

Compare and Contrast the Accounts of the War of 1812 in American and Canadian Elementary Textbooks

by Jill Raci

Grade level: 4th

Lesson will run for 2 class periods

Common Core Standards:

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.1 Refer to details and examples in a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.4.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words or phrases in a text relevant to a grade 4 topic or subject area.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.4.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.CCRA.R.9 Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Objective

The students are to compare and contrast the different accounts of the War of 1812 using the accounts of the war from both an American textbook and a Canadian textbook. The students should be able to identify and discuss the similarities and differences in the two historical reports told from the perspectives of Canada and the United States.

Introduction

Historical accounts of War of 1812 differ, sometimes greatly, depending on the nationality of the person giving the account. Students need to read all historical sources with a critical eye. They need to understand that their textbook is only one interpretation of an event or era. Reading international accounts of events can provide us with a much broader understanding of a topic.

Materials

- Hartcourtbrace Social Studies textbook, Early United States version, pages 414 through 420
- History Lessons by Lindaman and Ward, pages 53 through 55.
- Graphic organizer to record events from both texts

Vocabulary

Students will be introduced to the following vocabulary words through direct instruction. The words to be defined and discussed are: impressment, nationalism, annex, and doctrine.

Procedure

The students will already be familiar with the idea that one event can be perceived and reported very differently depending upon who is doing the reporting (the Simpson's episode on Who Shot Mr. Burns will have been viewed and discussed prior to this lesson.)

DAY 1

Students will be placed into groups of 3 or 4.

Direct instruction of the vocabulary will take place, which will include a brief explanation of the history involved.

After a short review of perspective and historical context, students will receive a copy of account of the War of 1812 from a Canadian elementary textbook.

Each group of students will silently read the chapter from the Canadian textbook, followed by a group discussion of what took place in the reading. As a group, students will fill out a graphic organizer that will allow them to record and interpret what they read.

DAY 2

A brief review of the previous day's reading and vocabulary will take place, utilizing the graphic organizer.

Each group of students will silently read the second passage from their own social studies textbooks, followed by a discussion of what took place in the reading. In their groups, students will fill out the other side of the graphic organizer that will allow them to record and interpret what they read.

The student groups will then choose 3 events or outcomes that are described differently by the Americans versus the Canadians. Once this has been accomplished, the entire class will discuss and list their findings.

A whole group discussion will follow, allowing the students to give their views on what was the same between the stories, which events were described differently by each country, and why they think the accounts differ.

We will finish the lesson by coming up with examples of stories from our lives and current events that differ depending on the source.

In most American textbooks, British impressment of sailors, British restriction of American trade and British support of Native Americans on the frontier are usually cited as the main causes in the War of 1812. Andrew Jackson and Commodore Perry emerge as heroes and the British soldiers involved in the destruction of Washington, D.C. are the villains. A majority of American textbooks usually downplay the terms of the Treaty of Ghent and end their narrative with Jackson's victory at New Orleans and the subsequent rise of nationalism, which make the war seem like a last-minute victory for the United States.

A few key differences may emerge as students encounter a new point of view from the Canadians. For example, the Americans are described as the aggressors and invaders and the Canadians are the clear victors – they successfully defended their country against the American invaders. Isaac Brock and Laura Secord are the heroes. Washington, D.C. was only destroyed as retaliation after the Americans destroyed York (present day Toronto).

Extensions

Throughout the year, as we study historical events and review current events, we will identify and discuss perspective.

War of 1812 – American Perspective

According to the text, what are the causes of the War of 1812?

What terms or adjectives does the author use to describe the various groups who participated in the war (ex. Americans, Canadians, British, Native Americans)?

Are there any heroes in the War of 1812? Any villains?

Who were the winners and losers in the War of 1812?

War of 1812 – Canadian Perspective

According to the text, what are the causes of the War of 1812?

What terms or adjectives does the author use to describe the various groups who participated in the war (ex. Americans, Canadians, British, Native Americans)?

Are there any heroes in the War of 1812? Any villains?

Who were the winners and losers in the War of 1812?
