



War of 1812

Background - The 1783 *Treaty of Paris* ended the American Revolution. Britain agreed to the independence of the United States and to abandon its forts and withdraw its soldiers from the new nation. However, Britain still governed Canada. From 1793 to 1812, France & Britain waged almost constant war. During their conflicts, each side attempted to blockade the ports of the other. American merchant ships were often fired upon or captured by both sides. By 1812, France agreed to stop seizing American ships, but Britain had not. On June 4, Congress considered a resolution to declare war on Britain.

"Declare War" by Wilma Harrison

The United States is being bullied! If we do not defend ourselves, no nation will ever take us seriously!

The British navy is seizing American ships. They not only take private property, they also kidnap American sailors. Consider the case of the American ship *Chesapeake*. While out at sea, it was fired upon by the British warship *Leopard*. Three Americans were killed.

The British then boarded our ship, identified four Americans who they claimed had once been British citizens & dragged them away.

After that outrageous incident, we tried to convince Britain to stop seizing our ships by refusing to trade with them, however that just hurt our economy!

We must meet force with force or we will lose respect throughout the world!

The fact of the matter is, Britain is still angry we won our independence almost 30 years ago! The peace treaty ending the Revolution was signed in 1783, but it took 12 years for the British to leave the forts they built. In 1794, the British Governor of Canada promised the American Indians that if they helped him re-conquer America, he would return to them any land they had given the U.S. in past treaties.

From 1790 to 1795, the British gave guns to the Delaware, Wyandot & Miami Indians & encouraged them to attack American settlements. When an American army was sent to restore peace, the Indians launched a surprise attack, killing more than 600 soldiers.

Ultimately, those Indians were defeated! But now Britain is arming & inciting Indians to kill our settlers again!

They encouraged the Shawnee chief, Tecumseh, to travel through the western U.S. to organize other tribes.

Tecumseh promises them British guns, ammunition & support. Last year, the Shawnee Indians attacked American settlements in Ohio & Kentucky, more acts of violence are sure to follow!

When the United States became an independent nation, we agreed to accept responsibility for protecting ourselves. It is now time we accepted that responsibility and declared war on Great Britain!

"Negotiate with Britain" by Rufus Duke

War has serious consequences! Wars are expensive & deadly! The Revolutionary War put our government almost \$100 million in debt & cost the lives of approximately 10,000 American lives. Before we send our fathers, brothers & sons to die, we should review the facts objectively & make a decision based on logic, not emotion!

The first fact to consider is that blockades are common during war. The British navy does not allow Russia or Spain to trade with France either, but the governments of those nations are not discussing whether to declare war on Britain because of it. If we go to war with every country that enforces a blockade against its enemy, we will be at war all the time.

Another fact is that if we declare war against Britain, we will indirectly help France. France is ruled by Napoleon, a dictator who wants to conquer the world. When Napoleon acquired the Louisiana Territory from Spain in 1802, Americans panicked. We recognized then that Napoleon is an aggressive, dangerous tyrant. Fortunately, we bought the Louisiana Territory from him & ended the French threat. Do we really want to choose Napoleon's side in this war?

A third important fact is that we trade with Britain more than we trade with any other nation. The British blockade of France costs us very little, but declaring war on a country with whom our merchants carry on lots of trade will destroy our economy. When one considers all of the facts, it makes more sense to declare war on France than Britain!

Some people complain that the British in Canada encourage Indians to attack American settlements. But our record in the West is full of examples of treaties we ignored & injustices we did to the Indians there. We should not blame Britain for our poor relationship with Indians.

We must also ask ourselves, what will happen if we lose? Think of the cost if our western border became the Ohio River instead of the Mississippi River, or if the British took control of New Orleans. Finally, before going to war, we should make sure we allow enough time for negotiation. Refusing to trade with Britain will eventually force them to compromise. President George Washington warned us against European war, we should stay out!

War of 1812 Questions

1. According to Harrison, what are 2 reasons the U.S. should declare war against Great Britain?

1. _____
2. _____

2. According to Harrison, why is an embargo(refusing to trade) not a good option?

3. According to Rufus Duke, why would it be bad if we indirectly helped France by declaring war against Britain?

4. Harrison's view on why American Indians are attacking settlers:

Duke's view on why American Indians are attacking American settlers:

5. Do you agree with Harrison or Duke & what was their most persuasive argument?

The War of 1812

Problem	President Thomas Jefferson
War between Great Britain and France resulted in the seizure of American ships and, at times, the impressment of Americans into the British navy.	<p style="text-align: center;">Response (1807)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Embargo Act</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stop trading with British - trying to stay out of war

Reasons for the success or failure of Jefferson's response:

Failed → embargo hurt American business more than British.

Problem	President James Madison
Great Britain seized American ships and sailors and was thought to have encouraged Native American attacks on American settlers.	<p style="text-align: center;">Response</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Declare war on British</i></p>

Reasons for the success or failure of Madison's response:

Mixed Results:

- many lives lost and Britain burns Washington DC (+Buffalo)
- armistice ends fighting but does not address issues
- Native Am. Confederacy collapses
- America confirms independence