The War of 1812 – What events led to the United States deciding to go to war?

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Pioneer Middle School
Summer 2008


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<th>Overview: Presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson all attempted to solve international conflicts with diplomacy and avoid war. President James Madison was the first President to formally ask Congress for a declaration of war. What events led the United States to decide to declare war on Great Britain in 1812?</th>
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<th>Objectives: Students will be able to determine some of the reasons why the United States declared war on Great Britain in 1812. Students will be able to use primary source documents to find the reasons the United States decided to go to war.</th>
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<th>Recommended time frame: 2 class period – 50 minutes each</th>
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<th>Grade level: 8th grade</th>
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<th>Curriculum fit: Social Studies</th>
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<th>Materials: The four primary source documents found on the Library of Congress website and the worksheets students fill out as they look at the primary source documents.</th>
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<th>Michigan State Learning Standards: U4.1 Analyze the challenges the new government faced and the role of political and social leaders in meeting these challenges. 8- U4.1.2 Establishing America’s Place in the World – Explain the changes in America’s relationships with other nations by analyzing treaties with American Indian nations/ War 1812.</th>
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<th>Procedures: DAY 1</th>
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1.) 5 minutes - Opening: Write on the board: Presidents Washington, Adams, and Jefferson all attempted to solve international conflicts with diplomacy and avoid war. President James Madison was the first President to formally ask Congress for a declaration of war. What would make a country declare war on another country? Allow students a minute or two to think about their answers and then have a few students share their ideas verbally.

2.) 5 minutes – Explanation/ Review of the definition and examples of primary sources. Definition: Primary sources provide firsthand accounts of historical events. Primary sources are materials created during the time period being studied. Primary sources can also be created at a later date by a participant in the events being studied (examples: memoirs, interviews). Examples: Books from the time period, letters, memoirs, diaries, photographs, newspaper articles, movies, songs, interviews, autobiographies, advertisements, speeches, audio recordings, movies from the time period, legal notices, laws, paintings, artifacts, etc.

3.) 5 minutes – Explanation of Activity: Tell to students that today, they will look at four primary source documents related to the War of 1812. As they look at the documents they will be asked to answer questions
about each document. In addition, they will need to collect evidence from the documents answer the overall question for the day which is: What events lead President James Madison to ask Congress to declare war on Great Britain in 1812?

4. 35 minutes- Activity 1: Place students in small groups – approximately 4 per group. Give each student in the group a packet containing the 4 primary source documents. Give each student the student handout of questions related to the document. The questions are to be discussed/answered as a group but each student must complete a sheet individually. We will share the answers with the class at the end. *NOTE:* Item 4 can be a lengthy piece, as the teacher you may choose to pull out important phrases or sections and just give excerpts to students instead of the entire document.

**Procedures: DAY 2**

1.) 5 minutes – Opening: Write on the board: Based on ITEM 1 and ITEM 2 of the primary source packet from last class period, what seems to be the relationship Great Britain and the Native Americans around 1812? Allow students a minute or two to think about their answers and then have a few students share their ideas verbally.

2.) 15 minutes – Allow students to return to the groups from yesterday and finish Activity 1 that was begun the day before.

3.) 10 minutes - Activity 2: Sharing responses from group work: The teacher will call on students from each group to answer the questions completed on the sheet.

4.) 15 minutes - Activity 3: Have students work individually to answer questions 5 and 6 “PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER” section on the student handout.

5.) 5 minutes – Activity 4: As a class have students share their answers for questions 5 and 6. The teacher should write on the board the answers the students come up with for the reasons the United States decided to declare war on Great Britain.

**Evaluation:** Students will be evaluated based on the responses they give on the answer sheet as well as the verbal contributions they make to the class discussion after working with the documents.

**Extension:**

1.) Have students take one of the events/battles from the primary source song used in this activity and do further research.

2.) Read aloud excerpts from the novel, *Once on the Island* by Gloria Whalen. This book on the War of 1812 focuses on a family in Michigan and how the War impacts their lives.

**Sources:**

<table>
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<th>Primary Source Items Used</th>
<th>Citation</th>
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8th Grade Social Studies - War of 1812 – Reasons to fight

Directions: Look at the four primary source documents you have been given. Answer the questions for each document on the back of this sheet or on a separate sheet of paper. After you have examined all 4 documents answer the final question.

USING THE DOCUMENTS

1.) Item 1: Political Cartoon published in 1812 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (published at the beginning of the War of 1812)
   a. Describe what is occurring in the political cartoon.
   b. This cartoon was created at the beginning of the War of 1812. Do you think the creator of this cartoon supports America or Britain in this war? Why? (Give evidence from the cartoon)
   c. What reason does this political cartoon give for going to war?

2.) Item 2: Page from a journal written in 1815
   a. The document you are looking at is one page of a book about the military campaigns in the Ohio River Valley during the War of 1812. On the page of the book you are examining, a speech given by the American general Hull is being recounted. What is Hull talking about in his speech?
   b. In Hull’s speech, who is being oppressive and unjust? Who is suffering the oppression and injustice?
   c. What general reason does Hull give for fighting the British.
   d. How does Hull’s speech relate to the political cartoon you already looked at?

3.) Item 3: Song commemorating the War of 1812
   a. Why do people commemorate events?
   b. The first two stanzas of the song are referring to what event?
   c. Below are several lines from the song. Explain what each one means. There are clues in the text of the song or you may have to look in the dictionary/ Social Studies book if you do not know a word.
      i. “Regardless of the sailor’s right, impress’d our native seamen.”
      ii. “Our commerce too they did invade”
      iii. “Our freedom surely lies at stake”
   d. Many battles and events from the War of 1812 are mentioned in this song. Pick 2 battles or events and try and figure out what happened based on the lyrics. Tell who was involved (leaders) and what happened as best you can.
   e. Close to the end of the song, one of the stanzas ask, “What has our infant country gain’d By fighting that old nation?” What does the United States gain from fighting Britain according to the song? Name at least 2 things.

4.) Item 4: Report given June 3, 1812 to the House of Representatives about foreign relations with Britain.
   a. Read the entire document. List 4 reasons/ events from this document as to why the United States should fight Britain.
   b. The last line of the document states: “Relying on the patriotism of the nation, and confidently trusting that the Lord of Hosts will go with us to battle in a righteous cause, and crown our efforts with success, your committee recommend an immediate appeal to arms.” What does this line mean?

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

5.) Based on all the evidence you have gathered from looking at these 4 primary source documents, what are the major reasons for declaring war on Great Britain? (State the document the reasons are found in.)

6.) Do you find these reasons to be compelling enough to declare war or do you think President James Madison and the United States government could have continued to use diplomacy as the three previous presidents had? Explain.
KEY: THESE ARE SUGGESTED ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS
8th Grade Social Studies - War of 1812 – Reasons to fight

USING THE DOCUMENTS
1.) Item 1: Political Cartoon published in 1812 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (published at the beginning of the War of 1812)
   a. ANSWERS WILL VARY
   b. AMERICA – CARTOON SHOWS OUTRAGE AT BRITISH ENCOURAGING NATIVE AMERICANS. CARTOON SAYS BRITISH WILL SHAKE AND THE WRONGS COMMITTED AGAINST AMERICA CALL FOR REDRESS
   c. BRITAIN IS ENCOURAGING/ PAYING NATIVE AMERICANS TO ATTACK AMERICANS/ SCALP AMERICANS

2.) Item 2: Page from a journal written in 1815
   a. NATIVE AMERICANS ATTACKING AMERICANS. THE BRITISH ENCOURAGING THESE ATTACKS. REMEMBER BRITAIN IS OPPRESSIVE AND UNJUST AND WE WILL NO LONGER TAKE IT
   b. BRITAIN IS BEING OPPRESSIVE AND UNJUST AND THE UNITED STATES IS SUFFERING THE OPPRESSION AND INJUSTICE
   c. FIGHT AGAINST INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION. FIGHT AGAINST BRITAIN INSTIGATING THE NATIVE AMERICAN ATTACKS
   d. SAME TOPIC/ REASON FOR FIGHTING

3.) Item 3: Song commemorating the War of 1812
   a. ANSWERS WILL VARY
   b. THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION
   c. Below are several lines from the song. Explain what each one means.
      i. “Regardless of the sailor’s right, impress’d our native seamen.” IMPRESSMENT OF UNITED STATES SAILORS BY THE BRITISH
      ii. “Our commerce too they did invade” BRITAIN BLOCKING THE UNITED STATES TRADE WITH OTHER COUNTRIES
      iii. “Our freedom surely lies at stake” AMERICA LOSING ITS INDEPENDENCE FROM BRITAIN
   d. ANSWERS WILL VARY
   e. ANSWERS WILL VARY (EXAMPLES: MAINTAINING OUR LIBERTY, RAISED OUR REPUTATION ABOARD, FREEDOM OF THE SEAS, SEAMAN RELEASED, IMPRESSMENT ENDED, CORRECTING BRITAIN’S ARROGANCE)

4.) Item 4: Report given June 3, 1812 to the House of Representatives about foreign relations with Britain.
   a. 5 REASONS: ANSWERS WILL VARY – EXAMPLES: ACTS OF VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE, BRITAIN IS DOMINATING THE OCEAN, BRITAIN IS ENCROACHING ON OUR RIGHTS AND INTERESTS, BRITAIN HAS PROHIBITED OUR TRADE/ ATTACKED OUR COMMERCE, IMPRESSMENT OF OUR SOLDIERS, SEIZING OUR VESSELS, ENCOURAGING NATIVE AMERICANS TO ATTACK AMERICAN, ATTEMPTING TO DISMEMBER OUR UNION AND OVERTHROW OUR CONSTITUTION, ETC
   b. WE RELY ON PATRIOTISM OF OUR NATION AND TRUST IN GOD THAT OUR CAUSE IS JUST AND WE WILL SUCCEED. THE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE RECOMMENDS WE DECLARE

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER
5.) REASONS TO DECLARE WAR:

6.) ANSWERS WILL VARY
A scene on the frontier as practiced by the humane British and their worthy allies!

Quote on right: Bring me the scalps and the King our Master will reward you

Sign on gun: Reward for 16 scalps

Arise Columbia's Sons and forward press!
Your Country's wrongs call loudly for redress.
The savage Indian with his scalping knife
Or tomahawk may seek to take your life.

By bravery aw'd they'll in a dreadful fright
Shrank back for refuge to the woods in flight.
Their British leaders then will quickly shake.
And for those wrongs shall restitution make.

ITEM 1
Old England forty years ago.

Old England, forty years ago,
When we were young and slender,
She minim'd at us a mortal blow,
But God was our defender.

Jehovah saw her headlong flight,
Great Washington He gave us;
His lustine inspir'd the man
With skill and power to save us.

She sent her fleet and armies o'er,
To ravage, kill and plunder;
Our heroes met them on the shore,
And drove them back with thunder.

Our independence they confess'd,
And with their hands they sign'd it!
But on their hearts 'twas ne'er impress'd,
For there we never could find it.

And since that time they have been still
Our liberties invading;
We bore it, and forbore until
Forbearance was degrading.

Regardless of the sailor's right,
Impress'd our native seamen,
Made them against their country fight,
And thus enslav'd our freemen.

Great Madison besought the foe,
He mildly did implore them,
To let the suffering captives go,
But they would not restore them.

Our commerce, too, they did invade,
Our ships they search'd and seiz'd;
Declaring, also, 'we should trade
With none, but whom they pleased.'

Thus Madison in thunder spake,
We're power, and we must use it,
Our freedom surely lies at stake,
And we must fight, or lose it;

We'll make old England's children know
We are the brave descendants
Of those who flog'd their fathers so,
And gain'd our Independence.

Our soldiers and our seamen too,
We've put in warlike motion,
Straight to the field our soldiers flew,
Our seamen to the ocean;
They met their foes on tow'ring waves,
With corage, skill and splendor;
They sunk them down to wat'ry graves,
Or for'd them to surrender.

Decatur, Hull, and Bainbridge dear,
Did wonders in our navy;
Brave captain Hull sunk the Guerriere,
And Bainbridge sunk the Java;
Decatur took a ship of fame,
High on the warlike water.
*The Macedonian was her name;*
And home in triumph brought her.

Perry, with flag and suils unfurl'd,
Met Barcley on Lake Erie,
At him his matchless thunders hurl'd,
Till Barcley grew quite weary;
He gain'd the vict'ry and renown,
He work'd him up so neatly;
He brought old England's banners down,
And swept the lake completely.

Proud Downie fell on Lake Champlain,
By fortune quite forsaken;
He was by bold McDoughal slain,
And all his fleet were taken.

Where'er they met Columbia's sons,
On lakes or larger waters,
They sunk beneath her thund'ring guns,
Or humbly cried for quarters.

When Provost saw he'd lost his fleet,
He gave out special orders
For his whole army to retreat,
And leave the Yankee borders;
Thro' dreary wilds, o'er bog and fen,
The luckless general blunder'd;
He fled, with fifteen thousand men,
From Mc'Combs fifteen hundred.

Let William Hull be counted null,
And let him not be named
Upon the rolls of valiant souls;
O him we are ashamed;
For his campaign was worse than vain,
A coward and a traitor,
For paltry gold his army sold,
To Brock, the speculator.

When Proctor found brave Harrison
Had landed on his region,
Awar the tim'rous creature ran,
With all his savage legion;
But overtaken were, and most
Of them were kill'd and taken;
But Proctor soon forsook his post,
And fled, to save his bacon.

At Little York, beneath the guns
Of Channah, Dearborn landed;
And quickly made old England's sons
Renounce what he demanded;
From George's fort to Erie's beach,
Our savage foes were beaten;
Their naked bones were left to bleach,
When wolves their flesh had eaten.

How often Brown made Drummond fly
From scenes of desolation;
The terror of his noble eye
Struck him with consternation;
Brave Miller, Ripley, Gaines and Scott,
At Erie and Bridgewater.
At Chippewa, in battles hot,
Their bravest foes did slaughter.

At Washington, their horrid crimes
Must tarnish British glory;
Children will blush, in future times,
To read this shameful story;
They burnt the volumes which compris'd
The best of information;
Their barbarous deeds will be despis'd
By every Christian nation.

At Baltimore, a deadly blow
The sons of mischief sent
The sons of freedom met their foe,
And victory justly claim'd;
Amidst their ranks our thunder burst,
Many were kill'd and wounded,
Their chief commander bit the dust,
And all their schemes confounded,

What wonders did brave Jackson do,
When aided by kind heaven?
Their leader and four thousand slain,
And lost but only seven;
Some interposing angel's band
Repeal'd their vile intrusion;
The remnant of their broken band
Fled off, in sad confusion.

They pass'd thro' numerous trying scenes
In most of them defeated;
Their grand defeat at New-Orleans,
The bloody scene completed;
Soon after this sweet peace arriv'd,
Our armies were disbanded;
Ourscatter'd foes who had surviv'd
The war, were home commanded.

What has our infant country gain'd,
By fighting that old nation?
Our liberties we have maintain'd,
And rais'd our reputation;
We've gain'd the freedom of the seas,
Our seamen are released—
Our mariners trade where they please
Impressments, too, have ceased.

Now in ourselves we can confide,
Aroni we are respected;
We've check'd the rage of British pride,
Their haughtiness corrected;
First to the God of boundless power,
Be thanks and adoration;
Next Madison, the wondrous flower,
And jewel of our nation.

Next Congress does our thanks demand,
To them our thanks we tender;
Our heroes next, by sea and land,
To them our thanks we render;
Let us be just, in union live,
Then who will dare invade us?
If any should, our God will give
His angels charge to aid us.
OLD England, forty years ago,  
When we were young and slender,  
She! 'aim'd at us a mortal blow,  
But God was our defender;  
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