pete Browning break his bat, then offered to make him a new one. The tale says Browning got three hits in his next game. Soon the shop was making bats for players everywhere.

BY THE NUMBERS

Population	About 4.6 million (26th most)
Size	About 40,400 square miles (37th largest)
Highest point	Black Mountain, 4,145 feet
Counties	120
Neighbors	Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri

DID YOU KNOW?

- Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis led the two sides in the Civil War. Both were born in Kentucky, less than a year apart.
- The tune of "Happy Birthday to You" comes from an 1893 song by two Louisville sisters. It was called "Good Morning to All."
- A small piece of Kentucky is cut off by a loop of the Mississippi River. To drive there, you must go through Tennessee.
- The first Kentucky Derby was run in Louisville in 1875. The race has been held every year since.

FIND IT ON THE MAP

1. Which city is the largest in Kentucky?
2. Which city is closest to Mammoth Cave?
3. In what year was Kentucky Lake created?

Answers: 1. Louisville 2. Bowling Green 3. 1944