

SECTION 4 The War of 1812

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

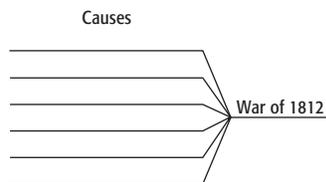
While the War of 1812 produced no clear winner, it gave Americans a strong sense of national pride.

Key Terms and Names

Non-Intercourse Act, War Hawks, Tecumseh, William Henry Harrison, Oliver Perry, Hartford Convention, nationalism, Treaty of Ghent

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the War of 1812, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by listing the causes of the war.



Reading Objectives

- **Describe** why the United States declared war on Britain, and discuss the major campaigns of the war.
- **List** the results of the Treaty of Ghent.

Section Theme

Individual Action Military leaders, including William Henry Harrison, Tecumseh, Oliver Perry, and Andrew Jackson, helped decide the outcome of the War of 1812.

Preview of Events



★ An American Story ★



Francis Scott Key

On the night of September 13, 1814, Francis Scott Key, a young Maryland lawyer, stood on the deck of a British ship in Baltimore Harbor and watched the British bombard Fort McHenry. The shelling continued into the morning hours. Explosions lit up the night, and shells with trailing fuses streaked towards the fort. Rockets arced across the sky, as a huge American flag waved over the fort.

As the sun rose, Key strained to see if the flag still waved. To his great joy, it did. He took a letter from his pocket and began scribbling these words for a poem on the back:

“Oh, say can you see, by the dawn’s early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming?
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O’er the ramparts we watched, were so gallantly streaming?
And the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there.
Oh, say does that star spangled banner yet wave,
O’er the land of the free and the home of the brave?”

—from “The Star-Spangled Banner”

The Decision for War

After Thomas Jefferson announced that he would not run again for president in 1808, the Republican Party nominated James Madison. The Federalists nominated Charles Pinckney. Despite some lingering anger about the Embargo of 1807, Madison won the election easily.



Madison assumed office in the midst of an international crisis. Tensions between the United States and Britain were rising, and it would fall to Madison to decide whether or not to lead the United States into its first full-scale war since the Revolution.

Economic Pressures Like Jefferson, Madison wanted to avoid war. To force the British to stop seizing American ships, he asked Congress to pass the **Non-Intercourse Act**. This act forbade trade with France and Britain while authorizing the president to reopen trade with whichever country removed its trade restrictions first. The idea was to play France and Britain against each other, but the plan failed.

In May 1810, Congress took a different approach with a plan drafted by Nathaniel Macon of North Carolina. The plan, called Macon’s Bill Number Two, reopened trade with both Britain and France, but it stated that if either nation agreed to drop its restrictions on trade, the United States would stop importing goods from the other nation.

Soon afterward, Napoleon announced that France would no longer restrict American trade, although his statement still allowed for the seizure of American ships. Madison accepted Napoleon’s statement, despite its conditions, hoping to pressure the British into dropping their trade restrictions. When the British refused, Congress passed a non-importation act against Britain in early 1811.

Madison’s strategy eventually worked. By early 1812 the refusal of the United States to buy British goods had begun to hurt the British economy. British merchants and manufacturers began to pressure their government to repeal its restrictions on trade. Finally, in June 1812, Britain ended all restrictions on American trade, but it was too late. Two days later, the British learned that the United States Congress had declared war on Great Britain.

The War Hawks Although it appeared that Britain’s actions against the United States had hurt mainly Eastern merchants, most members of Congress who voted for war came from the South and West. They were led by Henry Clay of Kentucky, John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, and Felix Grundy of Tennessee. Their opponents nicknamed them the **War Hawks**.

Americans in the South and West wanted war for two reasons. British trade restrictions hurt Southern planters and Western farmers, who earned much of their income by shipping tobacco, rice, wheat, and cotton overseas. Eastern merchants could make a profit despite British restrictions because they passed the cost of losing ships and goods onto the farmers.

Western farmers also blamed the British for clashes with Native Americans along the frontier. In the early 1800s, settlers had begun moving past the line established by the Treaty of Greenville. As clashes with Native Americans increased, many settlers accused the British in Canada of arming the Native Americans and encouraging them to attack American settlements.

Tecumseh and Tippecanoe Although Western settlers blamed the British for their problems with the Native Americans, it was the increasing demands of speculators and settlers that sparked Native American resistance. **Tecumseh**, a Shawnee leader, believed that Native Americans needed to unite to protect their lands.

While Tecumseh worked for political union, his brother Tenskwatawa (known as “the Prophet”) called for a spiritual rebirth of Native American cultures. His followers lived in Prophetstown on the Tippecanoe River in Indiana, where they tried to practice traditional Native American ways of living.

Aware that Tecumseh’s movement was becoming more militant, **William Henry Harrison**, governor of the Indiana territory, prepared to stamp it out. In November 1811, Harrison gathered a force and marched towards Prophetstown. Tenskwatawa decided to strike first, sending fighters to attack Harrison and his troops near the Tippecanoe River. The bloody Battle of Tippecanoe left about one-fourth of Harrison’s troops dead or wounded, but its impact on the Native Americans was far greater. The clash shattered Native American confidence in the Prophet’s leadership. Many, including Tecumseh, fled to Canada.

Fact	Fiction	Folklore
<p>The Star-Spangled Banner, 1779–1818 The Stars and Stripes flag gained two more stars and two more stripes in 1795, after Kentucky and Vermont joined the Union. This flag flew over Fort McHenry during the War of 1812 and inspired Francis Scott Key to write “The Star-Spangled Banner.”</p> <p>Congress realized that the flag would become too large if a stripe were added for every new state. It decided to keep the stripes at 13—for the 13 original colonies—and to add a star for each new state.</p>		





Tecumseh's flight to British-held Canada seemed to prove that the British were supporting and arming the Native Americans. Many Western farmers argued that war with Britain would enable the United States to seize Canada and end Native American attacks.

In early June 1812, President Madison gave in to the pressure and asked Congress to declare war. His war message spoke about national honor and emphasized the abuse Americans had suffered at the hands of the British:

“Thousands of American citizens, under the safeguard of public law and of their national flag, have been torn from . . . everything dear to them; have been dragged on board ships of a foreign nation . . . to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes to risk their lives in battles of their oppressors.”

—from Madison's
War Message to Congress

In Congress, the vote split along regional lines. The South and West generally voted for war, while the Northeast did not.

Reading Check **Examining** Why did Americans in the South and West favor war with Great Britain?

The Invasion of Canada

Although the Republican-led Congress had called for war, the nation was not ready to fight. The army had fewer than 7,000 troops and little equipment. The navy had only 16 ships. Also, Americans were deeply divided over the war. Many people in New York and New England called it “Mr. Madison's War,” implying that it was a private fight that did not deserve the nation's support.

Paying for the war also posed a problem. The year before the war, Republicans had shut down the Bank of the United States by refusing to renew its charter. This made it difficult for the government to borrow money because most private bankers were located in the Northeast. They opposed the war and would not

Profiles IN HISTORY

Tecumseh c. 1768–1813

Tecumseh was a Shawnee chief born near present-day Springfield, Ohio. The Shawnee had taken part in many wars in the Northwest Territory. After the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, Tecumseh and many other Shawnee moved to the Indiana territory to escape American settlers.

Tecumseh urged all Native Americans to unite. They were all one people, he said, and should cooperate in a confederacy to control their destiny. He was furious when the Delaware and Potawatomi agreed to cede about 3 million acres (1.2 million ha) to the United States. The land belonged to all Native Americans, Tecumseh argued. How could one group give it up?

In the end, Tecumseh saw no choice but to fight: “The hunting grounds are fast disappearing and they are driving the red man farther and farther to the west.” Ominously, he warned, “Surely [this] will be the fate of all tribes if the power of the whites is not forever crushed. . . .”

During the War of 1812, Tecumseh allied himself with the British. A superb



commander, he met his end at the Battle of the Thames River, fought near Chatham, Ontario, in October 1813. There, 400 British troops commanded by General Henry Proctor and about 1,000 Native Americans led by Tecumseh fought some 3,000 American troops led by General William Henry Harrison. During the battle, the British broke ranks and fled, leaving Tecumseh's men to face the American forces alone. After Tecumseh's death, his confederacy collapsed, leaving the United States in firm control of the Northwest Territory.

loan money to the government. Despite the nation's military and financial weakness, President Madison ordered the military to invade Canada.

Three Strikes Against Canada American military leaders planned to attack Canada from three directions—from Detroit, from Niagara Falls, and up the Hudson River valley toward Montreal. All three attacks failed. The British navy on Lake Erie rapidly shuttled troops to Detroit and forced the American commander, General William Hull, to surrender.

Next, the British shifted their troops to Niagara Falls, where they took up positions on Queenston Heights. From there, they easily drove off some 600 American troops who had landed on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. The American force would have been larger, except that the New York militia, many of whom opposed the war, refused to cross the river. They argued that the terms of their military service did not require them to leave the country.





The third American attack fared no better than the first two. General Henry Dearborn, marching up the Hudson River toward Montreal, called off the attack after the militia accompanying his troops refused to cross the border.

Perry's Victory on Lake Erie The following year, the United States had more success after Commodore **Oliver Perry** secretly arranged for the construction of a fleet on the coast of Lake Erie in Ohio. On September 10, 1813, Perry's fleet attacked the British fleet on Lake Erie near Put-in-Bay. When his own ship was no longer able to fight, Perry rowed to another vessel. After a grueling four-hour battle, the British surrendered.

Perry's victory gave the Americans control of Lake Erie. It also enabled General Harrison to recover Detroit and march into Canada, where he defeated a combined force of British troops and Native Americans at the Battle of the Thames River.

Harrison's attack from the west was supposed to meet up with American troops from Niagara Falls in the east. British troops and Canadian militia, however, stopped the American attack from the east at the Battle of Stony Creek. When Harrison learned of the defeat, he retreated to Detroit. By the end of 1813, the United States still had not conquered any territory in Canada.

Reading Check

Explaining Why was conquering Canada an important American goal in the War of 1812?

The War Ends

In 1814, Napoleon's empire collapsed. With the war against France over, the British were able to send much of their navy and many more troops to deal with the United States. The British strategy for the war had three parts. First, the British navy would raid American cities along the coast. Second, they would march south into New York from Montreal, cutting New

England off from the rest of the country. Third, they would seize New Orleans and close the Mississippi River to western farmers. The British believed this strategy would force the United States to make peace.

Raids on Washington, D.C., and Baltimore With attention focused on Canada, in August 1814 a British fleet sailed into Chesapeake Bay and landed troops within marching distance of Washington, D.C. The British easily dispersed the poorly trained militia defending the capital and entered the city unopposed. Madison and other government officials hastily fled. The British set fire to both the White House and the Capitol. They then prepared to attack Baltimore.

Unlike Washington, D.C., Baltimore was ready for the British. The city militia inflicted heavy casualties on the British troops that went ashore. After bombarding Fort Mchenry throughout the night of September 13, the British abandoned their attack on the city.





The Battle of New Orleans Less than a month after the Hartford Convention began, an American victory in the South put a stop to Federalist complaints. In January 1815, a British fleet with some 7,500 men landed near New Orleans. The American commander, General Andrew Jackson, quickly improvised a defense using cotton bales. The thick bales absorbed the British bullets, while the British advancing in the open provided easy targets for the American troops. The fighting ended in a decisive American victory.

The **Battle of New Orleans** made Andrew Jackson a national hero. It also helped to destroy the Federalist Party. As **nationalism**, or feelings of strong patriotism, surged, the Federalists at the Hartford Convention appeared divisive and unpatriotic. They never recovered politically, and within a few years the party ceased to exist.

The Treaty of Ghent Peace negotiations began in the European city of Ghent even before the major battles of 1814. On December 24, 1814, the negotiators signed the **Treaty of Ghent**, ending the War of 1812. The treaty restored prewar boundaries but did not mention neutral rights or impressment, and no territory changed hands. Still, the War of 1812 increased the nation's prestige overseas and generated a new spirit of patriotism and national unity.

Four years later in the Convention of 1818, the United States and Great Britain set the U.S.-Canadian border from what is now Minnesota to the Rocky Mountains at 49° north latitude. The countries also agreed to claim jointly for the next ten years a region farther west known as the Oregon Country.

Reading Check **Examining** What were the effects of the Battle of New Orleans?

History Through Art

Battle of New Orleans This John Landis engraving depicts the triumph of Andrew Jackson (on horseback at right) over the British during the War of 1812. **What was unusual about the timing of the battle?**

The Battle of Lake Champlain That same month, about 15,000 well-trained British soldiers advanced southward from Montreal into New York. The key to the British advance was control of Lake Champlain. On September 11, 1814, the American naval force on the lake decisively defeated the British fleet. When the British realized that the Americans could use their control of the lake to surround the British, they abandoned the attack and retreated to Montreal.

The Hartford Convention The British offensive increased New England's opposition to the war. In December 1814, Federalists from the region met in Hartford, Connecticut, to discuss what they could do independently of the United States. Although members of the Essex Junto at the convention urged New England to secede, moderate delegates refused to support such extreme action. Instead, the **Hartford Convention** called for several constitutional amendments to increase the region's political power.

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

- Define:** War Hawks, nationalism.
- Identify:** Non-Intercourse Act, Tecumseh, William Henry Harrison, Oliver Perry, Hartford Convention, Treaty of Ghent.
- Analyze** why Perry's victory on Lake Erie was important for the Americans.

Reviewing Themes

- Individual Action** What did Tecumseh's death signify for Native Americans of the Northwest Territory?

Critical Thinking

- Synthesizing** How did the War of 1812 affect the United States?
- Classifying** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list how Americans in different sections of the country felt about war with Great Britain and why.

Section of U.S.	Position on War	Reason for War Position
West		
South		
North		

Analyzing Visuals

- Studying Art** Look carefully at the painting of the Battle of New Orleans pictured above. What advantage did the American forces have that helped them win the battle?

Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Think of an event that made you feel patriotic about the United States. Write a paragraph explaining why the event made you feel this way.

