

Battle of New Orleans – Pre-Visit Activities

Timeline Activity

Objectives: Students will learn the major events of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 and be able to put them into a relative chronology. Students will encounter important figures of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812, and think historically about the experiences of these people.

Resources needed:

Timeline cards with major events of the Battle of New Orleans and the War of 1812 (print front-to-back and cut out. The cards are color-coded as a tool for students new to timelines; however, the activity can be completed without the cards being printed out in color)

Internet access to do research (optional: for enrichment exercise)

Background:

The Battle of New Orleans was the last major event of the War of 1812. After many years of struggle where the United States attempted to assert its independence from Great Britain, repeated British attempts to curtail U.S. trade and ongoing political tensions resulted in a controversial 1812 decision by Congress to declare war. After months of armed struggle without a clear-cut winner or any land changing hands, the British planned a final series of assaults on the important cities of Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans. The British thought New Orleans in particular would be an easy target, however a “rainbow army” of American Indians, French and Spanish Creoles, free people of color and Americans from all over the U.S. came together to successfully defend the city.

Activity:

Print out timeline cards so the white-faced narrative events are facing up and the color-faced dates of the events are facing down. Shuffle the cards and lay them in a stack. In small groups or as a class, have students read the first event, and place it on the table in front of them. Then have students read the next event. Did this happen before or after the previous event? (If students are struggling, have them group related events together, and then decide which group came first and which come later.)

Once all of the cards are laid out, have students flip the cards over to see the date that each of these events occurred and to see if their relative chronology was correct (If printed out in color, the cards will give a visual hint: if laid out in the correct order they will make a rainbow).

Enrichment Activity:

Each of the event cards has the name of a person or a group of people in **bold**. Have students individually or in small groups pick a person or group of people to research. Then have students write a journal entry or a short story of the event from their perspective.

Putting New Orleans on the Map

Objectives: Students will familiarize themselves with a map of the United States in 1815, and will practice atlas and map skills by marking important cities and regions on a map. Students will identify important water trade routes during this time period and learn the role that the city of New Orleans played in trade.

Resources needed:

“Putting New Orleans on the Map” mapping activity sheet

Colored pencils, crayons or markers

A U.S. atlas or an Internet connection to do geographic research

Background:

Before the first steam-powered riverboat arrived in New Orleans in 1812, trade could only move in one direction on the Mississippi River. Goods were loaded on to flat-bottomed rafts upriver and floated down to New Orleans. In New Orleans, the goods were transferred to big sailing ships that could leave the river and sail the ocean to bring the goods to markets in Europe, the eastern seaboard of the United States, and the Caribbean. The riverboat revolutionized trade in New Orleans. After 1812, for the first time it became nearly as easy to send goods upriver against the current as it was to send them downriver with the current. Easier river navigation opened up new areas to white settlement. Because of this New Orleans became the largest city in the South, and one of the most important trading ports in the world.

Activity:

Have students complete “Putting New Orleans on the Map” activity to help them understand the importance of New Orleans’ location. Discuss: how do you think New Orleans’ location as an important trade city affect the culture and diversity of the city? Why do you think the British were so interested in capturing New Orleans during the War of 1812?

After years of arguing with Great Britain over trade rights and to show America's military strength, the Congress of the United States votes to declare war. **President James Madison** signs the bill, and for the second time in the lives of many Americans, the United States is at war with Great Britain.

To weaken the British army and to scare the **British colonists in Canada**, American forces invade York, Canada (modern-day Toronto). In the days that follow, Americans would burn the city and leave it in ruin before retreating back to the United States. This angers the British and they vow to take revenge.

To get revenge against the Americans for attacking York, the British have invaded the Chesapeake Bay and have captured Washington, D.C. The White House, the Capitol, and other government buildings are burned down, and **citizens of the nation's capital** flee.

General Andrew Jackson and his troops of U.S. Army regulars, Tennessee militiamen and **American Indians** capture Pensacola, Florida from the British. This prevents the British from being able to attack New Orleans by land and instead forces them to arrive by boat.

April 27, 1813

June 18, 1812

November 7, 1814

August 24, 1814

Anticipating a British attack on New Orleans, Major General Andrew Jackson arrives in the city and begins to put together an army. In addition to the U.S. Army soldiers, American Indians and Tennessee militia he already leads, Jackson recruits **local Creole citizens** and **free people of color**, and more militiamen from all over the Southeast.

Advancing British army boats defeat the American Navy ships in Lake Borgne. This clears the way for the British to arrive by water just a few miles away from New Orleans.

The British army makes landfall in Louisiana just a few miles downriver from New Orleans. The Americans quickly head out from the city to meet the British army, hoping to drive them back immediately. The skirmish ends in a draw, and the Americans fall back closer to New Orleans.

After the skirmish is over, the American army retreats to the Chalmette Plantation, about two miles closer to New Orleans. **General Andrew Jackson** oversees construction of a rampart wall to protect his troops in battle and to make it more difficult for the British to reach New Orleans.

December 14, 1814

December 1, 1814

December 24, 1814

December 23, 1814

After the defeat in Pensacola, the British Army and Navy gather on the Caribbean island of Jamaica. From there, they sail towards New Orleans, hoping to take the city and control trade along the Mississippi River.

As the Americans are fortifying their position at the **Chalmet family's** plantation, the British fire cannons and guns at them from a distance. The Americans are able to withstand the attack, showing the British that they will have to charge through the Americans if they want to take New Orleans.

British troops, led by **General Edward Pakenham**, march toward the Americans. Although the British have many more soldiers, the Americans have a much stronger position. The Battle of New Orleans begins early in the morning. It is short but disastrous for the British. They retreat away from New Orleans. The city is safe!

The United States Senate ratifies a peace treaty with Great Britain. After three long years, the War of 1812 is over. The United States has proven its strength as an independent country, and **the citizens of New Orleans** have proven that despite their differences, they are all Americans.

January 1, 1815

November 26, 1814

February 16, 1815

January 8, 1815

Putting New Orleans on the Map

In 1815, New Orleans was one of the most important cities in the United States. Rivers were the highways of the 1800s, used to move people and supplies all over the world. It was very difficult to move goods by land in the early 1800s, so even if it was a much greater distance, it was almost always faster and easier to ship by water.

Using an atlas and the map below, follow the instructions on the second page to chart out trade routes that a merchant would travel in the early 1800s.

What do you notice about the location of New Orleans?



Use the map on the other page, an atlas of the United States and a set of markers, crayons or colored pencils and follow the instructions.

- 1)) Using your atlas, find the city of **New Orleans** on your map and put an **orange dot** there. Now find **Minnesota** and **shade in the southeastern corner of Minnesota on your map in orange**. The “Big Woods” of Minnesota was an important source for lumber that cities like New Orleans needed to keep the steam-powered paddlewheel boats rolling up and down the Mississippi River. **In orange, draw the route that a load of lumber would take from Minnesota to New Orleans.**
- 2) Find the state of **Iowa** on your map and **shade the southeastern corner of Iowa in green**. Find the city of **Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**, and **put a green dot on it**. Corn and wheat were some of the many crops grown in the fertile land of Iowa, which would have been shipped all over the country to feed people. **In green, draw the route that these grains would have taken from a small farm in Iowa to the big city of Philadelphia.**
- 3) Find the city of **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**, on your map and draw a **purple dot over it**. Now find the city of **New York, New York**, and **draw a purple dot over it**. Pittsburgh was a manufacturing town that made iron and glass. New York was a big, fast-growing city that needed these materials to make buildings for people to live in. **Draw the route that iron and glass would take from Pittsburgh to New York.**
- 4) Find the city of **Boston, Massachusetts**, on your map and **put a red dot on it**. Now find **Natchez, Mississippi**, and **put a red dot on Natchez on your map**. There were many cotton plantations in and around Natchez operated by slave labor. Cotton grown in Natchez would be shipped to textile mills near Boston to be made into fabric to make into clothes. **In red, draw the route that cotton would have travelled from Natchez to Boston.**