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## War of 1812

The War of 1812 was a conflict between the United States and Britain that began in 1812 and lasted until early 1815. A declaration of war was requested by President James Madison to protect American ships on the high seas and to stop the British from capturing U.S. sailors.

President Madison also wanted to prevent Britain from creating alliances with Native Americans on the American frontier. Americans in the West and South, who hoped to increase the size of the United States by seizing control of both Canada and Florida, influenced his decision. Critics called the War of 1812 "Mr. Madison's War," but others saw it as a "second war of independence," an opportunity for Americans to protect their freedom and honor in the face of European disrespect. Neither Britain nor the United States was particularly well prepared to fight this war, and the conflict eventually ended in a stalemate.

### Summary of the War

On June 18, 1812, James Madison declared war on Great Britain. At that time, Great Britain was engaged in the Napoleonic Wars with France.

During the course of the War of 1812, the Americans found themselves battling both the British, and many groups of Native Americans who were unhappy about encroachment on their land by westward bound American settlers. As a result, many battles of the War of 1812 pitted Americans against the combined forces of the British and Native Americans.

In the beginning, the main British proposal was the creation of a neutral territory for Native Americans as a buffer between British and American property in the area around the Great Lakes. The British hoped to appoint the Ohio River as the southern boundary of this territory. The British also wanted access to navigation on the Mississippi River and the permanent possession of Sackets Harbor and Fort Niagara. They demanded that the United States give up defenses and naval forces on the Great Lakes as well as fishing rights along the coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador (in what is now northern Canada).

The Americans would not concur to any of these points. They demanded that the British end impressment, pay compensation for the ships they had seized, and follow international regulations on the use of blockades. As negotiations proceeded, the British government gradually reduced its demands, ultimately eliminating its proposals concerning neutral territory and armaments on the lakes. The Americans ultimately dropped the subjects of impressment and blockades.

## Causes of the War

The War of 1812 occurred between the United States and Great Britain from 1812-1814. America declared war on Great Britain for four main reasons:

1. Great Britain has violated American sovereignty by refusing to surrender western ports as promised in the Treaty of Paris of 1783.
2. **Impressment:** Great Britain began stopping American sea vessels and forcing American sailors on those vessels to enter the British Navy.
3. Native Americans tribes, make an alliance with Great Britain against the U.S. Tecumseh organizes his people against the illegal taking of Native American lands.
4. Trade embargoes (prohibits trades between countries) by Britain and France resulted in the seizing of American ships. The US hoped to hurt Britain & France instead the embargo created an economic recession in the US, and was eventually failed.
5. Great Britain controlled much of Canada, and many Americans simply wanted to expel the British from North America and expand America's borders. This was propelled by a new spirit of nationalism.
6. In addition, Henry Clay and John Calhoun, a powerful new group of Republican leaders demanded war. They became known as "War Hawks".

## The End of the War and the Treaty of Ghent

England and America had tried to start peace negotiations as early as 1813, but without much success. In August 1814, the British selected commissioners to meet with the American negotiators at Ghent. Both countries signed the peace treaty, known as the Treaty of Ghent, on December 24, 1814. The Battle of New Orleans, fought after the two sides had already signed the peace treaty, ironically became the war's most famous incident.

## Results of the War

Almost overnight the War of 1812 became a glorious success. Because America had managed to bring the world's greatest super power to a standstill (again), it gained international respect. It also gave a greater sense of nationalism among its citizens. The period of U.S. immediately following the war was known as the "The Era of Good Feeling", a time when, at least on the surface, most Americans felt united behind a common purpose. The War of 1812 convinced the country that it could now fend off any foreign threats and that its focus should be on growth and development at home.

The Federalist Party, once the dominant political party in the United States, lost favor because they opposed war with Great Britain.