

1754
French
and Indian
War begins

1758
British seize
Louisbourg

1759
British take
Quebec

1761
British
seize Fort
Detroit

1763
Treaty of Paris
ends French and
Indian War

1750

1755

1760

1765

1 The French and Indian War

SECTION PREVIEW

Objectives

- 1 Summarize the causes of the French and Indian War.
- 2 Describe how the British won the French and Indian War.
- 3 Analyze how the war weakened the colonists' loyalty to Britain.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: French and Indian War; Albany Plan of Union; militia; prime minister; siege; Treaty of Paris (1763).

Main Idea

The war that the colonists fought against the French and Indians caused them to rethink their relationship with Britain.

Reading Strategy

Organizing Information As you read, create a graphic organizer showing the causes and effects of the French and Indian War.

After ambushing a French scouting party in western Pennsylvania in May 1754, a small force of British colonists built a stronghold named Fort Necessity. There they waited for the French to try to retake the Ohio Valley, which both Britain and France claimed. The French, who far outnumbered the British, soon surrounded the fort and forced a surrender. The colonists returned to Virginia defeated and disgraced. It was not a good start for their 21-year-old commander, George Washington. One day, however, his achievements would make him a hero.

Causes of War

George Washington's unsuccessful expedition into western Pennsylvania was the first minor battle of a war that lasted until 1763. It was called the **French and Indian War** because the British and their American colonists waged it against the French and their Indian allies. This nine-year conflict was the final chapter in a long struggle among the French, the British, and various groups of Native Americans for control of eastern North America.

Rivalry Between Britain and France The rivalry among European nations for control of North America began soon after they began to explore and colonize the continent. While English colonists built their settlements along the eastern seacoast during the 1600s, the French explored farther inland: along the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and the Mississippi River. From these explorations the French claimed a vast region stretching from the Appalachian Mountains in the east to the Rocky Mountains in the west. Conflict arose because the English claimed some of this territory as well.

British and French colonization of North America followed different patterns. British settlers founded towns and cleared land for planting crops, while French colonists established forts to protect their land claims. The French forts also served as centers for trade with Native Americans. As a result of these differences, French relations with Native Americans were generally better than were British-Indian relations. In 1718 the deputy governor of Virginia noted the French threat in a report to his superiors in England:

AMERICAN VOICES

“By . . . the forts [the French] have already built, the British Plantations [settlements] are in a manner Surrounded by [French] Commerce with the numerous Nations of Indians. . . . [The French] may, when they please, send out such Bodys of Indians on the back [outskirts] of these Plantations as may greatly distress [threaten] his Majesty’s Subjects here.”

—Deputy governor of Virginia

Main Idea CONNECTIONS

Why was the Albany Plan of Union important?

Beginning in the late 1600s, Great Britain and France were often at war. When they battled over issues in Europe, their colonists often fought in America. Increasingly, however, these conflicts focused on the rivalry in North America. The last of them, the French and Indian War, actually started in the colonies and spread to Europe. Because the European phase began in 1756, about two years after the fighting was under way in America, in Europe it was called the Seven Years’ War.

The Albany Plan of Union At the time George Washington and his small force held out at Fort

Necessity, a meeting of delegates from seven northern colonies convened at Albany, New York, in June 1754. The delegates hoped to strengthen ties with the Iroquois League. British officials saw the powerful Iroquois as important potential allies.

Another reason for the Albany meeting was to work out a unified war effort in the northern colonies. With this in mind Benjamin Franklin, a Pennsylvania delegate, offered an ambitious plan for a permanent union of the colonies. Named the **Albany Plan of Union**, it called for a grand council of delegates from each colony, elected by their colonial legislatures. Heading the council would be a president general, appointed by the British crown. Franklin believed that just as the Iroquois nation had strengthened itself by forming the Iroquois League, the British colonies would benefit from greater unity.

Although the delegates approved Franklin’s plan, the colonies themselves rejected it. Colonists were unwilling to surrender that much power to a central government. The Albany Plan of Union is important, however, because it provided a model for the later government of the United States.



The three main thrusts of British strategy are shown here. In 1758, British forces struck in two directions—at French strongholds in the west and against Louisbourg in the east. Finally, in 1759 they attacked Quebec and Montreal. **Movement** Why was it necessary to capture Louisbourg before attacking Quebec?

The French and Indian War, 1754–1763



Early British Defeats At first the French and Indian War went poorly for the British. The badly outnumbered French and their Indian allies won important victories. The most impressive of these victories took place once again in the forests of western Pennsylvania. On July 9, 1755, about 900 French and Native Americans surprised a force of nearly 1,500 British troops and 450 colonial **militia**, armed citizens who serve as soldiers during an emergency.

British soldiers had been trained to fight in the open and in straight lines, as was done in Europe. They were no match for an enemy who hid behind rocks and trees. In the fierce three-hour battle about a third of the British force was killed or wounded. Among those killed was the British commander, General Edward Braddock. “We shall better know how to deal with them another time,” Braddock is reported to have said of the French as he died.

Among the colonists who survived was wagon driver Daniel Boone, later to become known for his exploits on the Kentucky frontier. Another was Braddock’s aide, George Washington, who had two horses killed under him and ended the battle with four bullet holes in his coat. Washington, who organized the British retreat, later reported that the colonists “showed a great deal of Bravery” and “were exposed to almost certain death” because of the “dastardly behavior” of the British soldiers who “broke and run [sic] as Sheep pursued by dogs.”

The British Win the War

In 1756 Great Britain formally declared war on France. As fighting spread to Europe and Asia, the British repeated their American military disasters. In 1757 William Pitt became Britain’s **prime minister**, the highest official of a parliamentary government. Believing that the entire British Empire could be at stake, Pitt persuaded Parliament to raise taxes and borrow huge sums of money to fight the war.

The Tide of War Turns Pitt’s efforts soon paid off. In 1758, better-prepared and better-led British troops began to overwhelm French



By compressing space and time, the painter of this view of the British attack on Quebec was able to illustrate several events at once. **Movement** What British actions are shown?

and Indian forces in western Pennsylvania and Canada. They first attacked the long line of forts and settlements that the French had built. (See the map on the previous page.) In July 1758, British forces seized Louisbourg, an important French fortress on the Gulf of St. Lawrence. In November they captured Fort Duquesne in Pennsylvania. (The fort, renamed Fort Pitt for the British leader, eventually became the city of Pittsburgh.) In July 1759 British troops took Fort Niagara.

The British victories put the French on the defensive. They abandoned their forts in New York and retreated into Canada. The Iroquois, who had cleverly been playing each side against the other, now decided that the French cause was hopeless. They began to support the British actively.

The Fall of Quebec In the late spring of 1759, the British began a campaign to invade Canada and capture Quebec, the capital of New France. The city sat high on the cliffs overlooking the St. Lawrence River. General James Wolfe commanded about 9,000 British troops. Some 7,500 French forces led by the Marquis de Montcalm defended Quebec.

After suffering heavy losses in a direct attack in July 1759, Wolfe settled down to a **siege** of the city. Laying siege to a stronghold is a tactic by which enemy forces are trapped in their position and starved into surrendering.

Wolfe, however, had only limited time for the siege to work. The British warships that supported his army needed to withdraw from the river as winter approached. By September, he was ready to try a daring tactic.

On the night of September 12, Wolfe began moving his troops up a narrow, undefended path on the side of Quebec's cliffs. By dawn about 4,500 troops were in position to threaten the French defenders of the city. Without waiting for some 3,000 reinforcements to arrive, Montcalm moved his 4,500 troops out of the city to battle the enemy. The British turned back his attack, inflicting heavy losses on the French. Both Wolfe and Montcalm were killed in the fighting. A few days later, the city surrendered.

With the fall of Quebec the war was nearly over. The following September, British forces took the city of Montreal, giving Great Britain control over all of Canada. By 1761, the British had seized Fort Detroit and other French posts along the Great Lakes.

The Treaty of Paris In 1763, representatives of Great Britain, France, and France's ally Spain signed a treaty in Paris, France. The **Treaty of Paris (1763)** ended the French and Indian War in America and the Seven Years' War in Europe. In the treaty, France turned Canada over to Britain and surrendered its claim to all lands east of the Mississippi River. The only exception was the city of New Orleans, which France had given to Spain in a secret treaty the year before. The British returned Cuba, captured during the war, to Spain in exchange for Florida.

Weakened Loyalty to Britain

Despite the victory, the French and Indian War seriously strained relations between the British and the American colonists. The British thought the colonists did not provide enough support for the long and costly war that Britain had fought to protect them.

For their part, the Americans were shocked by the weakness of British military tactics. They demanded to be led by colonial officers, which the British viewed as treason. One militiaman expressed amazement at his British commander during the battle for Fort Ticonderoga:

AMERICAN VOICES

“The . . . roar of [muskets] terrified me. . . . Our regiment formed among the trees, behind which the men kept stepping from their ranks for shelter. Colonel Preble . . . swore he would knock the first man down who should step out of his ranks, which greatly surprised me, to think that I must stand still to be shot at.”

—Massachusetts militiaman

The end of the war left many colonists with two strong beliefs. One was a loss of respect for British military power. The other was a belief that the British did not share the same values as Americans or treat them with appropriate respect. Now that the French no longer held Canada or the region west of the Appalachian Mountains, the colonists saw no reason why they should not expand and prosper on their own, without British help. These feelings would soon combine with events to deepen the split between Britain and its colonies.

SECTION 1 REVIEW

Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) French and Indian War; (b) Albany Plan of Union; (c) militia; (d) prime minister; (e) siege; (f) Treaty of Paris (1763).
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** How did the French and Indian War cause the colonists to rethink their relationship with Britain?
- 3. Organizing Information** Outline the major causes and effects of the French and Indian War.

Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Review the time line at the start of the section. Why was the Treaty of Paris significant?
- 5. Drawing Conclusions** What made it possible for the British to win the French and Indian War?

Writing Activity

- 6. Writing a Persuasive Essay** Write a speech by William Pitt persuading Parliament to raise taxes and borrow money in order to fight the war. Think about why the war in North America was so important to the British.