

The French and Indian War

FIND OUT

- What were the causes of the French and Indian War?
- What advantages did each side have in the war?
- How did the Treaty of Paris affect North America?

Captain Joncaire had just sat down to dinner on December 4, 1753, when a tall young man strode into the room. He introduced himself as Major George Washington. He said he had a letter from the English lieutenant governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, to the commander of the French forces in the Ohio Valley.

Joncaire told Washington where the commander could be found and then invited him to dine. As they ate, Joncaire boasted, "It is our absolute design to take possession of the Ohio, and by God, we will do it!" The remark made Washington pause. Dinwiddie's letter, he knew, warned the French to get out of the Ohio Valley. A conflict between England and France seemed certain.

Opening Shots

Three times between 1689 and 1748, France and Great Britain* had fought for power in Europe and North America. Each war ended with an uneasy peace. In 1754,

*In 1707, England and Scotland were officially joined into the united kingdom of Great Britain. After that date, the terms Great Britain and British were used to describe the country and its people. However, the terms England and English were still used throughout much of the 1700s.

fighting broke out again. The long conflict that followed was called the **French and Indian War**.

Major Washington. Scuffles between France and Britain in the Ohio River valley triggered the opening shots of the French and Indian War. Young Major Washington played an important part as fighting began.

George Washington had grown up on a plantation in Virginia, the son of wealthy parents. At age 15, he began work as a surveyor. His job took him to frontier lands in western Virginia. When Lieutenant Governor Dinwiddie wanted to warn the French in Ohio in 1753, Washington offered to deliver the message.

After Washington returned, Dinwiddie promoted him. He also sent the young man west again. This time, Dinwiddie ordered Washington to take 150 men and build a fort where the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers meet. (See the map on page 139.) The fort was to protect Virginia's land claims in the upper Ohio River valley.

Trapped at Fort Necessity. In April 1754, Washington and his party headed for Ohio country. Along the way, they heard disturbing news. The French had just completed Fort Duquesne (doo KAYN) at the fork of the Monongahela and Allegheny rivers. The fork was the precise spot where Washington was to build a British fort.

Determined to carry out his orders, Washington continued on. Indian allies revealed that a French scouting party was camped in the woods ahead. Marching quietly through the night, Washington surprised and scattered the French.

Washington's success was short-lived, however. Hearing that the French were planning to counterattack, he and his men quickly built a makeshift stockade. They named it **Fort Necessity**. A huge force of French and Indians surrounded the fort. Trapped and heavily outnumbered, the Virginians were forced to surrender. Soon after,

CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**Using a Primary Source**

Historians use primary sources to learn about the past. A **primary source** is firsthand information about people or events. Letters, diaries, maps, drawings, and artifacts are all primary sources. The primary sources below are from speeches by Native Americans about English actions in the Ohio Valley in the 1760s.

- 1. Identify the source.** (a) Who made these statements? (b) What are they about? (c) When were they made?
- 2. Recognize the author's point of view.** Many eyewitnesses have a special reason for writing or speaking about an event. Often, they want to persuade the listener to share their views. When you read a primary source, you need to recognize the author's point of view. (a) What opinion did these Native Americans have of the English?

(b) What words or phrases show you how strongly they felt?

3. Decide whether the source is reliable.

(a) Do you think these Native Americans gave an accurate view of the situation in the Ohio Valley in the 1760s? Why? (b) Have they left out any important information? (c) Would you say that these are reliable sources for learning about relations between the English and Native Americans in the mid-1700s? Explain.

ACTIVITY

Prepare a document that would provide useful information to a future historian studying the 1990s. Your document can be a letter, a diary entry, a petition, or a speech describing the concerns of young Americans today. Trade documents with a classmate and determine whether each document is a reliable primary source.

A Seneca Chief, July 1761

“The English treat us with much disrespect, and we have the greatest reason to believe, by their behavior, they intend to cut us off entirely. They have possessed themselves of our country. It is now in our power to dispossess them and recover it, if we will but embrace the opportunity before they have time to assemble together and [strengthen] themselves. There is no time to be lost, let us strike immediately.”

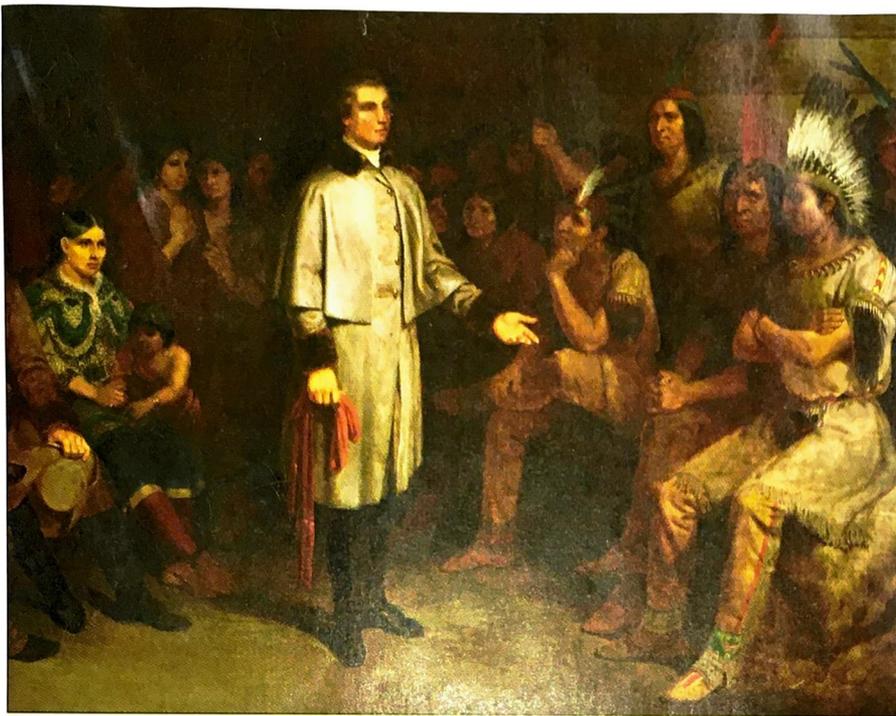
An Iroquois, August 1761

“We, your brethren of the several nations, are penned up like hogs. There are forts all around us, and therefore we are [fearful] that Death is coming upon us.”

Pontiac, 1763

“The Great Spirit [told a Delaware Indian to] be seated, and thus addressed him:

‘I am the Maker of heaven and earth, the trees, lakes, rivers, and all things else. I am the Maker of mankind; and because I love you, you must do my will. The land on which you live I have made for you, and not for others. Why do you suffer the white men to dwell among you? My children, you have forgotten the customs and traditions of your forefathers. Why do you not clothe yourselves in skins, as they did, and use the bows and arrows, and the stone-pointed lances, which they used. You have bought guns, knives, kettles, and blankets, from the white men, until you can no longer do without them; and what is worse, you have drunk the poison fire-water, which turns you into fools. Fling all these things away; live as your wise forefathers lived before you. And as for these English—these dogs dressed in red, who have come to rob you of your hunting-grounds, and drive away the game,—you must lift the hatchet against them.’”



Washington Meets With Iroquois Chiefs *Young George Washington played an important role in the opening skirmishes of the French and Indian War. Here, Washington confers with chiefs of the Iroquois nations.*
Geography *What region was at the heart of the conflict that triggered the French and Indian War?*

the French released Washington, and he returned home to Virginia.

The British quickly saw the importance of the skirmish. “The volley fired by this young Virginian in the forests of America,” a British writer noted, “has set the world in flames.”

The Albany Congress

While Washington was defending Fort Necessity, delegates from seven colonies gathered in Albany, New York. The delegates met for two reasons. They wanted to persuade the Iroquois to help them against the French. They also wanted to plan a united defense.

Iroquois leaders listened patiently to the delegates, but they were wary of the request for help. The British and French “are quarreling about lands which belong to us,”

pointed out Hendrik, a Mohawk chief. “And such a quarrel as this may end in our destruction.” The Iroquois left without agreeing to help the British. But they did not join the French either.

The delegates in Albany knew that the colonists needed to work together if they were to defeat the French. Benjamin Franklin, the delegate from Pennsylvania, proposed the **Albany Plan of Union**.¹ The plan called for a Grand Council with representatives from each colony. The council would make laws, raise taxes, and set up the defense of the colonies.⁶

The delegates voted to accept the Plan of Union. When the plan was submitted to the colonial assemblies, however, not one approved it. None of the colonies wanted to give up any of its powers to a central council. In the words of the disappointed Franklin:

“Everyone cries a union is necessary. But when they come to the manner and form of the union, their weak noodles are perfectly distracted.”

Early Years of the War

At the start of the French and Indian War, the French enjoyed several advantages over the British. Because the English colonies could not agree on a united defense, 13 separate colonial assemblies had to approve all decisions. New France, on the other hand, had a single government that could act quickly when necessary. Also, the French had the support of many more Indian allies than the British did.

Britain, however, also had strengths. The English colonies were clustered along the coast, so they were easier to defend than the widely scattered French settlements. At the same time, the population of the English colonies was about 15 times greater than that of New France. And although most Indians sided with the French, the British did have some Indian allies. Finally, the British navy ruled the seas.

“Bulldog” Braddock. In 1755, General Edward Braddock led British and colonial troops in an attack against Fort Duquesne. The general boasted that he would sweep the French from the Ohio Valley.

Braddock was a stubborn man, called “Bulldog” behind his back. He knew how to fight a war in the open fields of Europe. However, he knew little about how to fight in the wilderness of North America.

Braddock’s men moved slowly because they had to clear a road through thick forests for their cannons and other heavy gear. George Washington, who went with Braddock, was upset by the slow pace. Indian scouts warned Braddock that he was headed for trouble. He ignored them.

Disaster for the British. As the British neared Fort Duquesne, the French and their Indian allies launched a surprise attack.

Sharpshooters hid in the forest and picked off British soldiers, whose bright-red uniforms made them easy targets. Braddock had five horses shot out from under him before he fell, fatally wounded. Washington was luckier. As he later reported, he “escaped without a wound, although I had four bullets through my coat.”

Almost half the British were killed or wounded. Washington and other survivors returned to Virginia with news of Braddock’s defeat. Washington was now put in command of a small force of men. For the rest of the war, he had the almost impossible task of guarding the long Virginia frontier against Indian attack.

During the next two years, the war continued to go badly for the British. British attacks against several French forts ended in failure. Meanwhile, the French won important victories, capturing Fort Oswego on Lake Ontario and Fort William Henry on Lake George. (See the map on page 139.) To English colonists, the situation looked grim. In the words of Massachusetts minister Jonathan Edwards:

“God indeed is remarkably frowning upon us every where; our enemies get up above us very high, and we are brought down very low: They are the Head, and we are the Tail. . . . What will become of us God only knows.”

A Bold Leader Takes Charge

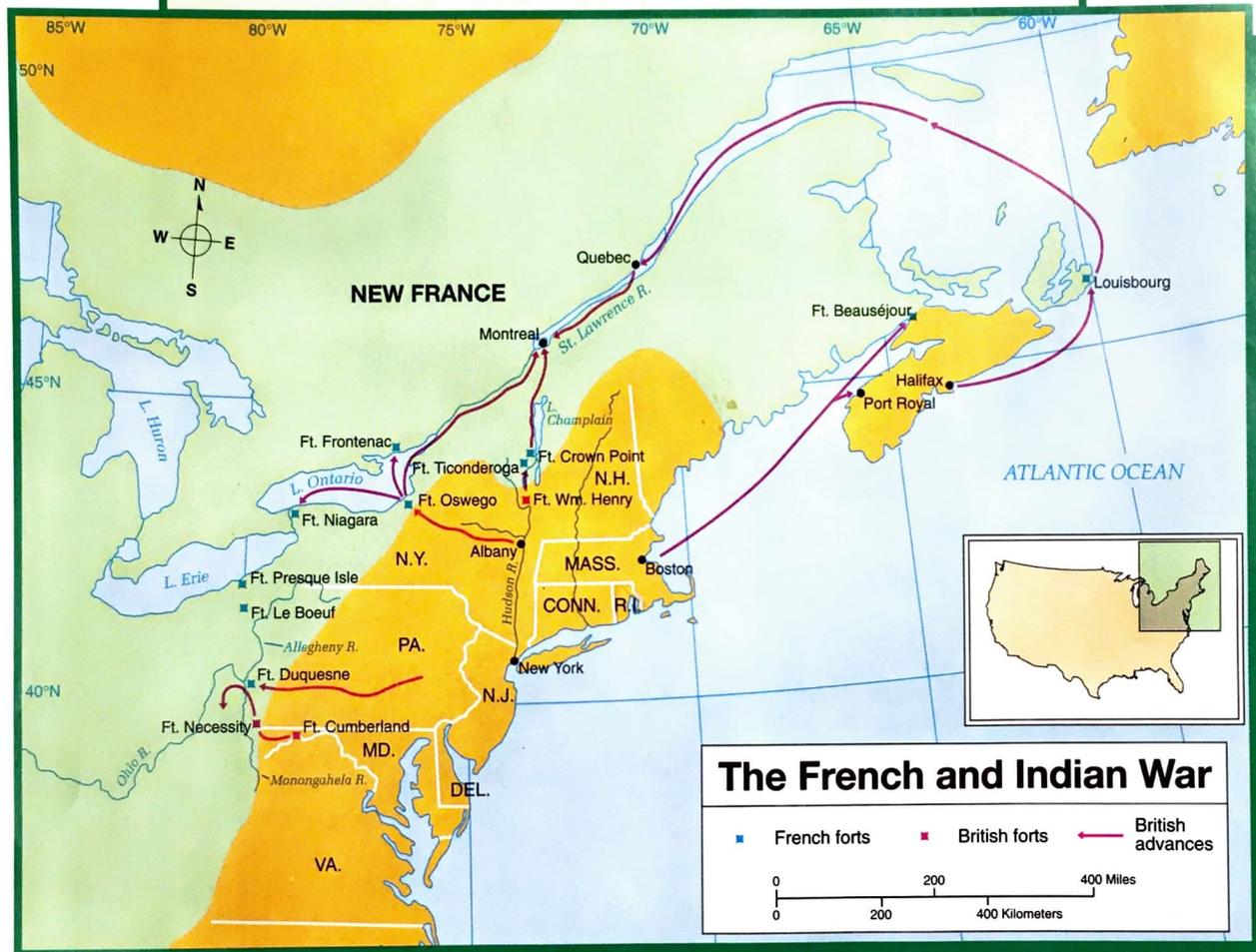
In 1757, William Pitt became head of the British government. Pitt was a bold leader. “I believe that I can save this nation and that no one else can,” he declared with great confidence.

Pitt set out to win the war in North America. Once that was done, he argued, the British could focus on victory in other parts of the world. Pitt sent Britain’s best generals to North America. To encourage

MAP STUDY

During the French and Indian War, Britain and France battled for control of North America.

1. Which French forts were located on Lake Ontario?
2. About how many miles did advancing British troops travel from Louisbourg to Quebec?
3. **Analyzing Information** Based on the map, do you think naval power was important in fighting the French and Indian War? Explain.



colonists to support the war, he promised large payments for military services and supplies.*

*By 1756, fighting between the French and the British had broken out in Europe. There, it became known as the Seven Years' War. The British and the French also fought in India. In the early years of the war, the British suffered setbacks on every front.

Under Pitt's leadership, the tide of battle turned. In 1758, Major General Jeffrey Amherst captured **Louisbourg**, the most important fort in French Canada. That year, the British also won more Iroquois support.

The Iroquois persuaded the Delawares at Fort Duquesne to abandon the French. Without the Delawares, the French could no longer hold the fort. Acting quickly, the



Battle of Louisbourg The British capture of Louisbourg was a turning point in the French and Indian War. In this engraving, cannonballs fly as British ships shell the fort. **Geography** Locate Louisbourg on the map on page 139. Why do you think control of this fort was important?

British seized Fort Duquesne, which they re-named **Fort Pitt**. The city of Pittsburgh later grew up on the site.

The Fall of New France

The British enjoyed even greater success in 1759. By summer, they had pushed the French from Fort Niagara, Crown Point, and Fort Ticonderoga (tī kahn duh ROH guh). Now, Pitt sent General James Wolfe to take **Quebec**, capital of New France.

Battle for Quebec. Quebec was vital to the defense of New France. Without Quebec, the French would be unable to supply their forts farther up the St. Lawrence River. But Quebec was well defended. The city sat atop a steep cliff above the St. Lawrence. An able French general, the Marquis de Montcalm, was prepared to fight off any British attack.

General Wolfe devised a bold plan. Late one night, he ordered British troops to

move quietly in small boats to the foot of the cliff. Under cover of darkness, the soldiers swarmed ashore and scrambled to the top. The next morning, Montcalm awakened to see 4,000 British troops drawn up on the **Plains of Abraham**, a grassy field just outside the city.

Montcalm quickly marched out his own troops. A fierce battle followed. When it was over, both Montcalm and Wolfe were dead. Moments before Wolfe died, a soldier gave him the news that the British had won.



Linking Past and Present

The British commander who seized Fort Duquesne and rebuilt it as Pittsburgh was a Scotsman. He used the Scottish spelling “burgh” for the name, rather than the more common English “burg” or “boro.” Later Pittsburghers resisted government efforts to make them drop the “b.”

MAP STUDY

The Treaty of Paris of 1763 greatly changed the map of North America.

1. Which countries shared control of North America in 1763?
2. Which country controlled the land west of the Mississippi?
3. **Comparing** Compare this map with the map on page 133. How was North America in 1763 different from North America in 1753?

Wolfe reportedly whispered, “Now, God be praised, I will die in peace.”

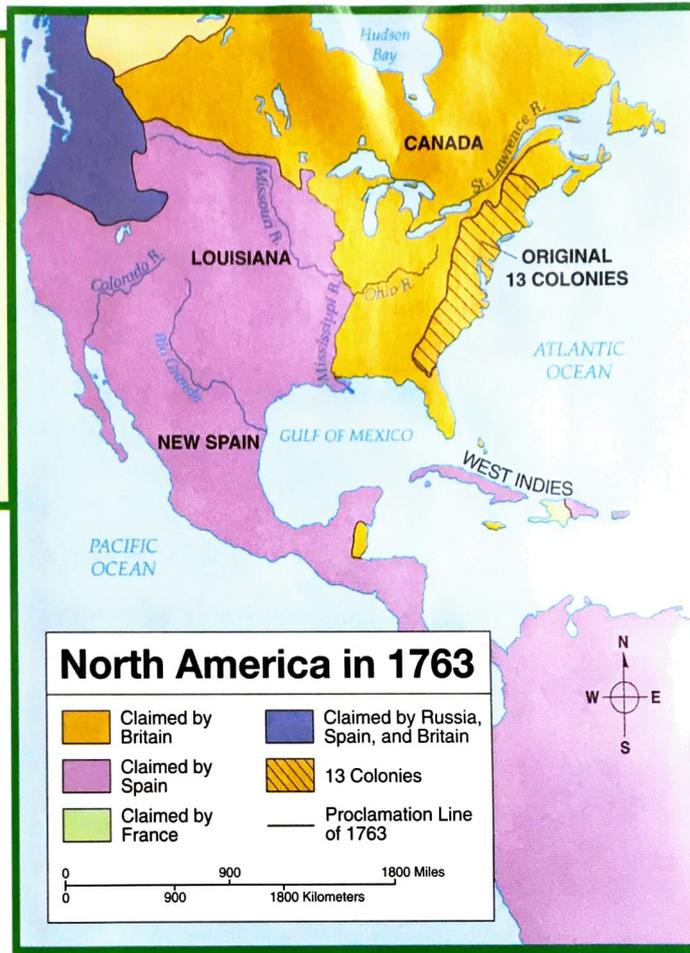
Treaty of Paris. The fall of Quebec sealed the fate of New France. In 1760, the British took Montreal, and the war in North America ended. Fighting dragged on in Europe until Britain and France signed the **Treaty of Paris** in 1763.

The Treaty of Paris marked the end of French power in North America. Under the treaty, Britain gained Canada and all French lands east of the Mississippi River. France was allowed to keep a few sugar-growing islands in the West Indies. Spain, which had entered the war on the French side in 1762, gave up Florida to Britain. In return, Spain received all French land west of the Mississippi, as well as the city of New Orleans.

After years of fighting, peace returned to North America. But in a few short years, a new struggle would break out. This struggle would pit Britain against its own colonies.

SECTION 2 REVIEW

1. **Locate:** (a) Fort Necessity, (b) Louisbourg, (c) Fort Pitt, (d) Quebec.
2. **Identify:** (a) French and Indian War, (b) George Washington, (c) Albany Plan of Union, (d) Edward Braddock,



- (e) James Wolfe, (f) Marquis de Montcalm, (g) Plains of Abraham, (h) Treaty of Paris.
3. Why did the British and French go to war in North America in 1754?
4. List two strengths of the British in the French and Indian War.
5. What lands did Britain gain under the Treaty of Paris?
6. **CRITICAL THINKING Evaluating Information** Under the Albany Plan of Union, the Grand Council could “draw on the fund in the Treasury of any Colony” during war. Why might colonial assemblies object?

ACTIVITY Writing to Learn

Write a short scene for a TV movie depicting the battle for Quebec.