

# Thomas Jefferson, The War of 1812



- In 1800, Thomas Jefferson was elected president of the United States and Washington D.C. became the national capital.
- After the bitter presidential campaign of 1800, he tried to conciliate the warring parties by saying, “We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.”
- Even though he spoke in a conciliatory tone, Jefferson fully intended to introduce “republican” principles into the government.

- Jefferson made Washington D.C. society less stuffy than it had been under the Federalists. Instead of formal levees or state banquets, Jefferson gave private dinners with no designated seating plan.
- He held small private suppers where he seated his guests at a round table and which he often attended wearing carpet slippers, a threadbare scarlet vest, and often shirts that were not entirely clean.
- The guests at his dinners discussed philosophy, the arts, literature, and science.

- Jefferson's attitude toward slavery seems to some to be inconsistent and even hypocritical. He recognized the evils of slavery, but he also was a large slaveholder and couldn't not imagine blacks and whites living under the same government.
- Evidence indicates that Jefferson may have maintained a liaison with Sally Hemings, a young black slave that he owned.
- Recent historians using the evidence of DNA from Jefferson's and Heming's descendants, agree that either Jefferson or a close relative probably did father children with Sally Hemings.

- Jefferson sought to shrink the role of the federal government. Secretary of Treasury Albert Gallatin reduced the national debt by reducing appropriations for the army and navy.
- The Jeffersonian administration also abolished several unpopular internal taxes that the Federalists had imposed.
- The administration also repealed some of the Alien and Sedition Acts, allowed others to expire, and pardoned all of the people that the Federalists had imprisoned for sedition.

- The Jefferson administration couldn't dismantle the Bank of the United States until 1811, because it had a 20 year charter. But in 1802, the federal government sold its shares of bank stock at a profit and got out of the banking business.
- During Jefferson's first two years in office, he replaced almost 200 Federalist officials with Jeffersonian Republicans.
- The Judiciary Act of 1801, passed in the waning days of the Federalist Administration of John Adams, made politics difficult for Jefferson.

- On the evening of March 3, 1801, the day before Jefferson was to take office, the Adams administration passed and enacted the Judiciary Act of 1801.
- This act provided for Federalist circuit judges, federal marshals, attorneys and justices of the peace.
- The Republican Congress repealed the 1801 Judiciary Act and replaced it with the Judiciary Act of 1802.
- Chief Justice of the Supreme Court John Marshall believed in judicial review.



- Marshall believed that the Supreme Court had the right to check the acts of Congress by declaring some of these acts unconstitutional.
- In 1803 Chief Justice Marshall ruled in the case of Marbury v. Madison. The Federalist Marbury had tried to claim his commission granted to him by the Judiciary Act, and refused delivery by Secretary of State James Madison.
- Speaking for the Supreme Court, Chief Justice Marshall denied Marbury's case by declaring the federal law that had been used to sue him unconstitutional.

- This case also established that the Supreme Court was to be the final judge of constitutionality.
- In 1800, Spain and France signed the Treaty of San Ildefonso allowing France to resume sovereignty of Louisiana. This treaty alarmed Americans because they feared that France intended to reestablish an empire in North America.
- Through a series of negotiations with Napoleon and his ministers, the United States purchased the Louisiana Territory.

- On May 2, 1803, American negotiators signed the treaty transferring Louisiana to the United States for \$15 million.
- On December 20, 1803, the French flag was lowered at New Orleans and the Stars and Stripes raised in its place.
- President Jefferson appointed his private secretary Meriwether Lewis and a former soldier, William Clark, to explore the Louisiana region.
- The Lewis and Clark party left St. Louis in the spring of 1804.

- After wintering in the Dakotas, the Lewis and Clark Expedition set off for the Pacific in April of 1804 with 37 men and a woman, Sacajawea, a Shoshone captive who acted as a guide in exchange for her freedom.
- The Expedition returned to St. Louis in September 1806.
- They had established relations with important Indian nations, discovered passes through the Rockies, and provided important botanical, zoological, geological, and anthropological data about a vast stretch of western north America.

- Even after the Louisiana Purchase, Westerners, people of the trans Appalachian region., weren't sure that they could entrust their future to the government in Washington.
- General James Wilkinson, governor of the Louisiana Territory, and Vice President Aaron Burr of New York conspired to detach the West from the United States, combine it with parts of Spanish Mexico, and set up an independent union with themselves as rulers.

- Eventually Wilkinson betrayed Burr to President Jefferson and the administration indicted Burr. He was tried before Chief Justice Marshall and acquitted of treason. Rather than face various state charges against him, he fled to Europe.
- Impressments and neutrality rights began to come to the forefront of American foreign policy once again.
- In the Chesapeake Bay region, many deserters from the Royal Navy had taken refuge and some had enlisted in the American navy.

- Sir George Berkeley, British naval commander ordered his subordinates to stop the American frigate U.S.S. Chesapeake who was supposedly carrying a British deserter.
- On June 1, 1807, the H.M.S. Leopard overtook the Chesapeake and fired three broadsides into the American ship, killing three Americans and wounding eighteen. Not fully outfitted for combat, the Chesapeake could only fire a token shot before surrendering.
- This blatant violation of American sovereignty inflamed American public opinion.

- In December 1807, President Jefferson activated the first Non-importation Act and asked Congress to place an embargo on all exports from the United States. Congress passed the 1807 Embargo Act which forbade American vessels to sail to foreign ports without special permission and forbade foreign vessels to carry off American goods.
- In 1808, James Madison was elected president of the United States.



- Jefferson retired to Monticello. He didn't feel that he had been a successful president, but he failed to consider that he had successfully guided the United States through a major transition from the rule of one party to the rule of another.
- Jefferson had doubled the physical size of the United States.
- Jefferson had brought a new, more democratic tone to the nation's political culture.
- James Madison was a man after the Jeffersonian mold.

- Madison was co-founder of the Republican party, Jefferson's secretary of state, and one of the chief architects of the Constitution.
- No single dramatic event finally pushed the United States into the War of 1812, but numerous American grievances against the British did. Westerners mistakenly thought that the British incited the Indians against them.
- The War Hawks, about forty western and southern representatives elected to the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress, agitated to shake the United States loose from subservience to Great Britain.

- The War Hawks succeeded in electing Henry Clay speaker of the House and packing foreign relations and naval committees with their members.
- The British continued to impress sailors and violate American neutrality.
- On June 18, 1812, Congress declared war on England. Ironically, British politics had been in turmoil and when Lord Castlereagh was ready to suspend the Orders in Council against American, the news of his announcement arrived too late in America.

- The first year of the War of 1812 went badly for Americas, including the surrender of Detroit to the British by General Hull.
- In September 1813, Oliver Hazard Perry defeated a British flotilla under Captain Robert Barclay.
- General William Henry Harrison won the Battle of the Thames in early October 1813 and this defeat led to the collapse of the Shawnee chief's confederation and the desertion of many tribes from the British cause.

- In April 1814, Napoleon had been defeated which freed the British Army for the war in America. The British part of the British plan to cut America in half along the old Lake Champlain-Hudson route failed when Captain Thomas McDonough defeated the English fleet at Plattsburg on Lake Champlain.
- The second part of the British plan, aimed at the Chesapeake was more successful. In June 1814, the British marched into Washington and burned the Capitol, the presidential mansion, and almost all of the public buildings.

- The British next turned to Baltimore, and bombarded Fort McHenry for two days. To commemorate the victory, lawyer Francis Scott Key wrote a poem, “The Star Spangled Banner,” and set it to the tune of an old British drinking song.
- The third part of the British campaign came in late November 1814, when the British army of 7,500 under Sir Edward Pakenham landed at Lake Borgne, forty miles from New Orleans.
- Andrew Jackson and his troops fought the British and defeated them in January 1815.

- Ironically enough again, if transatlantic communications had been swifter, the Battle of New Orleans would never have taken place. Peace negotiations between the Americans and British had concluded a peace at Ghent in Belgium on December 24, 1814.
- The Treaty of Ghent restored peace and provided for a commission to settle the disputed boundary with Canada in the far northeast.
- The Treaty provided for a commission to settle differences over navigation of the Great Lakes and the Newfoundland fisheries.

- Jackson's victory at the Battle of New Orleans ended the possibility of a new British Empire in North America.
- The victory at New Orleans also left Americans with the sense that they had defeated British tyranny a second time.
- The War of 1812 united Americans more firmly as a nation and fostered a strong nationalist sense.
- The War of 1812 also ended the Federalist party. After 1815 the Federalists would never again be a serious threat to the Republicans on a national level.



- The Battle of New Orleans and the Treaty of Ghent closed an important chapter of American history.
- The United States had been embroiled in European affairs for 50 years.
- After the defeat of Napoleon, Europe settled down for a period of relative calm.

- For almost a century the United States would not be involved in the unsettling clash of empires.
- With the advent of peace, Americans could focus on exploiting their human and natural resources and convert them into tangible wealth.

The Battle of New Orleans:

Jimmy Driftwood Style

- **Music and lyrics by Jimmy Driftwood: Jimmy Driftwood was a high school principal and history teacher who loved to sing, play instruments and write songs. Mr. Driftwood wrote many songs, all for the sole purpose of helping his students learn about this battle and other historical events.**

- **But this song turned out to be so popular that it won the 1959 Grammy Award for Song Of The Year (awarded in 1960 for musical accomplishments in 1959). Johnny Horton also won the 1959 Grammy Award for Best Country And Western Performance for his recording of this song. "The Battle of New Orleans," is about a battle in the War of 1812, and it became one of the biggest selling hits of 1959.**

- **Students might also be interested to know that there is a movie called "The Buccaneer" about the Battle of New Orleans. It is interesting to reflect on the fact that despite the turbulent early relationship between England and the American colonists, our two countries have long since been strongly united. The words were written to correspond with an old fiddle tune called "The 8th of January," which is the date of the famous "Battle of New Orleans".**

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- *Narrative by Jimmy Driftwood:*
- *“After the Battle of New Orleans, which Andrew Jackson won on January the 8th eighteen and fifteen, the boys played the fiddle again that night, only they changed the name of it from the battle of a place in Ireland to the “Eighth of January”. Years passed and in about nineteen and forty-five an Arkansas school teacher slowed the tune down and put words to it and that song is The Battle Of New Orleans and I will try to sing it for you.” (\*Note -- two minor revisions were made for classroom use)*

- **Well, in eighteen and fourteen we took a little trip  
along with Colonel Jackson down the mighty  
Mississip.**

**We took a little bacon and we took a little beans,  
And we caught the bloody British near the town of  
New Orleans.**



- **We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin. There wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.  
We fired once more and they began to runnin' down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**

- **Well, I see'd Mars Jackson walkin down the street  
talkin' to a pirate by the name of Jean Lafayette  
[pronounced La-feet]  
He gave Jean a drink that he brung from  
Tennessee  
and the pirate said he'd help us drive the British  
in the sea.**

- **The French said Andrew, you'd better run,  
for Packingham's a comin' with a bullet in his  
gun.**

**Old Hickory said he didn't give a dang,  
he's gonna whip the britches off of Colonel  
Packingham.**

- **We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin. There wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.  
We fired once more and they began to runnin' down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**

- **Well, we looked down the river and we see'd the  
British come,  
and there must have been a hundred of 'em  
beatin' on the drum.  
They stepped so high and they made their bugles  
ring  
while we stood by our cotton bales and didn't say  
a thing.**

- **Old Hickory said we could take 'em by surprise if we didn't fire a musket til we looked 'em in the eyes.**

**We held our fire til we see'd their faces well,  
then we opened up with squirrel guns and really  
gave a yell.**

- **We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin. There wasn't nigh as many as there was a while ago.  
We fired once more and they began to runnin' down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**

- **Well, we fired our cannon til the barrel melted down,  
so we grabbed an alligator and we fought another round.  
We filled his head with cannon balls and powdered his behind,  
and when they tetched the powder off, the gator lost his mind.**



- **We'll march back home but we'll never be content till we make Old Hickory the people's President. And every time we think about the bacon and the beans, we'll think about the fun we had way down in New Orleans.**

- **We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin,  
But there wasn't nigh as many as there was a  
while ago.**

**We fired once more and they began to runnin'  
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**

- **Well, they ran through the briars and they ran through the brambles  
And they ran through the bushes where a rabbit couldn't go.  
They ran so fast the hounds couldn't catch 'em  
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**

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**We fired our guns and the British kept a'comin.  
But there wasn't nigh as many as there was a  
while ago.**

**We fired once more and they began to runnin'  
down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico.**