

Title: Shall We Go to War? A Classroom Debate

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Grade Levels: 10: United States History, 1600-1877 (Honors)
11: Advanced Placement United States History

Time Frame: 2 84-minute lessons

Alignment with state and federal standards:

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks:

- MA.USI.22 - Summarize the major policies and political developments that took place during the presidencies of George Washington (1789–1797), John Adams (1797–1801), Thomas Jefferson (1801–1809), and James Madison (1809 – 1817).
- MA.USI.26 Describe the causes, course, and consequences of America’s westward expansion and its growing diplomatic assertiveness. Use a map of North America to trace America’s expansion to the Civil War, including the location of the Santa Fe and Oregon trails. A. A. the origins of the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties

Common Core Standards:

RH.9-10.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.

RH.9-10.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.

RH.9-10.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

RH.9-10.9 - Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

WHST.9-10.1 - Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

WHST.9-10.2 - Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.

WHST.9-10.2.e - Establish and maintain a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which they are writing.

WHST.9-10.2.f - Provide a concluding statement or section that follows from and supports the information or explanation presented (e.g., articulating implications or the significance of the topic).

WHST.9-10.4 - Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Objectives and Goals:

- Students will understand the major causes of the War of 1812.
- Students will be able to draw arguments from complex primary documents.
- Students will be able to identify the major arguments in support of and in opposition to going to war in 1812.
- Students will evaluate the decision to go to war in 1812.
- Students will consider modern expressions of opposition to war.
- Students will be able to define and apply the following academic vocabulary: embargo, neutrality, impressment, belligerent, jurisdiction, commerce, blockade, edict

Guiding Questions:

- What were the major issues in maritime disputes between the U.S. and Great Britain?
- What were the accusations against the British in North America?
- Why did Republicans tend to support the war and Federalists tend to oppose it?

Required Materials:

Computer with Internet connection, projector

Class set of excerpts from primary documents: either posted online or copied and assembled in packets (see attachments):

- a) James Madison's War Message to Congress
- b) Cartoon: "A Scene on the Frontier as Practiced by the Humane British and their Worthy Allies"
- c) Newspaper editorials: *Niles Weekly Register*, 30 May 1812, *New York Evening Post*, 26 January 2013, and *Columbian Sentinel*, 12 January 1813
- d) Proclamation of Committee appointed by the town of Boston, 1812

Teaching Context:

Prior lessons:

Early political party system: Federalists vs. Democratic-Republicans

American foreign policy 1789 – 1812, including: Proclamation of Neutrality, Jay Treaty, XYZ Affair, Quasi-War with France, Barbary Wars, Jefferson's Embargo—all in relation to French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars.

Procedure:

Day One:

- 1) Think-pair-share:
 - a) 2-3 minutes: working silently and independently, students write down –in list form-- everything they know about the War of 1812, especially (but not exclusively) about its causes.
 - b) Students turn to a neighbor and share what they have written, then add to their own lists.
- 2) Video clip: "The War of 1812: The Movie"
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2AfQ5pa59A>
- 3) Ask students to share what they wrote about causes of the war. Chances are good that

- they won't have much, but take a few minutes to discuss anything they might have written, or that the movie helped them to remember. Tell students that in today's lesson, they will be familiarizing themselves with the causes of this war. For homework, they will write speeches and prepare arguments either supporting or opposing war.
- 4) Divide the class into groups of four or five students each. Distribute document packets (see attachments)—or direct students to online collection. Working together, students should read and analyze each excerpt and be able to explain how it describes a situation that could lead to war. Instruct students to read the documents actively by taking notes and looking up unfamiliar vocabulary. They might also want to look up more information about each event described.
 - 5) Pull the class back together and discuss each document. Ask students which of the documents indicates support for which, and which indicates opposition. Ask also whether each situation described is cause enough to go to war.
 - 6) Tell students that in the next class period, they will be debating whether or not to go to war in 1812. They will be assigned to either the pro-war or the anti-war side and be expected to prepare their opening arguments as homework.
 - 7) With each group, assign 2-3 students to be pro-war Republicans and 2-3 students to be anti-war Federalists, so that half the class will be arguing on either side.
 - 8) For homework, students should write position papers (which will become “constructive speeches”) in preparation for debating the following: “Resolved: that the United States should declare war on Great Britain.” Students should write their speeches as if they are alive in 1812. Their speeches should incorporate evidence from the documents that they examined in class, as well as any information they can find through their own research. Speeches should be typed.

Day Two:

- 1) After checking homework, place students into debating groups as follows:
 - *2-3 affirmative debaters
 - *2-3 negative debaters
 - *one to two judges (usually students who were absent last class or who did not prepare speeches, but it may also be necessary to assign additional students to judging roles)(Thus, depending on class size, there will be four, five, or six debates taking place simultaneously around the room.)
- 2) Distribute debate procedure (see attachments) and discuss/explain
- 3) Allow each debate team time to prepare while judges familiarize themselves with the procedure and their role (see attachments). Be sure that each debating group is positioned as far away from other groups in the classroom as possible, and that each team of two or three students is facing its opponent, and that judges are positioned so as to be able to see and hear each side)
- 4) When teams and judges are ready, the affirmative side begins its constructive speech, with judges overseeing procedure within each group. Teacher should circulate around the room as debates are taking place.
- 5) When debates finish, judges take time to assess the “winners.” Ask judges to share results with the entire class and to describe high points of their groups' debates.
- 6) General class discussion: would you have supported going to war in 1812? why or why not? What were the most compelling reasons for going to war? Why did many New Englanders oppose the war? Could the war have been avoided, and if so, how? How do people today express their opposition to America's wars?

Homework/Assessment:

Students participate in an online forum, answering from among the same questions as those posed in the end-of class discussion.

Next Lessons:

Conduct and Consequences of the War of 1812.

Bibliography:

Charles, William. "A Scene on the Frontier as Practiced by the Humane British and their Worthy Allies." 1812. U.S. Navy, Bicentennial of the War of 1812.

<http://www.navy.mil/1812/gallery/photoGallery.asp?id=9> (August 12, 2013)

"Editorial." *Columbian Sentinel*, 12 January 1813

http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=3&psid=4130 (August 12, 2013).

"Editorial." *New York Evening Post*, 26 January 2012.

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Madison, James. "War Message to Congress" June, 1812.

<http://www.presidentialrhetoric.com/historicspeeches/madison/warmessage.html>

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