Facts about the War of 1812

1. Only war in human history named after a particular year
2. Total British, American, and Canadian casualties did not exceed 25,000
3. Little changed immediately after the war. Borders were the same and trade resumed as before the war.
4. The last battle of the war “New Orleans” was fought weeks after the war had officially ended.
5. Named after one year but took three years to fight
6. The war is also known as the 2nd War for Independence.

To understand the war, one must look at the perspectives of those involved in the war.
Why did the war happen?

The causes were both real and imagined but the War of 1812 is a direct result of the Napoleonic Wars begin fought in Europe.
Why did the war happen? (Napoleonic Wars)

The British were in a world-wide struggle with Napoleon. They viewed themselves as defenders of civilization against a brutal dictatorial monster.

The British employed every tactic available to them in order to defeat Napoleon. One such tactic was an economic blockade of Europe.
Why did the war happen? (Napoleonic Wars)

To maintain the blockade, the British required 1,000 ships, but ran short of able-bodies.

As a weak neutral country, American ships would be stopped, searched, and often looted of its cargo.

Sailors who had an English accent or who were deemed to be British were seized and forced to serve aboard British ships. This is called “impressment.” Over 6,000 sailors were impressed into the British Navy. 1,300 of them were born in America.

Interesting Fact: Two days before Congress declared war on Britain, the British parliament had voted to revoke the law authorizing impressment, the chief cause of the war.
IMPRESSMENTS
IMPRESSMENTS

Attack on the Chesapeake:
William Henry Harrison, appointed governor of the Indiana Territory, was trying to open the frontier to settlement by purchasing large tracts of land from Indian tribes.

Harrison’s bargaining tactics were said to be “bribes, bullying, whiskey, deceit, and outright fraud.” He never really concerned himself about those who sold him the land and if they owned it in the first place.
Why did the war happen? (Frontier Problems)

Tecumseh, a Shawnee chief whose name means “shooting star,” challenged Harrison’s right to acquire land in this manner.

He began to organize a confederation of tribes with himself as the leader.
Why did the war happen? (Frontier Problems)

Negotiations between Tecumseh and Harrison failed to prove positive results, and Tecumseh began inciting tribes up and down the frontier to take arms against the whites.
Harrison wanted to stop Tecumseh before he grew too strong. He marched 1,100 troops to Prophetstown (Tecumseh’s home village) and set up camp on Tippecanoe Creek. Tecumseh’s brother led an attack which was beat back by Harrison’s troops. Before burning Prophetstown, Harrison’s troops discovered British muskets in the village.
Why did the war happen? (Frontier Problems/ British were helping the Natives!!)

Harrison was convinced that the British were arming tribes and inciting them to attack white settlers.
Why did the war happen? (War Hawks)

The election of 1810 brought a group of young firebrands to Congress. They had reached manhood after the Revolutionary War and were less likely than the older generation to consider the grim consequences of war. Two notable War Hawks were John C. Calhoun of South Carolina and Henry Clay of Kentucky.
Why did the war happen? (War Hawks)

James Madison was elected President of the United States in 1809. Like his predecessor, Thomas Jefferson, Madison was reluctant to go to war; however, the War Hawks in Congress would work hard to outmaneuver him.
Why did the war happen? (War Hawks)

In time, the War Hawks would convince Madison that war was the nation’s only honorable response to British insults at sea and meddling in the West. On June 1, 1812, Madison asked Congress for a Declaration of War against the most powerful nation on earth. The Congress and Senate passed the declaration by a slim margin after more than two weeks of debate.

It is said that Madison’s face was as “white as a sheet” when he signed the declaration of war.
The West: The War of 1812 was met with enthusiasm because it would open up the West to unhindered settlement.

New England: Most were against the war. They relied on trade with England for their livelihoods. Flags were flown at half-staff and the secession movement gained momentum.

Elsewhere: Mixed reaction and anxiety over the war. There were pockets of strong support and opposition.
How would you fight the greatest empire in the world?
For the Americans, the War of 1812 was a war of principle and a fight for respect. They viewed the British as instigators of trouble on the American frontier and disrespectful of the right to trade freely and to peacefully transit the high seas.

Their strategy was to launch a series of invasions of Canada in an effort to quickly force Britain to seek terms. The belief was that there was no love lost between the Canadians and Britain (especially the French speaking Canadians). The U.S. had 7 million residents as compared to 500,000 in Canada. Jefferson and Madison both believed that the Canadians would welcome an American invasion as “liberating.”
War Strategies (Britain)

For the British, the War of 1812 was an annoyance. They viewed it as a stab in the back from a 2nd rate country that was taking advantage of Britain’s involvement in the Napoleonic Wars.

Their strategy was to commit a small number of troops and naval forces to keep the war in a “holding pattern” until Napoleon was defeated.
War Strategies (Native Americans)

The Native Americans viewed the Americans as dishonest and hell-bent on expansion Westward. The British enjoyed trade with the Natives and pushed for an independent Indian territory.

The Native Americans lost much of their territory after the Revolutionary War and were hesitant to join the British. Regardless, Tecumseh aligned with the British during the War of 1812 in hopes of securing a victory and a future Indian nation.
War Strategies (Canada)

For the Canadians settlers, war meant an assured invasion of their territory. There were 500,000 settlers in Canada at the time of the war. French and English speaking settlers banded together to form effective militias under British command.

The goal of the Canadians was to fend off an invasion of their territory.
Geography of Canada: 1812
Theaters of War (Northern Territories & Canada)

June 18, 1812: War is Declared

July 17, 1812: U.S. surrenders Ft. Mackinac
Aug 15, 1812: U.S. abandons Ft. Dearborn
Aug. 16, 1812: U.S. surrenders Ft. Detroit
Oct. 13, 1812: Battle of Queenston Heights
Jan. 23, 1813: Raisin River Massacre
April 26, 1813: Americans sack York (Toronto) and burn it.
Oct. 5, 1813: Battle of the Thames
September 11, 1814: Battle of Plattsburg
Theaters of War (Naval Battles)

June 18, 1812: War is Declared

Aug. 19, 1812: USS Constitution defeats the HMS Guerriere
June 1, 1813: USS Chesapeake battles the HMS Shannon
Sept. 10, 1813: Battle of Lake Erie
Sept. 11, 1814: Battle of Lake Champlain
Theaters of War (Eastern Seaboard)

June 18, 1812: War is Declared

August 24-25, 1814: Attack and burning of Washington D.C.

Theaters of War (Southern Campaign)

**June 18, 1812:** War is Declared

**March 27-28, 1814:** Battle of Horseshoe Bend (Alabama)

**Jan. 8, 1815:** Battle of New Orleans
U.S. Surrenders Fort Detroit (Northern Territories & Canada) (5:00)

August 16, 1812
USS Constitution defeats HMS Guerriere
“Old Ironsides” (Naval Battles)
Aug 19, 1812

To lower US National Debt the US reduces the size of the Navy. USS Constitution still destroyed the British Vessels.
Lake Erie (Naval Battles)

Sept 10, 1813

Perry, commander of Lake Erie Naval forces asked to seize the lake from the British

British ships sailed out, bloody battle, Perry and ships defeated the British

Message to General William Henry Harrison “We have met the enemy and they are ours.”
Battle of the Thames (Northern territories & Canada)

October 5, 1813

- Now America has Lake Erie
- British and Natives pull out from Detroit area
- Harrison and his troops cut them off
- Tecumseh is killed
Battle of Horseshoe Bend (Southern Campaign)

March 27-28, 1814

- Before Tecumseh’s death he had talked about aligning with the Creeks (Mississippi Territory)
- Jackson’s forces slaughtered more than 550 of the Creek People.
- Defeat broke Creeks resistance to the War and they gave up their land
British attack Washington, D.C. (Eastern Seaboard)
August 24, 1814
Hurricane

August 25, 1814
Attack on Baltimore and Fort McHenry (Eastern Seaboard) (3:00)

September 13-14, 1814
Defending Baltimore and a Grand Flag (4:31)

Late Summer, 1814
Time Warp: Fort McHenry

April, 2011
Double Time Warp: Fort McHenry overrun by Union Soldiers in the 21st Century

April, 2011
A Renewed Symbol and a future National Anthem

(3:11) September, 1814
Battle of Plattsburg (Northern Territories & Canada)
(1:50)
September 11, 1814
Ghent Negotiations (0:40)

Autumn, 1814
Battle of New Orleans (Southern Campaign) (1:00)
January 8, 1815
Battle of New Orleans (Outcome) 1:00
January 8, 1815
Treaty of Ghent
December 24, 1814

Word of the treaty did not reach the United States until February 11, 1815 (four weeks after the Battle of New Orleans). The Senate ratified the treaty on February 15, 1815.
Outcomes (Britain)

On the heels of the costly Napoleonic Wars, the War of 1812 was unpopular in Britain. The Treaty of Ghent allowed both the Britain and the U.S. to “save face” and nothing was really gained from each other in terms of land, boundaries, or money. Britain got out of an unpopular war, still in control of prewar territories.
For the Canadians, the War of 1812 was an integral part of developing a unique national identity. The seeds of Canadian sovereignty were sown in the War of 1812. They helped Britain stave off a foreign invasion. The United States agreed to recognize the boundary with Canada and pledged never to invade again. Today, the U.S.-Canadian border is arguably the longest, non-antagonistic border in the world.
Outcomes (Native Americans)

The Native Americans were the ultimate losers of the war. With the defeat of Britain and the death of Tecumseh (Battle of the Thames), the Native Americans faced an onslaught of a never-ending stream of settlers from the East. Many historians argue that an Indian Confederation could have led to the creation of a large Indian nation in the heart of the current contiguous United States.
Outcomes (America)

For America, nothing changed as far as land gained or lost. The issue of impressment was resolved as before the war began, yet America gained something she had never had before—a sense of National Identity. The following are some of the results of the War of 1812:
Outcomes (America)

1. Unimpeded settlement in the Western Territories
2. The national acceptance of a peacetime Federal Army
3. Increased pace of industrialization (due to British blockade)
4. Erie Canal proposed (economic use as well as military uses)
5. Era of good national feelings
6. Low level of political partisanship
7. Election of war heroes (Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison) to the Presidency.
8. The Army Corps of Engineers began building fortifications around New Orleans.
9. Heightened national pride in American symbols such as the flag and the song, “the Star Spangled Banner.”