

Summary: The War of 1812

Trouble with Britain

In 1808, Britain and France were at war. The U.S. did not take either side, but Britain and the U.S. became enemies. British officers raided American ships to look for British sailors on the ships. American sailors were caught and forced to serve in the British Navy. This was called impressment. The government was angry about impressment. It was also angry that the British were helping Indians fight Western settlers. The Indian chief Tecumseh wanted Indians to unite to keep settlers away. In 1811, the Indians were defeated at their Tippecanoe settlement.

Fighting the War

In 1812, the U.S. declared war on Britain. Americans wanted to stop impressment. They also wanted Britain to stop arming the Indians.

In 1814, the British navy fired at Fort McHenry. Francis Scott Key watched the battle. He saw the American flag flying above the fort and wrote “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This became the national anthem. Later that year, the U.S. and Britain signed a peace treaty. The Treaty of Ghent did not give either country any new land. Unaware of the treaty, British forces attacked Americans in New Orleans. The British were defeated.

A New Sense of Pride

After the war Americans had a time of prosperity. They developed a sense of nationalism and became interested in the American flag. In 1818, Congress passed a law that said the flag should have 13 stripes for the 13 original colonies. A star would be added for each state that joined the Union. Today there are 50 stars on the flag.

In 1816, President James Monroe worried that other European countries would invade America. He created a new foreign policy. The Monroe Doctrine warned European countries to stay out of North and South America. The United States would also stay out of Europe.

Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

prosperity *noun*, economic success and security

nationalism *noun*, a devotion to one’s country

foreign policy *noun*, a government’s actions toward other nations

After You Read

REVIEW Why did Tecumseh want American Indian nations to unite? Circle the sentence that tells the answer.

REVIEW What inspired Francis Scott Key to write the poem that became “The Star-Spangled Banner”? Highlight the sentence that tells what Francis Scott Key saw.

REVIEW How did the law passed in 1818 change the appearance of the national flag? Circle the number of stripes on the flag. Underline the reason for that number. Underline what each star represents on the flag. Circle the number of stars the flag has today.