

The French and Indian War

MAIN IDEA

British victory over the French in North America enlarged the British empire but led to new conflicts with the colonists.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

British victories helped spread the English language throughout North America.

Terms & Names

- New France
- George Washington
- French and Indian War
- William Pitt
- Pontiac
- Proclamation of 1763
- George Grenville
- Sugar Act

One American's Story

Joseph Nichols and other Massachusetts men joined British soldiers in fighting the French near the Hudson River in 1758. Yet even though the colonists and the British had united against a common enemy, the two groups held conflicting ideas about authority. On October 31, 1758, Nichols recorded the following dispute.

A PERSONAL VOICE JOSEPH NICHOLS

“About sunrise, the chief officer of the fort came to our regiment and ordered all our men up to the falls to meet the wagons and teams. Our men seemed to be loath to go before they eat. Those that refused to turn out, he drove out, and some he struck with his staff, which caused a great uproar among us. Our people in general declare in case we are so used tomorrow, blows shall end the dispute.”

—quoted in *A People's Army*

This “uproar” demonstrates that the British and the colonists differed in their views about authority and individual freedom. During the war between Great Britain and France, these conflicting viewpoints triggered divisions between Great Britain and its colonies that would never heal.



▲ The British general Edward Braddock met defeat and death near Fort Duquesne in 1755. In the French and Indian War, the colonists and the British fought side by side for nine years.

Rivals for an Empire

In the 1750s, France was Great Britain's biggest rival in the struggle to build a world empire, and one major area of contention between them was the rich Ohio River Valley. The colonists favored Great Britain because they still thought of themselves as British; as well, they were eager to expand the colonies westward from the increasingly crowded Atlantic seaboard.

FRANCE'S NORTH AMERICAN EMPIRE France had begun its North American empire in 1534, when Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence River. In 1608, Samuel de Champlain founded the town of Quebec, the first permanent French settlement in North America.

After establishing Quebec, French priests and traders spread into the heart of the continent. In 1682, Robert Cavelier, Sieur de La Salle, claimed the entire Mississippi Valley for France, naming it Louisiana in honor of King Louis XIV. However, by 1754 the European population of **New France**, the French colony in North America, had grown to only about 70,000 (compared to more than 1,000,000 in the British colonies).

From the start, New France differed from the British colonies. Typical French colonists included fur traders and Catholic priests who wanted to convert Native Americans. Neither had a desire to build towns or raise families.

The French colonists also developed friendlier relations with Native Americans than did the British. They relied on Hurons, Ottawas, Ojibwas, and others to do most of the trapping and then traded with them for the furs, which were in great demand in Europe. This trade relationship led to several military alliances. As early as 1609, for example, the Algonquin and other Native Americans used Champlain's help to defeat their traditional enemies, the Mohawk Iroquois. **A**

MAIN IDEA

Contrasting

A How was the French colony in North America unlike the British colonies?

Britain Defeats an Old Enemy

As the French empire in North America expanded, it collided with the growing British empire. France and Great Britain had already fought two inconclusive wars during the previous half-century. In 1754, the French-British conflict reignited. In that year, the French built Fort Duquesne at the point where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers join to form the Ohio—the site of modern Pittsburgh.

However, the British had previously granted 200,000 acres of land in the Ohio country to a group of wealthy planters. The Virginia governor sent militia, a group of ordinary citizens who performed military duties, to evict the French.

The small band, led by an ambitious 22-year-old officer named **George Washington**, established an outpost called Fort Necessity about 40 miles from Fort Duquesne. In May 1754, Washington's militia attacked a small detachment of French soldiers, and the French swiftly counterattacked. In the battle that followed in July, the French forced Washington to surrender. Although neither side realized it, these battles at Fort Necessity were the opening of the **French and Indian War**, the fourth war between Great Britain and France for control of North America.

EARLY FRENCH VICTORIES A year after his defeat, Washington again headed into battle, this time as an aide to the British general Edward Braddock, whose mission was to drive the French out of the Ohio Valley.

Braddock first launched an attack on Fort Duquesne. As Braddock and nearly 1,500 soldiers neared the fort, French soldiers and their Native American allies ambushed them. The British soldiers, accustomed to enemies who marched in orderly rows rather than ones who fought from behind trees, turned and fled.

HISTORICAL

SPOTLIGHT

WASHINGTON'S RESIGNATION

George Washington's military career nearly ended shortly after it started. In 1754, as the British prepared to wage war on France in North America, Washington eagerly awaited a position with the regular British army.

The governor of Virginia offered Washington the rank of captain—a demotion from Washington's position as colonel. Washington angrily rejected the offer as well as a later proposal that he retain the rank of colonel but have the authority and pay of a captain.

The young Virginian's patriotism, however, was too strong. He swallowed his pride and relaunched his military career as a volunteer aide to General Braddock in the spring of 1755.

Washington showed incredible courage, while the weakness of the supposedly invincible British army surprised him and many other colonists. They began to question the competence of the British army, which suffered defeat after defeat during 1755 and 1756.

PITT AND THE IROQUOIS TURN THE TIDE Angered by French victories, Britain's King George II selected new leaders to run his government in 1757. One of these was **William Pitt**, an energetic, self-confident politician. Under Pitt, the reinvigorated British army finally began winning battles, which prompted the powerful Iroquois to support them. Now Britain had some Native American allies to balance those of France.

In September 1759, the war took a dramatic and decisive turn on the Plains of Abraham just outside Quebec. Under the cover of night, British troops under General James Wolfe scaled the high cliffs that protected Quebec. Catching the French and their commander, the Marquis de Montcalm, by surprise, they won a short but deadly battle. The British triumph at Quebec led them to victory in the war.

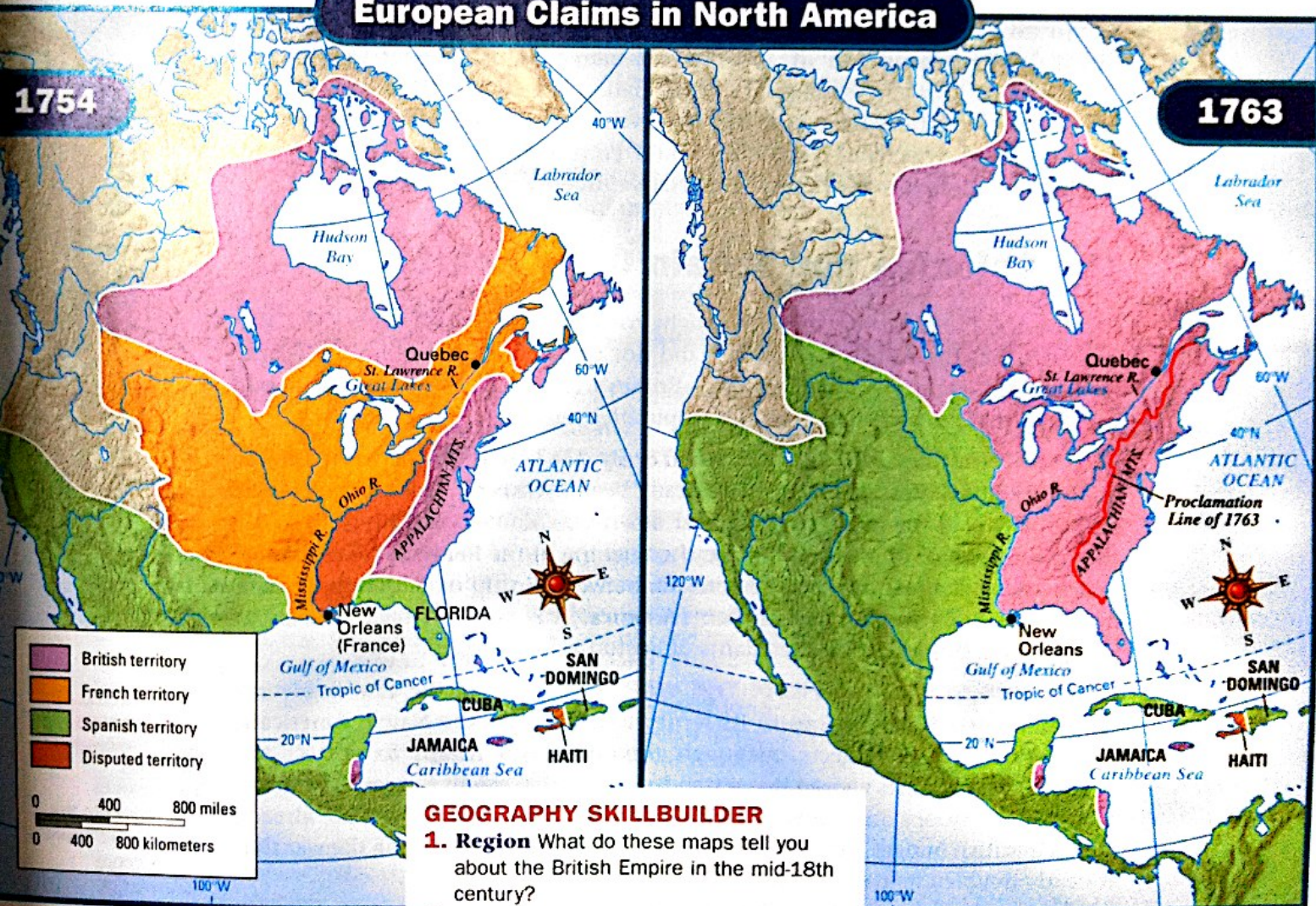
The French and Indian War officially ended in 1763 with the Treaty of Paris. Great Britain claimed all of North America east of the Mississippi River. This included Florida, which Britain acquired from Spain, an ally of France. Spain gained the French lands west of the Mississippi, including the city of New Orleans. France kept control of only a few small islands near Newfoundland and in the West Indies. The other losers in the war were Native Americans, who found the victorious British harder to bargain with than the French had been. **B**

MAIN IDEA

Summarizing

B How did Great Britain's victory change the balance of power in North America?

European Claims in North America



VICTORY BRINGS NEW PROBLEMS Claiming ownership of the Ohio River Valley brought Great Britain trouble. Native Americans feared that the growing number of British settlers crossing the Appalachian mountains would soon drive away the game they depended on for survival. In the spring of 1763, the Ottawa leader **Pontiac** recognized that the French loss was a loss for Native Americans.

A PERSONAL VOICE PONTIAC

“When I go to see the English commander and say to him that some of our comrades are dead, instead of bewailing their death, as our French brothers do, he laughs at me and at you. If I ask for anything for our sick, he refuses with the reply that he has no use for us. From all this you can well see that they are seeking our ruin. Therefore, my brothers, we must all swear their destruction and wait no longer.”

—quoted in *Red and White*

Led by Pontiac, Native Americans captured eight British forts in the Ohio Valley and laid siege to two others. In angry response, British officers presented smallpox-infected blankets to two Delaware chiefs during peace negotiations, and the virus spread rapidly among the Native Americans. Weakened by disease and war, most Native American groups negotiated treaties with the British by the end of 1765.

To avoid further conflicts with Native Americans, the British government issued the **Proclamation of 1763**, which banned all settlement west of the Appalachians. This ban established a Proclamation Line, which the colonists were not to cross. (See the map on page 87.) However, the British could not enforce this ban any more effectively than they could enforce the Navigation Acts, and colonists continued to move west onto Native American lands.



▲ Pontiac, the Ottawa chief, depicted in an 18th-century engraving.

The Colonies and Britain Grow Apart

Because the Proclamation of 1763 sought to halt expansion, it convinced the colonists that the British government did not care about their needs. A second result of the French and Indian War—Britain’s financial crisis—brought about new laws that reinforced the colonists’ opinion even more.

BRITISH POLICIES ANGER COLONISTS By 1763, tensions between Britain and one colony, Massachusetts, had already been increasing. During the French and Indian War, the British had cracked down on colonial smuggling. In 1761, the royal governor of Massachusetts authorized the use of the writs of assistance, which allowed British customs officials to search any ship or building. Because many merchants worked out of their residences, the writs enabled officials to search colonial homes. The merchants of Boston were outraged.

PROBLEMS RESULTING FROM THE WAR After the war, the British government stationed 10,000 troops in its territories to control the Native Americans and former French subjects. Although this army was meant to protect the colonies, the colonists viewed it as a standing army that might turn against them. Maintaining troops in North America was an added expense on an already strained British budget. Britain had borrowed so much money during the war that it nearly doubled its national debt. ☺

Hoping to lower the debt, King George III chose a financial expert, **George Grenville**, to serve as prime minister in 1763. Grenville soon angered merchants

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

☺ Why were the colonists so afraid of the troops stationed in Britain’s new territories?

Analyzing Political Cartoons

"JOIN, OR DIE"

In 1754 Benjamin Franklin drew this image of a severed snake to encourage the British colonies to unite against the threat posed by French and Indian forces. The design was inspired by a superstition that a sliced snake would revive if the pieces of its body were joined before sunset.

The image, the first political cartoon to be published in an American newspaper, was widely circulated in 1754 and later during the American Revolution. A remarkably direct and simple cartoon, it reveals the beginning of a sense of national identity.

SKILLBUILDER Analyzing Political Cartoons

1. Why are there only eight segments of the snake?
2. Why do you think this image was so persuasive to colonists who may never have thought of the separate colonies as parts of a whole?

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R24.



throughout the colonies. He began to suspect that the colonists were smuggling goods into the country. In 1764 he prompted Parliament to enact a law known as the **Sugar Act**. The Sugar Act did three things. It halved the duty on foreign-made molasses (in the hopes that colonists would pay a lower tax rather than risk arrest by smuggling). It placed duties on certain imports. Most important, it strengthened the enforcement of the law allowing prosecutors to try smuggling cases in a vice-admiralty court rather than in a more sympathetic colonial court.

By the end of 1764, the colonies and Great Britain were disagreeing more and more about how the colonies should be taxed and governed. These feelings of dissatisfaction soon would swell into outright rebellion.

SECTION 4

ASSESSMENT

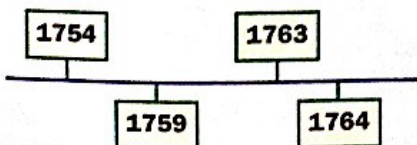
1. TERMS & NAMES For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- New France
- George Washington
- French and Indian War
- William Pitt
- Pontiac
- Proclamation of 1763
- George Grenville
- Sugar Act

MAIN IDEA

2. TAKING NOTES

Create a time line of the major events of the French and Indian War and its aftermath. Use the dates already plotted on the time line below as a guide.



How long was the war? Why do you think it lasted so long?

CRITICAL THINKING

3. ANALYZING CAUSES

How did the French and Indian War lead to tension between the colonists and the British government?

4. EVALUATING DECISIONS

If you had been a Native American living in the Northeast during the French and Indian War, would you have formed a military alliance with France or with Great Britain? Support your choice with reasons.

5. HYPOTHESIZING

What if the outcome of the French and Indian War had been different and France had won? How might this have affected the 13 colonies? **Think About:**

- the actual outcome of the Treaty of Paris
- France's patterns of colonization
- France's relations with Native Americans