THE WAR OF 1812



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War Hawks were overjoyed when the War of 1812 began. They thought that conquering Canada was "a mere matter of marching." They were wrong. In 1812, 1813, and again in 1814 U.S. forces crossed into Canada, but each time British forces drove them back. The British, too, found the going much rougher than expected. On September 10, 1813, a U.S. naval force under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry captured a British fleet of six ships on Lake Erie. Perry's victory enabled William Henry Harrison to push into Upper Canada, where he defeated the British in a major battle. Chief Tecumseh, who was fighting on the side of the British, was killed. However, in December, the British drove the Americans back across the border.

By 1814, Napoleon had been defeated in Europe, and Great Britain was able to send thousands of troops across the Atlantic. American plans to conquer Canada came to an end. Meanwhile, in August 1814, another British army invaded Washington, D.C. The British burned several public buildings, including the Capitol and the White House. President Madison had to flee for his life. Next, the British attacked the port city of Baltimore, Maryland. On September 13, an American lawyer named Francis Scott Key watched as the British bombarded Fort McHenry, which guarded the city's harbor. The bombardment went on all night. When dawn broke, Key was thrilled to see that the American flag still waved over the fort, proving that the fort had not been captured. He expressed his feelings in a poem that was later put to music as "The Star-Spangled Banner."





The Battle of New Orleans - A British fleet had surrendered to U.S. forces after the Battle of Lake Champlain in New York just two days before the unsuccessful attack on Baltimore. In Great Britain, news of this defeat would greatly weaken the desire to continue the war. But the news took time to travel, and in the meantime British commanders in the United States launched another invasion. This time, their target was New Orleans. New Orleans was defended by General Andrew Jackson and a diverse army of 7,000 militia that included a few African Americans, Indians, and pirates. On January 8, 1815, more than 7,500 British troops marched confidently into battle, where they were met with deadly fire from Jackson's troops. Some 2,000 British soldiers were killed or wounded, compared with only about 70 Americans. The Battle of New Orleans was the greatest U.S. victory of the War of 1812. It was also unnecessary. Two weeks earlier, American and British diplomats meeting in Ghent (GHENT), Belgium, had signed a peace treaty ending the war. The news did not reach New Orleans until after the battle.

Results of the War Although both sides claimed victory, neither Great Britain nor the United States really won the War of 1812. The Treaty of Ghent settled none of the issues that had led to the fighting. Instead, the problems of impressment and ship seizures faded away as peace settled over Europe. Still, the war had important effects. First, the war severely weakened Indian resistance in the Northwest Territory. Over the next 20 years, the U.S. government would force most of the American Indians who fought with Tecumseh out of the Ohio Valley and west of the Mississippi River. Second, national pride in the United States surged. Many Americans considered the War of 1812 "the second war of independence." They felt that by standing up to the British, the United States had truly become a sovereign nation.



President Monroe's Dilemma: New Foreign Policy Challenge

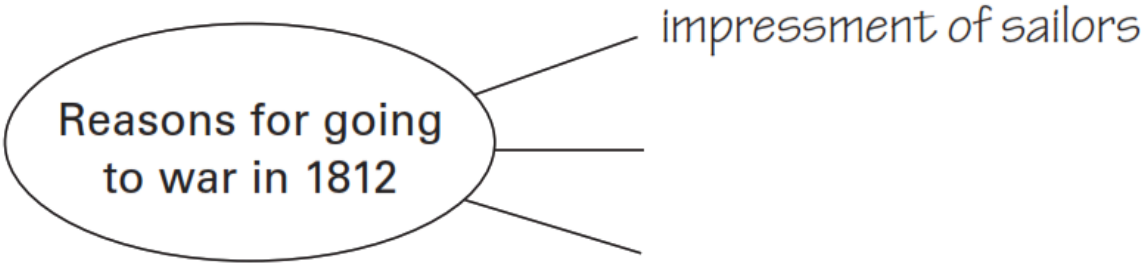
In 1817, President James Monroe faced a foreign policy challenge. After the War of 1812, he aimed to maintain isolationism, but American attention shifted to Latin America. Revolts against Spanish rule erupted from Mexico to South America. In Mexico, inspired by Catholic priest Miguel Hidalgo's "Cry of Dolores" in 1810, a ten-year revolution led to Mexico's independence in 1821. In South America, Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín liberated regions from Spanish rule by 1826. Americans and the British supported Latin American independence, as it opened doors for foreign trade. Other European leaders opposed it. In 1823, Great Britain asked the U.S. to join in sending a message to European leaders to leave Latin America alone. President James Monroe asked former presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison for advice. Should the United States do something to support the new Latin American nations? If so, what?



The Monroe Doctrine, announced in 1823, signaled a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy. It was born from the ideas of Jefferson and Madison, who wanted to align with Britain in warning Europe against interfering in the Americas. Secretary of State John Quincy Adams emphasized the need for the U.S. to assert its position independently and candidly. Monroe's doctrine declared that North and South American nations were independent and not open to European colonization, considering such attempts as threats to U.S. peace and safety. While Europeans criticized the message as arrogant, Americans saw it as a symbol of U.S. support for Latin American freedom. Over time, the Monroe Doctrine became a fundamental aspect of U.S. foreign policy, rejecting European interference in the Americas and showcasing U.S. strength and confidence on the global stage.

Questions

1. Complete the diagram to show the reasons why many Americans wanted to go to war with Great Britain in early 1812.



2. Complete the timeline of the War of 1812. For each month marked, briefly describe the event that happened and create a symbol to represent it.



3. Why might the United States have been interested in supporting the new Latin American nations in the early 1800s?

4. In your own words, explain what the Monroe Doctrine said. Then explain whether you think President Monroe pursued the best foreign policy option.