

The War of 1812

MAIN IDEA

War broke out again between the United States and Britain in 1812.

WHY IT MATTERS NOW

The War of 1812 confirmed American independence and strengthened nationalism.

Terms & Names

- blockade
- impressment
- embargo
- William Henry Harrison
- Tecumseh
- war hawk
- Andrew Jackson
- Treaty of Ghent
- armistice

One American's Story

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TAKING NOTES

Use the graphic organizer online to take notes on why the war hawks wanted war with Great Britain.

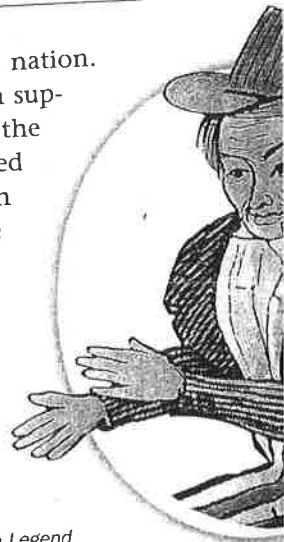
During the War of 1812, Samuel Wilson became a symbol for the nation. The owner of a meat-packing business in Troy, New York, he began supplying barrels of salted meat to the army, stamping the barrels with the initials "U.S.," for United States. One of Wilson's employees joked that the letters stood for "Uncle Sam," Wilson's nickname. Soon army recruits were calling themselves "Uncle Sam's soldiers." One of Wilson's great-nephews, Lucius Wilson, spoke about his famous relative in 1917.

A PERSONAL VOICE LUCIUS E. WILSON

"He was the old original Uncle Sam that gave the name to the United States. . . . [He] engaged in many enterprises, employed many hands [workers], had extensive acquaintance, was jolly, genial, generous, and known [as] and called "Uncle Sam" by everyone."

—Uncle Sam: The Man and the Legend

The story took on the features of a legend. Uncle Sam came to symbolize American values of honesty and hard work. The war during which the phrase caught on was just around the corner for the United States.



▲ One of the earliest depictions of Uncle Sam.

The War Hawks Demand War

Jefferson's popularity soared after the Louisiana Purchase, and he won reelection in 1804. During his second term, renewed fighting between Britain and France threatened American shipping. In 1806, Napoleon decided to exclude British goods from Europe. In turn, Great Britain decided that the best way of attacking Napoleon's Europe was to **blockade** it, or seal up its ports and prevent ships from entering or leaving. By 1807, Britain had seized more than 1,000 American ships and confiscated their cargoes, and France had seized about half that number.

GRIEVANCES AGAINST BRITAIN Although both France and Britain engaged in these acts of aggression, Americans focused their anger on the British. One reason was the British policy of **impressment**, the practice of seizing Americans at sea

and “impressing,” or drafting, them into the British navy. Another reason was the *Chesapeake* incident. In June 1807, the commander of a British warship demanded the right to board and search the U.S. naval frigate *Chesapeake* for British deserters. When the U.S. captain refused, the British opened fire, killing 3 Americans and wounding 18.

Jefferson convinced Congress to declare an **embargo**, a ban on exporting products to other countries. He believed that the Embargo Act of 1807 would hurt Britain and the other European powers and force them to honor American neutrality. The embargo hurt America more than Britain, and in 1809 Congress lifted the ban on foreign trade—except with France and Britain. **A**

TECUMSEH’S CONFEDERACY Another source of trouble appeared in 1809, when General **William Henry Harrison**, the governor of the Indiana Territory, invited several Native American chiefs to Fort Wayne, Indiana, and persuaded them to sign away three million acres of tribal land to the U.S. government.

Not all chiefs gave in. Like Little Turtle and chiefs from other tribes, the Shawnee chief **Tecumseh** believed that the only way for Native Americans to protect their homeland against intruding white settlers was to form a confederacy, a united Native American nation.

Tecumseh was aided by his younger brother, known as the Prophet. Around 1805, the Prophet had started a reform movement within the Shawnee tribe to cast off all traces of the white “civilization,” including Christianity. Both the Prophet and Tecumseh warned that the Great Spirit was angry with all of the tribes who had abandoned their traditional practices and beliefs. The time had come to return to those beliefs, they urged, and to implore the aid of the Great Spirit in driving out the invaders.

More practical than his brother, Tecumseh was a brilliant strategist and a skillful diplomat. While continuing to press Harrison to withdraw from Native American land, Tecumseh began negotiations with the British for assistance in what seemed like an inevitable war with the Americans. Throughout 1810 and 1811, Tecumseh traveled throughout the Midwest and the South, trying to win followers to his confederacy. Unfortunately, many tribes had already accepted payment for their lands. Others were reluctant to give up tribal autonomy by joining the kind of confederacy that Tecumseh proposed.

THE WAR HAWKS In November 1811, while Tecumseh was absent, his brother led the Shawnee in an attack on Harrison and his troops. Harrison struck back. On the banks of the Tippecanoe river, he burned the Shawnee capital known as Prophetstown to the ground. Harrison’s victory at what came to be known as the Battle of Tippecanoe made him a national hero, but his troops suffered heavy losses. When it was discovered that the Native American confederacy was using arms from British Canada, a group of young congressmen from the South and the West known as the **war hawks** called for war against Britain. Led by Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina and Henry Clay of Kentucky, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, the war hawks rallied behind their motto: “On to Canada!” **B**



*“The Great Spirit gave
this great land to his
red children.”*

TECUMSEH

MAIN IDEA

**Analyzing
Issues**

What was Jefferson's reasoning behind the embargo of 1807?

MAIN IDEA

**Analyzing
Motives**

Why did the war hawks call for the war with Britain?