

## Unit 2

# What Were They Fighting For?

***“The River Ohio and the rivers which fall into it unquestionably belong to France. It is the most-used communication between Canada and Louisiana. It is of the greatest importance to check the progress of the claims and enterprises of the English.”***  
***—Instructions to the Marquis Duquesne, governor of New France, in 1752<sup>3</sup>***

### Background for the Teacher

Read the “What Were They Fighting For?” section of the Teacher Background on the French and Indian War, page 17.

Each of the three groups that wanted to control the Ohio River Valley had different motivations.

### Key Teaching Points

- The American Indians lived on the land
- They were fighting to maintain control of their land and their future
- They wanted trade without settlement
- The French claimed the land
- They wanted control of the waterways and the American Indian trade
- The British also claimed the land
- The British settlers wanted to farm the land, the land speculators wanted to sell it to farmers, and the traders wanted to trade with the American Indians

### Activity in This Unit

#### “What Were They Fighting For?”

- This helps students focus on the reasons that each of the powers interested in the Ohio River Valley wanted control of the land.

*Typical trade items; blanket, gunpowder and shirt*



<sup>3</sup>George F.G. Stanley. *New France: The Last Phase, 1744-1766*. (Toronto, 1968), 45.



# What Were They Fighting For?

## Standards

### National History Standards

K-4 Topic 2: 3A, 3B, 3D

K-4 Topic 3: 5A

US Era 2: 1B

### National Geography Standards

1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 17

## Materials You'll Need

- 1 copy of the Student Reading "What Were They Fighting For?" for each student

*Beavers were highly sought after for their fur.*



In this activity, your students will discuss why each of the three powers interested in the Ohio River Valley wanted control of that land.

## Procedure

1. Pass out the Student Reading "What Were They Fighting For?" Divide students into three teams. Assign to each team one of the three groups – French, British, or American Indians.
2. Have students read the Student Reading carefully. Or you may decide to read it to them, if you think the reading is too difficult. Then have the students share what they have learned about the reason their group wanted control of the Ohio River Valley.
3. Have the students make an oral presentation about what their group wanted and what they needed to accomplish their goal.
4. Have the students make and complete a graphic organizer.

| American Indians   | French   | British   |
|--|--|---|
| Wanted to continue their lifestyle and trade with Europeans  | Wanted to control the American Indian fur trade on all the land they claimed | Wanted to settle the land west of the Allegheny Mountains for farming           |
| Needed land and forests, trading partners without settlement | Needed to make sure British traders did not cut into their trade             | Needed to have uncooperative people (French or American Indians) out of the way |

## Math Extension Activity

Graph the population of the three powers – the British, the French, and the American Indians – at the start of the French and Indian War.

British: 1.5 million; French: about 70,000; American Indians: about 175,000 in Northeastern North America



In the mid-1700s, the land west of the Allegheny Mountains was a huge forest. American Indians lived there in villages. French and British traders also moved through the area. There were millions of acres of rich forestland. The American Indians, the British, and the French all had their own reasons for wanting to control the land. Who would gain control of this valuable land?

### American Indians

About 3,000 to 4,000 American Indians were living in the upper Ohio River Valley at the start of the French and Indian War. Some of them had only lived in the area for about 30 years. They had moved to the area to escape British settlement. Their goal was to keep their land, their way of life, and control over their future. By this time they were using guns, gunpowder, knives, lead for musket balls, and cloth. They didn't want to give up these things. So they wanted to continue trading with the Europeans to get them.

To keep their way of life, American Indians needed land to grow their crops and woods to hunt in. They hunted both for meat to feed themselves and for skins and furs to trade. Without enough land and woods they could not survive.

The Seneca chief, the Half King, said his people were living in "a country between" the French and the British. One approach used by the American Indians during the French and Indian War was to stay neutral and have the British and the French compete for their cooperation. That way both European countries gave them gifts to try to stay on their good side.

As the French and Indian War went on it was harder to stay neutral. Each Indian nation chose a side based on what they thought was best for their people.

### Upper Ohio River Valley:

The area drained by the rivers that flow into the Ohio River in what is now western Pennsylvania.

**Neutral:** When a nation or person does not support either side.



*American Indians traded for many items including, blankets, gunpowder and shirts.*

**Allies:** people or groups that join together for a common cause.

### **The French**

Explorers had claimed the Mississippi River and its tributaries for France. By the 1750s the French had settlements in Canada, the “Illinois” country (in what is now the mid-west), and Louisiana (New Orleans and land west of the Mississippi River). There were about 70,000 settlers in all of New France.

The French colonial economy was based on trade with the American Indians. The French did not grow enough food and had to buy some of it. Because they depended on the American Indian trade they saw the American Indians as partners and allies.

To connect the French settlements and to reach American Indian towns, the French used the rivers. The rivers were their main way of traveling.

The French wanted to control the American Indian trade in the Ohio River Valley and keep the Pennsylvania traders out. They also needed the American Indians living there to be their allies. Unlike the British, the French did not plan to settle in the Ohio River Valley. But they did want their priests and traders to be able to move freely through the area.

France always worried about Britain. For hundreds of years, the two countries had fought each other in Europe. In North America, France wanted to keep the British east of the Allegheny Mountains.

In 1752, a new governor of New France, the Marquis Duquesne (mar-KEE dyoo-KAYN) arrived. His job was to keep control of the Ohio River – and to keep the British out.

## The British

The British colonists thought the Ohio River Valley belonged to them. Virginia's charter granted it land all the way to the Pacific Ocean.

At the start of the French and Indian war, the British had more than 1 million colonists. And the population in the colonies was quickly growing.

The British colonies had a strong economy. It was based on farming. They grew plenty of food. As the population grew, colonists wanted more farmland. Most of the farmland in the settled parts of the colonies was already taken. One way to get new farmland was by settling in the Ohio River Valley. The problem with the Ohio River Valley was that it was hard to get to over the Allegheny Mountains. The best way to travel was by river and there were no rivers across the mountains. There were no roads either.

Traders from Pennsylvania were trading with the American Indians in the Ohio River Valley. They used small trails and packhorses to bring their goods back and forth across the Allegheny Mountains. They were making a lot of money and wanted to continue trading with the American Indians there.

Neither the farmers nor the traders wanted to see the French in control of the Ohio River Valley. In 1753, when the French started building forts and trading posts in the area, the British colonists became very upset.

*Beavers were highly sought after for their fur.*



