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Class: _____

French and Indian War

By UShistory.org
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In 1754, the final round of conflict in a series of wars between France and Great Britain broke out in its North American theater. In the United States, it would be referred to as the French and Indian War. The following text recounts the events of the French and Indian War—what the struggle between two European powers meant for the people living in the New World, and the ramifications of this contest for land and power. As you read, take notes on the reasons each side participated in the war, particularly for Native Americans, and how the outcome of the fighting affected each group.

European Struggle for Dominance

- [1] The New World served as the stage for a small but significant part of the struggle for global domination between England and France. France established French colonies, called New France, as early as the 1530s along the shores of modern-day Canada and stretching inland towards the Great Lakes region.¹ During the 1600s, France was the dominant power on the European continent, emerging victorious from the Thirty Years War.² Louis XIV, the Sun King,³ built a palace at Versailles that made him the envy of every European



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1. The Great Lakes are a series of interconnected freshwater lakes. They and the surrounding region is located in the upper Midwest region of North America on the Canada-United States border.
2. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) was a series of wars in Central Europe. It was one of the longest and most destructive conflicts in European history, resulting in approximately eight million deaths. It began as a conflict between various Protestant and Catholic states, but ended up as a more general war between larger European powers. It's inaccurate to say France "won" such a prolonged and complicated war, but one of the results of their participation was the rise of the Bourbon dynasty.
3. Louis XIV (1638-1715), known as the Sun King (le Roi-Soleil), was a member of the House of Bourbon and ruled as King of France from 1643 until his death in 1715. His reign was known

monarch.⁴ French language, art, and literature prevailed on the continent. Meanwhile, England was in the throes of civil war.⁵ As the century drew to a close, however, England was ready to start settling the New World.

During the century that preceded⁶ American independence, England and France would fight four major wars, with the rest of Europe and eventually North America participating as well. With each conflict, France would slowly lose power, territory, and influence. King William's War⁷ and Queen Anne's War⁸ led to the removal of French power from Acadia, now Nova Scotia.⁹ After losses were incurred during King George's War,¹⁰ the French maintained their North American holdings only by ceding¹¹ land to Britain elsewhere. The final round of war would remove France from the continental mainland altogether.

Round four, the final conflict of this particular global struggle between England and France, broke out in 1754. Unlike the three previous conflicts, this war *began* in the New World. French and British soldiers butted heads with each other over control of the Ohio Valley. At stake were the lucrative¹² fur trade and access to the all-important Mississippi River, the lifeline of the frontier to the west. A squadron of soldiers led by a brash,¹³ twenty-two-year-old George Washington attacked a French stronghold named Fort Duquesne. Soon after the attack, Washington's troops were forced to surrender. Shortly after that, a second British force was also met with defeat. When news of this reached London, war was declared, and the conflict known in Europe as the Seven Years War began. Americans would call this bout the French and Indian War.

Forging Alliances

The name "French and Indian War" obscures the fact that Native Americans fought on both sides of this conflict, as well as in other campaigns between Britain and France—and later in the

for its opulence, centralized power, and patronage of the arts.

4. **Monarch** (*noun*) a sovereign head of state, especially a king, queen, or emperor
5. The English Civil War (1642–1651) consisted of a series of armed conflicts and political plots between Parliamentarians and Royalists over the form of England's government. The civil war deposed of two different monarchs (Charles I and Charles II) and was the first step towards England's constitutional monarchy.
6. **Precede** (*verb*) to come before something in time
7. King William's War (1688–1697)
8. Queen Anne's War (1702–1713)
9. Nova Scotia is one of Canada's three Maritime provinces.
10. King George's War (1744–1748)
11. **Cede** (*verb*) to give up (power or territory)
12. **Lucrative** (*adjective*) producing a great deal of profit
13. **Brash** (*adjective*) self-assertive in a rude, noisy, or overbearing way; cocky

American Revolution. Faced with an invading force of European settlers and imperialists,¹⁴ Native Americans only had so many choices; forming temporary coalitions¹⁵ was one of the few routes they could take. These alliances were based more on practicality than cultural similarities. Often, tribes would pit one side against the other as a means of survival. In the eyes of many Native Americans, this conflict, like many other conflicts, merely settled which group of Europeans that the natives would have to deal with later.

- [5] A majority of the Native American tribes involved in the conflict sided with France in the French and Indian War, despite the larger British presence in North America. Unlike the British, the French took strides to develop diplomacy with indigenous populations. This included economic trade, exchange of language, marriage, and cohabitation.¹⁶ Tribes began to become increasingly dependent on European goods. A prosperous¹⁷ fur trade flourished along the St. Lawrence and Mississippi Rivers. While this does not mean that the French settlers and Native Americans lived in complete harmony, there was at least some level of trust and benefit to their alliance.

In contrast, the British did much less to understand their native neighbors. Whether out of ignorance or hostility, the British acted in ways that strained their relationship with the native peoples. For example, the British failed to understand a common gift-giving practice among many tribes; they received much but gave little back. They secluded¹⁸ themselves from the native population. Indeed, the British seemed to have no interest in developing friendly relationships with the tribes. Both sides regarded the other with mistrust.

In the end, France and Britain prioritized land, wealth, and the extension of their empires, none of which were in the best interest of indigenous peoples. Natives did what they could to protect their ancestral lands and to maintain their traditions and lifestyles. Nevertheless, time and time again, alliances were formed, if only briefly, so that each side might pursue what was best for them.

Warfare

The first phase of this war was a sheer disaster for Britain. Assaults on French territory ended in bitter defeat. The French and their Indian allies inspired fear on the British frontier by burning and pillaging¹⁹ settlements. The French even struck within sixty miles of Philadelphia.

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14. **Imperialist (noun)** someone who supports the expansion of a country's power, often through military and diplomatic means
 15. **Coalition (noun)** alliance
 16. **Cohabitation (noun)** living or existing at the same time or in the same place
 17. **Prosperous (adjective)** wealthy or successful
 18. **Seclude (verb)** to keep (someone) away from other people; to isolate
 19. **Pillage (verb)** to rob using violence, especially in wartime

Americans were dismayed. They believed that Britain was not making the proper commitment to North America.

The turning point in the war came when the British statesman William Pitt²⁰ took over wartime operations. He believed North America was critical for England's global domination. Pitt turned command of recruitment and supplies over to local authorities in America and promised to reimburse²¹ them for their efforts. He committed more troops and rearranged commanding officers, replacing old war heroes with energetic young ones.

- [10] Militarily, the tide began to turn, as the British captured Louisbourg,²² an important strategic port the British used to close the St. Lawrence Seaway. The death blow to the French cause was struck in Quebec in 1759. Commander James Wolfe²³ bravely sent his forces up a rocky embankment to surprise the French. The battle that followed on the Plains of Abraham killed Wolfe and the French commander, and the crucial stronghold was transferred to British hands. It would only be a matter of time before Montreal suffered the same fate.

The French chapter of North American history had ended in a bloody finale.

The War's Aftermath

The fighting in North America mostly ended by 1760. The war officially ended with the Treaty of Paris (1763), which forced France to surrender its North American territories east of the Mississippi to Great Britain. This would have massive consequences for all involved, shaping the destinies of North America and Europe as we know it.

Despite this great increase in land, the imperial struggle took its toll on England. The empire had incurred a tremendous amount of debt. Its attempts to recover losses by increasing taxes on the American colonists would ultimately be one of the causes of the American Revolution. Furthermore, the leadership experience gained by colonial fighters such as George Washington during the wars would be used against the Redcoats in the decades that followed. France was weakened by the loss of New France, the financial burden of war, and the embarrassing overall defeat. Civil unrest and distrust in the monarchy would eventually culminate²⁴ in the French

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20. William Pitt (1708-1778) was the British secretary of state during the French and Indian War. He later served as Prime Minister of Great Britain.
21. **Reimburse (verb)** to repay someone who has spent or lost money
22. The Fortress of Louisbourg is located on Cape Breton Island in Nova Scotia. The fortress is an important site in the history of Anglo-French struggle for modern-day Canada.
23. James Wolfe (1727-1759) was a British Army officer, known for his training reforms but chiefly for his victory over the French at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759. After his death in said battle, Wolfe was called "The Hero of Quebec" or "The Conqueror of Canada," since the capture of Quebec led to the end of French control in the country.

Revolution²⁵—but not before France’s participation in the American Revolution. What better way to strike back at Britain than to provide direct aid to the colonists fighting for freedom?

France and Great Britain were not the only sides affected by the war. The outcome of the French and Indian War would have a profound effect on the course of Native Americans’ histories. The significant loss of French presence in North America might have benefitted Native Americans at one point, but the forfeiture left this territory open to British (and later American) expansion and rule. The switch from French to British control was a difficult one. In the case of General Amherst,²⁶ who oversaw this transition of French forts to British control, he introduced policies that disturbed many indigenous people and contributed to Pontiac’s Rebellion,²⁷ the first of many acts of Native defiance.

- [15] In 1761, a Chippewa²⁸ chief named Minavavana made an address to English fur trader Alexander Henry.²⁹ The following quote is as recorded by Henry:

“Englishman, although you have conquered the French, you have not yet conquered us! We are not your slaves....

“Englishman, our father, the King of France, employed our young men to make war upon your nation. In this warfare many of them have been killed, and it is our custom to retaliate until such time as the spirits of the slain are satisfied. But the spirits of the slain are to be satisfied in either of two ways; the first is by the spilling of the blood of the nation by which they fell; the other by *covering the bodies of the dead*, and thus allaying³⁰ the resentment of their relations. This is done by making presents.

“Englishman, your king has never sent us any presents,... wherefore he and we are still at

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24. **Culminate (verb)** to reach a climax or point of highest development
 25. The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a period of social and political upheaval in France that led to the removal and execution of the French Bourbon monarchy.
 26. General Jeffery Amherst (1717-1797) was an officer in the British Army and Commander-in-Chief of the Forces. He is perhaps best known as the architect of Britain's campaign to conquer New France during the Seven Years' War. Under his command, British forces captured Louisbourg, Quebec City, Montreal, and several major fortresses.
 27. Pontiac’s Rebellion (1763-1766) was launched by a confederation of Native American tribes (primarily from the Great Lakes region, the Illinois Country, and Ohio Country) who were dissatisfied with British postwar policies. It is named after the Odawa leader Pontiac, the most prominent of leaders in this conflict.
 28. Another name for this Native American nation is Ojibwe, or Ojibwa, the majority of whom live in Canada.
 29. Alexander Henry 'The Elder' (1739-1824) was one of the pioneers of the British-Canadian fur trade after the British conquest of New France.
 30. **Allay (verb)** to diminish or put at rest (such as fear, suspicion, or worry)

war; and until he does these things we must consider that we have no other father, nor friend among the white men than the King of France.... You do not come armed with an intention to make war.... We shall regard you, therefore, as a brother.... As a token of our friendship we present you with this pipe to smoke.”

While many Native American tribes sided with the French in the war, the tide eventually turned in favor of the British. Aware that it was in their best interest, Native Americans became more eager to make peace with the apparent victor. But this would not erase any fundamental misunderstandings or the history of violence between them. For Minavavana and many native people like him, there was neither stability nor “satisfaction” to be found in the end of the French and Indian War — only uncertainty.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best describes a central idea of the text?
 - A. The Native Americans lived in perfect harmony with their French allies.
 - B. France had a larger, more established presence in North America than the British, which made their defeat all the more embarrassing.
 - C. The French and Indian War was the culmination of a struggle between two foreign powers for, essentially, global dominance.
 - D. The French and Indian War was unique among the four wars between Britain and France, as it was the only one to be fought on North American soil.

2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
 - A. "The New World served as the stage for a small but significant part of the struggle for global domination between England and France." (Paragraph 1)
 - B. "Round four, the final conflict of this particular global struggle between England and France, broke out in 1754. Unlike the three previous conflicts, this war began in the New World." (Paragraph 3)
 - C. "A majority of the Native American tribes involved in the conflict sided with France in the French and Indian War, despite the larger British presence in North America. Unlike the British, the French took strides to develop diplomacy with indigenous populations." (Paragraph 5)
 - D. "France was weakened by the loss of New France, the financial burden of war, and the embarrassing overall defeat." (Paragraph 13)

3. Which of the following statements best summarizes why some Native Americans allied with either side of the war?
 - A. In general, Native American played one side against the other to their own advantage, but a majority sided with the French due to positive trade relations between them.
 - B. The majority of eastern native tribes sided with the French due to their sense of loyalty and dependence on these Europeans.
 - C. Many Native Americans sided with the English because they saw the tactical advantage of allying with the greater presence of British settlers than the few French.
 - D. There was a relatively even split between Native American groups who chose to fight; this was based more on geographical location and proximity to certain European settlements.

4. How does the text connect the outcome of the French and Indian War to the American Revolution?
- A. Following their loss, France was in bad shape and could only ally themselves with the ragtag Americans colonists; this led to France's reluctant participation in the American Revolution.
 - B. The financial strain of the war prompted Britain to raise colonial taxes; this frustration with taxes, coupled with frustration for prohibited expansion, led to revolution in the colonies.
 - C. France's embarrassing loss in the French and Indian War provoked further animosity towards Britain; to get back at them, France began seeding ideas about revolution in the colonies.
 - D. Following the war, Native Americans were disturbed by British policies in a once French-settled land, and this further added to the turmoil Britain was facing as it attempted hold on to control of America.
5. Reread the conclusion of the text. Why does the author likely include the quote by Minavavana? What does this section contribute to the overall text?
