Following Tecumseh's speech and the subsequent Indian raids on the frontier, Governor Harrison led an army provocatively toward the headquarters of the Indians. On the night of November 7, 1811, at Tippecanoe near the Wabash River (Indiana), he succeeded in beating back an Indian attack. This hollow but costly victory further inflamed the West, from which came Henry Clay and other leaders of the war hawks to Congress in 1811. Among them was Felix Grundy of Tennessee, three of whose brothers had been killed by the Indians. As the most famous criminal lawyer in the Southwest, he had often cheated the gallows by rousing the jury to tears. In this eloquent speech in Congress, which grievances were peculiarly western, and which ones were nationwide? What interest did westerners have in freedom of the seas?

I will now state the reasons which influenced the Committee [on Foreign Affairs] in recommending the [war] measures now before us.

It is not the [Atlantic] carrying trade properly so called about which this nation and Great Britain are at present contending. Were this the only question now under consideration, I should feel great unwillingness (however clear our claim might be) to involve the nation in war for the assertion of a right in the enjoyment of which the community at large are not more deeply concerned.

The true question in controversy is of a very different character; it involves the interest of the whole nation. It is the right of exporting the productions of our own soil and industry to foreign markets. Sir, our vessels are now captured when destined to the ports of France, and condemned by the British Courts of Admiralty, without even the pretext of having on board contraband of war, enemies' property, or having in any other respect violated the laws of nations.

These depredations on our lawful commerce, under whatever ostensible pretense committed, are not to be traced to any maxims or rules of public law, but to the maritime supremacy and pride of the British nation. This hostile and unjust policy of that country towards us is not to be wondered at, when we recollect that the United States are already the second commercial nation in the world. The rapid growth of our commercial importance has not only awakened the jealousy of the commercial interests of Great Britain, but her statesmen, no doubt, anticipate with deep concern the maritime greatness of this republic. . . .

What, Mr. Speaker, are we now called on to decide? It is whether we will resist by force the attempt, made by the [British] government, to subject our maritime rights to the arbitrary and capricious rule of her will. For my part I am not prepared to say that this country shall submit to have her commerce interdicted, or regulated, by any foreign nation. Sir, I prefer war to submission.

Over and above these unjust pretensions of the British government, for many years past they have been in the practice of impressing our seamen from merchant vessels. This unjust and lawless invasion of personal liberty calls loudly for the interposition of this government. To those better acquainted with the facts in relation to it, I leave it to fill up the picture.

My mind is irresistibly drawn to the West. Although others may not strongly feel the bearing which the late transactions in that quarter [Tippecanoe] have on this subject, upon my mind they have great influence. It cannot be believed, by any man who will reflect, that the savage tribes, uninfluenced by other powers, would think of making war on the United States. They understand too well their own weakness and our strength. They have already felt the weight of our arms; they know they hold the very soil on which they live as tenants in sufferance. How, then, sir, are we to account for their late conduct? In one way only: some powerful nation must have intrigued with them, and turned their peaceful dispositions towards us into hostilities. Great Britain alone has intercourse with those Northern tribes. I therefore infer that if British gold has not been employed, their trinkets, and the promise of support and a place of refuge, if necessary, have had their effect.

If I am right in this conjecture, war is not to commerce by sea or land. It is already begun; and some of the richest blood of our country has already been shed. . . . The whole Western country is ready to march; they only wait for our permission. And, sir, war once declared, I pledge myself for my people—they will avenge the death of their brethren. . . .
Ask the Northern man, and he will tell you that any state of things is better than the present. Inquire of the Western people why their crops are not equal to what they were in former years; they will answer that industry has no stimulus left, since their surplus products have no markets . . .

This war, if carried on successfully, will have its advantages. We shall drive the British from our continent. They will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our Indian neighbors and setting on the ruthless savage to tomahawk our women and children. That nation will lose her Canadian trade, and, by having no resting place in this country, her means of annoying us will be diminished.

3. Causes of the War (1812, 1813)

The “Second War for American Independence” was prompted by events on the frontier as well as on the high seas. The first print below, entitled A Scene on the Frontiers as Practiced by the Humane British and Their Worthy Allies, may have been inspired by the August 1812 “Massacre of Chicago,” in which it was reported that British officers had purchased American scalps from Indians. The second scene, The Tory Editor and His Apes Giving Their Pitiful Advice to the American Sailors, presumably takes place in an Atlantic seaport, where American sailors are rejecting the counsel being offered. Why were the British depicted so differently in these two prints? What view of themselves would Americans get from these images? What do these views suggest about the relative importance of the various causes of the War of 1812?
A group of thirty-four antiwar Federalists, outvoted in the House, prepared the following remonstrance, which was widely circulated. One of its leading authors was the unbridled Josiah Quincy, who, the year before, had declared that if the Territory of Louisiana was admitted as a state, the Union was "virtually dissolved," and that like-minded men must "prepare definitely for a separation—amicably, if they can; violently, if they must." The protest of the thirty-four congressmen was in effect a reply to Madison's War Message. After minimizing or partially justifying Britain's provocative maritime practices and Indian policy, the statement continued as follows. How plausibly does it make its points regarding the futility of the war and the folly of becoming a virtual ally of France? To what extent does it describe the war as immoral?

If our ills were of a nature that war would remedy, if war would compensate any of our losses or remove any of our complaints, there might be some alleviation of the suffering in the charm of the prospect. But how will war upon the land protect commerce upon the ocean? What balm has Canada for wounded honor? How are our mariners benefited by a war which exposes those who are free, without promising release to those who are impressed?

But it is said that war is demanded by honor. Is national honor a principle which thirsts after vengeance, and is appeased only by blood? . . . If honor demands a war with England, what opiate lulls that honor to sleep over the wrongs done us by France? On land, robberies, seizures, imprisonments, by French authority; at sea, pillage, sinkings, burnings, under French orders. These are notorious. Are they unfelt because they are French? . . . With full knowledge of the wrongs inflicted by the French, ought the government of this country to aid the French cause by engaging in war against the enemy of France? . . .

It would be some relief to our anxiety if amends were likely to be made for the weakness and wildness of the project by the prudence of the preparation. But in no aspect of this anomalous affair can we trace the great and distinctive properties of wisdom. There is seen a headlong rushing into difficulties, with little calculation about the means, and little concern about the consequences. With a navy comparatively nominal, we are about to enter into the lists against the greatest marine [sea power] on the globe. With a commerce unprotected and spread over every ocean, we propose to make a profit by privateering, and for this endanger the wealth of which we are honest proprietors. An invasion is threatened of the colonies of a power which, without putting a new ship into commission, or taking another soldier into pay, can spread alarm or desolation along the extensive range of our seaboard. . . .

The undersigned cannot refrain from asking, what are the United States to gain by this war? Will the gratification of some privateersmen compensate the nation for that sweep of our legitimate commerce by the extended marine of our enemy which this desperate act invites? Will Canada compensate the Middle states for New York; or the Western states for New Orleans?

Let us not be deceived. A war of invasion may invite a retort of invasion. When we visit the peaceable, and as to us innocent, colonies of Great Britain with the horrors of war, can we be assured that our own coast will not be visited with like horrors? At a crisis of the world such as the present, and under impressions such as these, the undersigned could not consider the war, in which the United States have in secret been precipitated, as necessary, or required by any moral duty, or any political expediency.

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2. The Hartford Convention Fulminates (1814)

As the war dragged on, the British extended their suffocating blockade to the coasts of New England. The New Englanders, forced to resort to costly defensive measures, complained bitterly that their federal tax payments were being used to fight the war elsewhere. Late in 1814, with Massachusetts and Connecticut as ringleaders, twenty-six delegates assembled secretly in a protest convention at Hartford, Connecticut. Although some of the Federalist extremists spoke brazenly of immediate secession, conservatives like the venerable George Cabot sat on the lid, saying, “We are going to keep you young hotheads from getting into mischief.” The final resolutions, less reasonable than commonly supposed, were a manifesto of states' rights and sectionalism designed to revive New England's slipping national power, avert Jeffersonian embargoes, and keep new western states from outvoting the charter members. Which of these proposed amendments were most clearly sectional, and which one probably had the best chance of adoption at the time?

Resolved, That the following amendments of the Constitution of the United States be recommended to the states. . . .

First. Representatives and direct taxes shall be apportioned among the several states which may be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers of free persons, including those bound to serve for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, and all other persons. [Aimed at reducing southern representation based on slaves.]

Second. No new state shall be admitted into the Union by Congress, in virtue of the power granted by the Constitution, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses.

Third. Congress shall not have power to lay any embargo on the ships or vessels of the citizens of the United States, in the ports or harbors thereof, for more than sixty days.

Fourth. Congress shall not have power, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses, to interdict the commercial intercourse between the United States and any foreign nation, or the dependencies thereof.

Fifth. Congress shall not make or declare war, or authorize acts of hostility against any foreign nation, without the concurrence of two-thirds of both Houses, except such acts of hostility be in defense of the territories of the United States when actually invaded.

Sixth. No person who shall hereafter be naturalized shall be eligible as a member of the Senate or House of Representatives of the United States, nor capable of holding any civil office under the authority of the United States. [Aimed at men like Jefferson's Swiss-born secretary of the treasury, Albert Gallatin.]

Seventh. The same person shall not be elected President of the United States a second time; nor shall the President be elected from the same state two terms in succession. [Prompted by the successive two-term tenures of Jefferson and Madison, both from Virginia.]

Resolved, That if the application of these states to the government of the United States, recommended in a foregoing resolution, should be unsuccessful, and peace should not be concluded, and the defense of these states should be neglected, as it has been since the commencement of the war, it will, in the opinion of this convention, be expedient for the legislatures of the several states to appoint delegates to another convention, to meet at Boston . . . with such powers and instruction as the exigency of a crisis so momentous may require.

[The legislatures of Massachusetts and Connecticut enthusiastically approved the Hartford Resolutions. Three emissaries from Massachusetts departed for Washington with their demands, confidently expecting to hear at any moment of a smashing British victory at New Orleans, the collapse of the peace negotiations at Ghent, and the dissolution of the Union. Instead came news of the smashing British defeat at New Orleans and the signing of the peace treaty at Ghent. The Hartfordites were booted off the stage of history, amid charges of treason that cling to this day.]

The War of 1812's Legacy

As far as Madison was concerned the war achieved none of the original aims. Nevertheless, it had a number of important consequences for the future development of the American republic. They are:

1. Having now survived two wars with Britain, a great power, the United States gained the respect of other nations.
2. The United States came to accept Canada as a neighbor and a part of the British Empire.
3. Widely denounced for its talk of secession and disunion in New England, the Federalist Party came to an end as a national force and declined even in New England.
4. Talk of Nullification and secession in New England set a precedent that would later be used by the South.
5. Abandoned by their British allies, Native Americans in the West were forced to surrender large areas of land to white settlement.
6. As European goods became unavailable due to the British naval blockade, more U.S. factories were built, and Americans took a big step toward industrial self-sufficiency.
7. War heroes such as Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison would soon be in the forefront of a new generation of political leaders.
8. As a result of the war, there was a strong feeling of American nationalism and also a growing belief that the future for the United States lay in the West and away from Europe.

My suggestion is that you read and understand the meaning of each so that if you need this for prior knowledge it will be available to you.
3. Jefferson Stretches the Constitution to Buy Louisiana (1803)

In early 1803, Jefferson dispatched James Monroe to Paris to consummate the purchase of Louisiana for the United States. Monroe was instructed to pay up to $10 million for New Orleans and as much land to the east as he could obtain. To the surprise of Americans, Napoleon offered to sell all of Louisiana, including the vast territory to the west and north of New Orleans. The Americans readily agreed, though Jefferson worried that he was exceeding his constitutional mandate. When he had earlier opposed Hamilton’s bank (see p. 198), Jefferson had argued that powers not conferred on the central government were reserved to the states. The Constitution did not specifically empower the president—or the Congress, for that matter—to annex foreign territory, especially territory as large as the nation itself. But the bargain acquisition of Louisiana seemed too breathtaking an opportunity to pass up. In the following letter to Senate leader John Breckinridge, Jefferson defends his action. Is his “guardian” analogy sound?

This treaty must, of course, be laid before both Houses, because both have important functions to exercise respecting it. They, I presume, will see their duty to their country in ratifying and paying for it, so as to secure a good which would otherwise probably be never again in their power. But I suppose they must then appeal to the nation for an additional article [amendment] to the Constitution, approving and confirming an act which the nation had not previously authorized.

The Constitution has made no provision for our holding foreign territory, still less for incorporating foreign nations into our Union. The Executive, in seizing the fugitive occurrence which so much advances the good of their country, have done an act beyond the Constitution. The Legislature, in casting behind them metaphysical subtleties, and risking themselves like faithful servants, must ratify and pay for it, and throw themselves on their country for doing for them, unauthorized, what we know they would have done for themselves had they been in a situation to do it.

It is the case of a guardian, investing the money of his ward in purchasing an important adjacent territory; and saying to him when of age, “I did this for your good. I pretend to no right to bind you; you may disavow me, and I must get out of the scrape as I can. I thought it my duty to risk myself for you.”

But we shall not be disavowed by the nation, and their act of indemnity will confirm and not weaken the Constitution, by more strongly marking out its lines.

EXPLORING THE LOUISIANA PURCHASE

BRITISH TERRITORY

OREGON
COUNTRY
(Indians)

Great Salt Lake

LOUISIANA
PURCHASE

SPANISH

TERRITORY

COLORADO R.

Louisiana Purchase
Lewis and Clark's Route
1804-1806

★ Approximate location of encounter with Grizzly bear

0 100 200 300 MILES
6. Lewis and Clark Meet a Grizzly (1805)

Diplomacy done, the vast and uncharted wilderness that was the Louisiana territory remained to be explored. President Jefferson commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark for the job, which took two years. The Lewis and Clark party of thirty-four soldiers and ten civilians moved up the Missouri River from St. Louis in the autumn of 1804, wintered with the Mandan Indians in present-day North Dakota, and struck out for the Pacific Ocean again in the spring of 1805. They sighted the Pacific in November 1805 and eventually returned to St. Louis nearly a year later. Along the way they collected botanical and geological specimens and made preliminary maps of the country. They also had numerous adventures, such as this one, recounted in Lewis's diary, which took place in present-day eastern Montana. What does it suggest about the task of taming the nearly trackless territory Jefferson had acquired?

Tuesday May 14th 1805.

Some fog on the river this morning, which is a very rare occurrence; the country much as it was yesterday with this difference that the bottoms are somewhat wider; passed some high black bluffs. Saw immense herds of buffaloe today also.

Elk deer wolves and Antelopes. Passed three large creeks one on the Starboard and two on the Larboard side, neither of which had any running water. Capt Clark walked on shore and killed a very fine buffaloe cow. I felt an inclination to eat some veal and walked on shore and killed a very fine buffaloe calf and a large woolf, much the whitest I had seen, it was quite as white as the wool of the common sheep. One of the party wounded a brown bear very badly, but being alone did not think proper to pursue him. In the evening the men in two of the rear canoes discovered a large brown bear lying in the open grounds about 300 paces from the river, and six of them went out to attack him, all good hunters; they took the advantage of a small eminence which concealed them and got within 40 paces of him unperceived. Two of them reserved their fires as had been previously concerted, the four others fired nearly at the same time and put each his bullet through him. Two of the balls passed through the bulk of both lobes of his lungs. In an instant this monster ran at them with open mouth. The two who had reserved their firncs discharged their pieces at him as he came towards them. Boath of them struck him, one only slightly and the other fortunately broke his shoulder; this however only retarded his motion for a moment only. The men unable to reload their guns took to flight, the bear pursued and had very nearly overtaken them before they reached the river; two of the party betook themselves to a canoe and the others seperated and concealed themselves among the willows, reloaded their pieces, each discharged his piece at him as they had an opportunity. They struck him several times again but the guns served only to direct the bear to them. In this manner he pursued two of them seperately so close that they were obliged to throw aside their guns and pouches and throw themselves into the river altho' the bank was nearly twenty feet perpendicular; so enraged was this animal that he plunged into the river only a few feet behind the second man he had compelled to take refuge in the water, when one of those who still remained on shore shot him through the head and finally killed him; they then took him on shore and butchered him when they found eight balls had passed through him in different directions; the bear being old the flesh was indifferent, they therefore only took the skin and fleece, the latter made us several gallons of oil; . . .