Challenge to the New Republic: The War of 1812

THE CHOICES PROGRAM
Explore the Past... Shape the Future
History and Current Issues for the Classroom

WATSON INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
BROWN UNIVERSITY WWW.CHOICES.EDU
Advanced Study Guide—Introduction and Part I

1. Compare Hamilton and Jefferson’s visions for the United States.

2. Explain the changes in U.S. attitudes toward the French Revolution and how they affected domestic politics.

3. Why was the Jay Treaty so controversial in the United States?

4. What important foreign policy precedents were established during the Washington and Adams administrations?

5. What were the causes and the consequences of the Quasi-War with France?
**Key Events in the Washington and Adams Administrations**

*Instructions: Fill out the chart below. Begin by identifying the presidential administration that was in power when the event took place. Give a general description of the event and the people or parties involved. Identify what precedent was established and how this event affected the United States' relationship with the European powers.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Presidential Administration</th>
<th>Description of Event</th>
<th>Precedent Established</th>
<th>Effect on U.S. Foreign Relations</th>
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<td>Neutrality Proclamation</td>
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<td>Receiving Minister Genet</td>
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<td>Jay Treaty</td>
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<td>Quasi-War with France</td>
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Key Documents in the Washington and Adams Administrations

Instructions: Answer the questions below with the other members of your group. Be prepared to share your views with the class. Refer to the reading from the student text if necessary.

Questions
1. Which historical events set the stage for the document assigned to your group?

2. What values does the document reflect? Underline sections that demonstrate the values you listed.

3. What were the reactions to the document in the United States?

4. Did your group’s document affect relations between the United States and the powers of Europe? How?

Document 1: Excerpts from the Constitution (Foreign Policy Powers)

Article I. Section 8. The Congress shall have power

To lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several States, and with the Indian tribes;

To establish an uniform rule of naturalization, and uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures;

To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas and offenses against the law of nations;

To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water;

To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money use shall be for a longer term than two years;

To provide and maintain a navy;

To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces;

To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the Union, suppress insurrections, and repel invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining the militia, governing such part of them as may be employed in the service United States, reserving to the States respectively the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such district (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular States,
and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of government of the United States, and to exercise like authority over all places purchased by the consent of the legislature of the State, in which the same for erection of forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards, and other buildings; and

To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof....

Section 10. No State shall enter into any treaty, alliance, or confederation; grant letters of marque and reprisal; coin money; emit bills of credit; make anything but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts; bill of attainder, ex post facto law, or law impairing the obligation of contracts, or grant any title of nobility.

No State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any impost duties on imports or exports, except what may be absolutely necessary executing its inspection laws: and the net produce of all duties and laid by any State on imports or exports, shall be for the use of the of the United States; and all such laws shall be subject to the revision and control of the Congress.

No State shall, without the consent of Congress, lay any duty of tonnage, keep troops or ships of war in time of peace, enter into any agreement or compact with another State, or with a foreign power, or engage unless actually invaded, or in such imminent danger as will not delay....

Article II. Section 2. The President shall be commander in chief of the army and navy of the United States, and of the militia of the several States when called into the actual service of the United States; he may require the opinion, in writing, of the principal officer in each of the executive departments, upon any subject relating to the duties of their respective offices, and he shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States, except in cases of impeachment.

He shall have power, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, to make treaties, provided two-thirds of the Senators present concur; and he shall nominate, and by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls. . . .

Article III. Section 1. The judicial power of the United States shall be vested in one Supreme Court, and in such inferior courts as the Congress may from time to time ordain and establish....

Section 2. The judicial power shall extend to all cases, in law and equity, arising under this Constitution, the laws of the United States, and treaties made, or which shall be made, under their authority; —to all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls; —to all cases of admiralty and maritime jurisdiction; —to controversies to which the United States shall be a party; —to controversies between two or more States; between a State and citizens of another State; —between citizens of different States; —bet-ween citizens of the same State claiming lands under grants of different States, and between a State, or the citizens thereof, and foreign states, citizens or subjects.

In all cases affecting ambassadors, other public ministers and consuls, and those in which a State shall be party, the Supreme Court shall have original jurisdiction....

Article IV. Section 3. The Congress shall have power to dispose of and make all needful rules and regulations respecting the territory or other property belonging to the United States; and nothing in this Constitution shall be so construed as to prejudice any claims of the United States, or of any particular State....

Article VI. This Constitution, and the laws of the United States which shall be made in pursuance thereof; and all treaties made, or which shall be made, under the authority of the United States, shall be the supreme law of the land; and the judges in every State shall be bound thereby, anything in the Constitution or laws of any State to the contrary notwithstanding....
Document 2: Excerpts from the Neutrality Proclamation, 1793

Whereas it appears that a state of war exists between Austria, Prussia, Sardinia, Great Britain, and the United Netherlands, on the one part, and France on the other; and the duty and interest of the United States require, that they should with sincerity and good faith adopt and pursue a conduct friendly and impartial towards the belligerent powers:

I have therefore thought fit by these presents, to declare the disposition of the United States to observe the conduct aforesaid towards those powers respectively, and to exhort and warn the citizens of the United States carefully to avoid all acts and proceedings whatsoever which may in any way tend to contravene such disposition.

And I hereby make known, that whosoever of the citizens of the United States shall render himself liable to, punishment or forfeiture under the law of nations, by committing, aiding, or abetting, hostilities against any of the said powers, or by carrying to any of them, those articles which are deemed contraband by the modern usage of nations, will not receive the protection of the United States against such punishment.

Document 3: Excerpts from Washington’s Farewell Address, 1796

Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence (I conjure you to believe me, fellow citizens) the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake, since history and experience prove that foreign influence is one of the most baneful foes of republican government. But that jealousy, to be useful, must be impartial, else it becomes the instrument of the very influence to be avoided, instead of a defense against it. Excessive partiality for one foreign nation and excessive dislike of another cause those whom they actuate to see danger only on one side, and serve to veil and even second the arts of influence on the other. Real patriots who may resist the intrigues of the favorite are liable to become suspected and odious, while its tools and dupes usurp the applause and confidence of the people to surrender their interests. The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is, in extending our commercial relations to have with them as little political connection as possible.
Document 4: Excerpts from the Sedition Act, 1798

Section 1: Be it enacted..., That if any persons shall unlawfully combine or conspire together, with intent to oppose any measure or measures of the government of the United States, which are or shall be directed by proper authority, or to impede the operation of any law of the United States, or to intimidate or prevent any person holding a place or office in or under the government of the United States, from undertaking, performing or executing his trust or duty; and if said, shall counsel, advise or attempt to procure any insurrection, riot, unlawful assembly, or combination, whether such conspiracy, threatening, counsel, advice, or attempt shall have the proposed effect or not, he or they shall be deemed guilty of a high misdemeanor....

Section 2: That if any person shall write, print, utter, or publish, or shall cause or procure to be written, printed, uttered or published, or shall knowingly and willingly assist or aid in writing, printing, uttering or publishing any false, scandalous and malicious writing or writings against the government of the United States, or either house of the Congress of the United States, or the President of the United States, with the intent to defame the said government, or either house of the said Congress, or the said President, or to bring them, or either of them, into contempt or disrepute; or to excite against them, or either or any of them, the hatred of the good people of the United States, or to stir up sedition within the United States, or to excite any unlawful combinations therein, for opposing or resisting any law of the United States, or any act of the president of the United States, done in pursuance of any such law, or of the powers in him vested by the constitution of the United States, or to resist, oppose, or defeat any such law or act, or to aid, encourage or abet any hostile designs of any foreign nation against the United States, their people or government, then such person, being thereof convicted of any court of the United States having jurisdiction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not exceeding two thousand dollars, and by imprisonment not exceeding two years.
Advanced Study Guide—Part II

1. What was impressment and how did it contribute to rising tensions between Great Britain and the United States during the Jefferson and Madison Administrations?

2. What was the most important achievement of Jefferson’s first administration? Why was it controversial?

3. How did Jefferson attempt to avoid armed conflict with Great Britain and France?

4. What were the costs of Jefferson’s attempts to avoid armed conflict with Great Britain and France?

5. Did changing conditions at home or abroad play a greater role in the United States’ decision to declare war in 1812? Explain your answer.
# Key Events of the Jefferson and Madison Administrations

*Instructions*: Many of the key events that took place leading up to the War of 1812 revolved around three themes: trade, territory, and impressment. Use this chart to record each event by considering how these themes were involved. Begin by identifying the presidential administration that was in power when the event took place. Check the shaded boxes to indicate which themes were central to the event. Then describe why the event was significant. For example, how did the event change which countries the United States could trade with? How did the event change U.S. territorial boundaries or reveal resistance to U.S. expansion? How did the event involve the controversial issue of impressment of U.S. sailors?

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Presidential Administration</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Impressment</th>
<th>Significance of Event in Relation to Major Themes</th>
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<td>Louisiana Purchase</td>
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<td>Berlin Decree and Orders in Council</td>
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<td>Monroe-Pinkney Treaty</td>
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<td>HMS <em>Leopard</em> and USS <em>Chesapeake</em></td>
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### Key Events of the Jefferson and Madison Administrations (continued)

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<th>Event</th>
<th>Presidential Administration</th>
<th>Trade</th>
<th>Territory</th>
<th>Impressment</th>
<th>Significance of Event in Relation to Major Themes</th>
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<td>Embargo Act of 1807</td>
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<td>Nonintercourse Act</td>
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<td>Macon’s Bill #2</td>
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<td>Battle at the Tippecanoe River</td>
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<td>Ninety-Day Embargo</td>
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Political Cartoons

Throughout U.S. history, political cartoonists have expressed the strong feelings politics and international issues have raised. Not only do cartoons reflect the events of the period, they usually offer an interpretation or express a strong opinion about these events. The first four cartoons that follow are from your readings.

Instructions: Answer the questions below for your assigned cartoon as well as for Cartoon #5 with the other members of your group. Be prepared to share your views with the class. Refer to the readings if necessary.

1. Who or what is depicted in the cartoon?

2. Which historical events set the stage for the cartoon?

3. Does the political cartoon have a particular point of view? What is it, and how do you know?

Cartoon 1
The text in this cartoon reads “Altar to Gallic (French) Despotism.”

[Image of political cartoon]
Cartoon 2

The Pharaoh's pudding in danger... or Sama Esfahany taking on Pharaoh

---

Cartoon 3

American Liberty

French Liberty
Cartoon 4
**Presenting Your Option**

**The Setting:** Your group is made up of members of Congress with strong opinions about President Madison’s request to consider war with Great Britain. You and members of opposing groups have decided to spend a summer evening dining at a fancy Washington hotel to listen to each other’s viewpoints. You have also decided to invite a group of concerned citizens to the dinner and to solicit their views on this matter.

**Your Assignment:** Your group’s assignment is to persuade the concerned citizens that the United States should adopt your option. Your group will be called on to present a persuasive three-to-five minute summary of your option. You will be judged on how well you present your option. This worksheet will help you prepare. Keep in mind that your group’s presentation may include only information that was available in June of 1812. After all of the groups have presented their options, the concerned citizens will have an opportunity to challenge your arguments.

**Organizing Your Group:** Each member of your group will take a specific role. Before preparing your section of the presentation, work together to answer the questions below.

The **group director** is responsible for organizing the presentation of your group’s option to the citizens. The **political expert** is responsible for explaining why your option is most likely to succeed in the current domestic and international climates. The **military expert** is responsible for explaining how the group’s option represents the best case in terms of military preparedness. The **historian** is responsible for explaining how the lessons of history justify your option.

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What is the main cause of the present crisis and who is to blame?

2. What issues are most at stake for the United States?

3. How should the United States respond to the present crisis?

4. What will happen if your recommendations are not heeded?

5. What will happen if Congress takes your recommendations? What will be the outcome if your option is selected?
**Concerned Citizens**

**Your Role:** You have been called upon to express the concerns of a citizen living in the United States in June 1812. You are having dinner at a fancy hotel in Washington at the invitation of some members of Congress. After dinner, the discussion turns to President Madison’s war message to Congress. You will hear four distinct positions (or options) from the members of Congress. You are expected to evaluate each of the options from the perspective of the citizen you represent.

**Your Assignment:** While the four option groups are organizing their presentations, you should answer the questions below to help you understand the perspective of your character. Once you have finished, you should read the options and prepare two questions regarding each of the options from the perspective of your assigned citizen. The questions should reflect the values, concerns, and interests of your role. Keep in mind that your questions should be based only on information that was available in the spring of 1812.

Your questions should be challenging and critical. For example, an appropriate question about Option 1 from George Sheldon might be:

*Under Option 1, how can you ensure that the British won’t attack and destroy our coastal towns and cities?*

On the day of the role play, the four option groups will present their positions. After their presentations are completed, your teacher will call on you and the other concerned citizens to ask questions. The “Evaluation Form” you receive is designed for you to record your impressions of the options presented. At the end of the activity, you will be expected to turn in your questions and the “Evaluation Form.”

**Questions to Consider:**

1. What are the pressing concerns of your character?

2. What do you think your character wants for the future?

3. How might policy decisions made by the U.S. government affect the life of your character?

4. What policies would your character support?
Dining at the Washington Hotel
June 1812

George Sheldon: You are a fifty-two-year-old merchant from Newport, Rhode Island. You own three merchant ships and a distillery which produces rum from molasses. Your family has lived in Rhode Island for three generations and your sons are often at sea with your ships. While the threat of seizure of your ships by the British or French has made life difficult, you have still managed to prosper due to skillful seamanship and good luck. In fact, Jefferson’s Embargo Act worried you more than the threat of seizure or impressment by Great Britain. Your family, your warehouses, and your ships are all located on the coast of Rhode Island.

Sarah Miles: You are a forty-three-year-old woman from Maryland. You live with your husband on a large, prosperous farm that produces wheat. A great deal of your wheat is sold to merchants who transport it to Europe. Recently, your daughter, Elizabeth, moved to Indiana with her new husband, Francis, to take advantage of affordable land for a new farm. You believe that this offers them the best chance of prospering and making their way in the world as land has become scarce in Maryland. The news of the battle of Tippecanoe and Tecumseh’s Indian confederation are very disturbing to you. You fear for your daughter’s safety.

Nathan Allen: You are a sixty-four-year-old veteran of the War of Independence who lives in New Hampshire. As a veteran of an army that was under equipped, ill-prepared, and poorly trained, you are well aware of the risk that this country would be taking in declaring war against a highly trained army. You have five children and eighteen grandchildren, all working on their own small farms. One of your sons is considering moving west, where he hears there is a great deal of fertile farm-land.

Henry LaSalle: You are a thirty-one-year-old prosperous merchant who owns his own small fleet in New Orleans. You have made a small fortune trading and smuggling in the Caribbean, successfully avoiding the British and the French navies. For you this issue is about freedom on the high seas. You envision becoming wealthy as a privateer in the event of war with Great Britain.

Mary Caldwell: You are a thirty-nine-year-old woman who works as a bar-maid at this hotel. You came to the United States as a servant for a wealthy family. Your eighteen-year-old son, having no education and few employment prospects, has told you he is going to join the army. You have overheard conversations before in the hotel between very important people who comment on how poor the U.S. military is. You are concerned about your son going into the army and the possibility of war with Great Britain.

George Wilkens: You are a forty-year-old newspaper editor from Raleigh, North Carolina. Ever since the Leopard fired on the Chesapeake, you have been writing editorials protesting the outrageous arrogance of Great Britain and their support of Indian raids on the frontier with Canada. Your father fought proudly in General Washington’s army against the British in the War of Independence. You resent the notion of Great Britain trying to dominate the United States again.

Juliette Dupré: You are a twenty-four-year-old woman of French birth, but you consider yourself an American. Your father and mother were forced to flee France when you were a young girl because of their opposition to Napoleon. You are fortunate to have considerable wealth at your disposal. This has given you
time to read and study extensively. In Washington, you meet often with friends to discuss your ideas about the devastation of war and to argue about the rights of man.

Ned Channing: You are an idealistic, twenty-five-year-old lawyer from New Jersey, who would like to run for Congress some day. You believe that Great Britain has flouted the rights of U.S. citizens by impressing U.S. sailors and seizing U.S. ships. While you are also concerned about Indian attacks on the frontier, you are not sure if the evidence supports the idea that the British are behind these attacks. Furthermore, you oppose the idea of increasing the size of the army.
Evaluation Form
Concerned Citizens—June 1812

Instructions: Answer the questions below from the perspective of your character.

Part I
1. According to each option, what is the main cause of the present crisis?
   Option 1:
   Option 2:
   Option 3:
   Option 4:

2. According to each option, how should the United States respond to the current crisis?
   Option 1:
   Option 2:
   Option 3:
   Option 4:

3. How would you and your family be affected by the proposed course of action of each option?
   Option 1:
   Option 2:
   Option 3:
   Option 4:

Part II
Which group presented its option most effectively? Explain your answer.
Advanced Study Guide—Epilogue

1. Did the War of 1812 have a victor? Who? Explain your reasoning.

2. Why do you think the U.S.-British relationship improved following the War of 1812?

3. How did the War of 1812 contribute to regional differences in the United States?

4. Evaluate this statement:
   “With the benefit of hindsight, it seems that the United States risked its independence by choosing to fight a war it naively assumed it could win.”

   Was the United States naive? Did the country risk its independence? Explain your conclusions.
Issues Toolbox

**States’ Rights**
Proponents of states’ rights drew on the political philosopher John Locke’s ideas about the right of the people to revolt. Prior to the War of 1812 both Jefferson and Madison argued that states should be able to reject laws made by the national government if the state believed the law to be unconstitutional. At the Hartford Convention the New England states broached the question: Does a state have a right to secede from the union? While these two particular issues are no longer debated in the United States, there are ongoing discussions about the division of responsibility and authority between federal and state governments.

“**Avoid Entangling Alliances**”
Although this phrase is often used to describe George Washington’s advice to the country in his Farewell Address, it was Thomas Jefferson who actually uttered it. Nonetheless, Washington’s address warned against the dangers of factionalism and of favoring one foreign nation over another. He also argued for good commercial relations with other countries while keeping political connections to a minimum. Some suggest that with this address, the “father of our country” also became the father of U.S. foreign policy by establishing the principles that would characterize U.S. foreign policy until the Second World War—neutrality and isolationism.

Other historians argue that many of Washington’s words bear the mark of the influence of Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton was anxious merely to avoid an entangling alliance with France and not with Great Britain. Hostility towards France increased steadily under the Federalist administrations of Washington and Adams and resulted in an undeclared state of war with France from 1797-1800. Under the Democratic-Republican administrations of Jefferson and Madison, this trend was reversed. Both saw commercial and philosophical reasons to align the United States with nations other than Great Britain. Tensions with Britain increased and culminated in the War of 1812.

**Neutrality**
Washington’s neutrality proclamation had its origins in a long-standing U.S. concern to preserve neutral trade. The commercial interests of the American colonies had been protected by Great Britain’s treaties, particularly the Treaty of Navigation and Commerce, between England and France dating from 1713. The principle that a neutral can carry goods to a customer without fear of attack from that customer’s enemy was important to American shippers before and after independence. The War of 1812 was provoked, in part, by violations of U.S. neutrality.

**Freedom of the Seas**
An important component of the issue of neutrality relates to the question of the freedom of the seas—the right to traverse them freely. During the 1500s, Britain, France, and Holland challenged Spain and Portugal’s claim of monopoly on the seas and asserted their right to travel unmolested. Some say that international law has its origins in the writings of Hugo Grotius who argued in 1609 in his work, *Mare Liberum*, for the freedom of the seas.

**Freedom of Trade**
The freedom to trade with any nation was a concern of the United States in its early years and remains so to this day. It is directly related to the issues of neutrality and the freedom of seas. It has its origins in the desire to maximize prosperity through unrestricted commerce.