



4 The War of 1812

TERMS & NAMES

Oliver Hazard Perry
Battle of the
Thames
Francis Scott Key
Treaty of Ghent

MAIN IDEA

Angered by Britain's interference in the nation's affairs, the United States went to war.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The War of 1812 showed that the United States was willing and able to protect its national interests.

ONE AMERICAN'S STORY

The war between the United States and Britain had begun in 1812. Two years later, British troops were marching toward Washington, D.C. Dolley Madison, the president's wife, stayed behind until the last minute. With bombs bursting in the distance, she hurried to save important historical objects from the White House.

A VOICE FROM THE PAST

I have had [a wagon] filled with . . . the most valuable portable articles belonging to the house. . . I insist on waiting until the large picture of General Washington is secured . . . It is done! and the precious portrait placed in the hands of two gentlemen of New York, for safe keeping.

Dolley Madison, from a letter sent to her sister

When the British troops arrived in the city, they set fire to many public buildings, including the White House and the Capitol. The next day, a violent storm caused even more damage. Fortunately, the heavy rains that accompanied the storm helped put out the fires. You will learn about other events of the War of 1812 in this section.

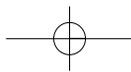
The War Begins

Britain did not really want a war with the United States because it was already involved in another war with France. To try to avoid war, the British announced that they would no longer interfere with American shipping. But the slow mails of the day prevented this news from reaching the United States until weeks after June 18th, when Congress approved Madison's request for a declaration of war.

The War of 1812 had two main phases. From 1812 to 1814, Britain concentrated on its war against France. It devoted little energy to the conflict in North America, although it did send ships to blockade the American coast. The second phase of the war began after the British defeated France in April 1814. With their European war nearly at an end, the British could turn their complete attention to the United States.



Before British troops set fire to the president's mansion, Dolley Madison saved priceless historical objects.

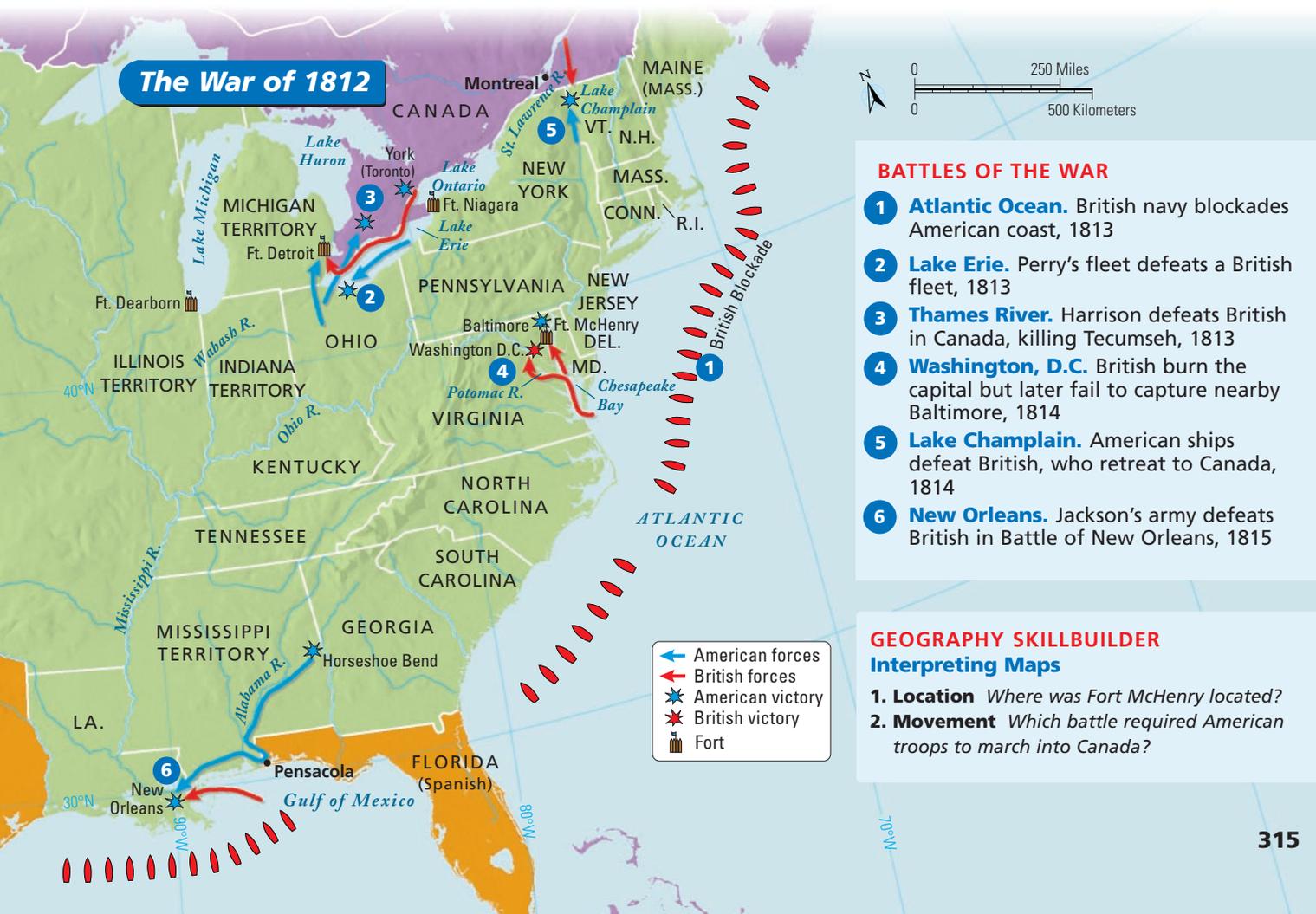


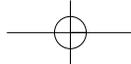
The United States military was weak when the war was declared. Democratic-Republicans had reduced the size of the armed forces. When the war began, the Navy had only about 16 ships. The army had fewer than 7,000 men. These men were poorly trained and equipped, and were often led by inexperienced officers. A young Virginia army officer complained that the older officers were victims of “sloth, ignorance, or habits of [excessive] drinking.”

The First Phase of the War

In spite of its small size, the United States Navy rose to the challenge. Its warships were the fastest afloat. American naval officers had gained valuable experience fighting pirates in the Mediterranean Sea. Early in the war, before the British blockaded the coast, ships such as the *Constitution* and the *United States* won stirring victories. These victories on the high seas boosted American confidence.

The most important U.S. naval victory took place on Lake Erie. In the winter of 1812–1813, the Americans had begun to build a fleet on the shores of Lake Erie. **Oliver Hazard Perry**, an experienced officer, took charge of this infant fleet. In September 1813, the small British force on the lake set out to attack the American ships. Commodore Perry, who had predicted that this would be “the most important day of my life,” sailed out to meet the enemy. Perry’s ship, the *Lawrence*, flew a banner declaring, “Don’t give up the ship.”





For two hours, the British and Americans exchanged cannon shots. Perry's ship was demolished and the guns put out of action. He grabbed his ship's banner and leaped into a rowboat. Under British fire, he and four companions rowed to another ship. In command of the second ship, Perry destroyed two of the enemy's ships and soon forced the British to surrender. After the battle, Perry sent a message to General Harrison: "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

"Don't give up the ship."

Banner on Perry's ship, the *Lawrence*

When General Harrison received Perry's note, he set out to attack the British. But when Harrison transported his army across Lake Erie to Detroit, he discovered that the British had retreated into Canada. Harrison pursued the British forces and defeated them at the **Battle of the Thames** in October. This victory put an end to the British threat to the Northwest—and also claimed the life of Tecumseh, who died in the battle fighting for the British.

The Second Phase of the War

After defeating Napoleon in April 1814, Britain turned its full attention to the United States. As you read in *One American's Story*, British forces burned the Capitol building and the president's mansion in August. The British then attacked Fort McHenry at Baltimore.

The commander of Fort McHenry had earlier requested a flag "so large that the British will have no difficulty in seeing it." Detained on a British ship, a Washington lawyer named **Francis Scott Key** watched the all-night battle. At dawn, Key discovered that the flag was still flying. He expressed his pride in what became the U.S. national anthem.

ReadingHistory

A. Drawing Conclusions

What was the overall result of the Battle of the Thames?

America's HERITAGE

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER

The "Star-Spangled Banner," inspired by the flag that flew over Fort McHenry (see below), continues to move Americans. On hearing this national anthem, patriotic listeners stand, take off their hats, and put their hands over their hearts. These actions pay respect to the American flag and the song that celebrates it.

Francis Scott Key's song enjoyed widespread popularity for more than 100 years before an act of Congress made it the national anthem in 1931.



A VOICE FROM THE PAST

Oh say can you see by the dawn's early light
What so proudly we hail'd at the twilight's last gleaming,
Whose broad stripes and bright stars through the perilous fight
O'er the ramparts we watch'd 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?

Francis Scott Key, *Star-Spangled Banner*

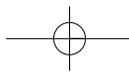
Meanwhile, in the north, the British sent a force from Canada across Lake Champlain. Its goal was to push south and cut off New England. The plan failed when the American fleet defeated the British in the Battle of Lake Champlain in September 1814.

In the south, the British moved against the strategic port of New Orleans. In December 1814, dozens of ships carrying 7,500 British troops approached Louisiana. To fight them, the Americans patched together an army under the command of General Andrew Jackson.

ReadingHistory

B. Reading a Map

Locate the battles of the second phase of the war on the map on page 315. Note how far apart the sites were.



Reading History

C. Making Inferences Why did Jackson fight the British at New Orleans after a peace treaty was signed?

The British attacked Jackson's forces on January 8, 1815. Protected by earthworks, American riflemen mowed down the advancing redcoats. It was a great victory for Jackson. American casualties totaled 71, compared to Britain's 2,000. Though the Battle of New Orleans made Jackson a hero, it was unnecessary. Slow mails from Europe had delayed news of the **Treaty of Ghent**, which ended the War of 1812. It had been signed two weeks earlier, on December 24, 1814.

The Legacy of the War

The treaty showed that the war had no clear winner. No territory changed hands, and trade disputes were left unresolved. Still, the war had important consequences. First, the heroic exploits of men such as Andrew Jackson and Oliver Perry increased American patriotism. Second, the war broke the strength of Native Americans, who had sided with the British. Finally, when war interrupted trade, the Americans were forced to make many of the goods they had previously imported. This encouraged the growth of U.S. manufactures.

The United States had also proved that it could defend itself against the mightiest military power of the era. For perhaps the first time, Americans believed that the young nation would survive and prosper. You will learn about the country's growing prosperity in Chapter 11.

The Effects of the War

SKILLBUILDER Interpreting Charts
Which effect do you think resulted from the war's interruption of U.S. trade?

Section **4** Assessment

1. Terms & Names

Explain the significance of:

- Oliver Hazard Perry
- Battle of the Thames
- Francis Scott Key
- Treaty of Ghent

2. Taking Notes

Use a chart like the one shown to record military events of the War of 1812.

First Phase of War	Second Phase of War
1.	2.

Why was the war divided into two phases?

3. Main Ideas

- What was the state of the U.S. military when the war began?
- What were the results of General Harrison's victory at the Battle of the Thames?
- Where did the British focus their attacks during the second phase of the war?

4. Critical Thinking

Recognizing Effects What was the legacy of the War of 1812?

THINK ABOUT

- Americans' feelings toward their country
- U.S. relations with Native Americans
- possible economic effects

ACTIVITY OPTIONS

LANGUAGE ARTS

ART

Research the U.S.S. *Constitution*. Write a **poem** to commemorate one of its victories or design a **model** to show its parts.