

THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

A Brief Summary of the War

England and France fought four wars against each other during the 1600's and 1700's. The last and most important of these conflicts was the French and Indian War. It lasted from 1754 to 1763.



Both the English and the French had colonies in North America. The French territory, called New France, stretched over a vast area west and north of the Thirteen Colonies. Only about 80,000 people lived in New France. The region was dotted by forts and trading posts, but had few cities and towns. The English territory included the Thirteen Colonies and an area around Hudson Bay. One and a half million Englishmen lived in the Thirteen Colonies.

The French and Indian War began in 1754 when both England and France claimed the Ohio River Valley. The French built forts in the region to protect their fur trade. English settlers wanted the Ohio Valley because of the rich farmland there.

England and France sent soldiers from Europe to North America to defend their colonies. Each side also had the help of various Indian tribes. During the first years of the war, most of the battles were won by the French. The French were more experienced at fighting in the wilderness. Eventually, though, the stronger and more numerous English forces turned the tide of war in their favor. In 1763, the Treaty of Paris was signed ending the French and Indian War. The victorious English gained control of all French territory on the mainland of North America.

The war had important results for the future of the Thirteen Colonies. First, the colonists saw that they were able to fight as well as English soldiers. Also, George Washington gained experience as a commander -- experience which would later prove valuable during the Revolutionary War. And, most importantly, with the French gone from North America, the colonists felt less dependent on England as a protective mother country. They began to think of themselves more as "Americans" than "Englishmen." This new attitude contributed to the ill feelings that developed between the colonies and England in the years following the French and Indian War.

Fort Duquesne and the Battle of Quebec

Two major military campaigns took place during the French and Indian War. The first was the unsuccessful English attack on French forces at Fort Duquesne in the Ohio Valley. The English defeat at Fort Duquesne was typical of how badly things went for the English during the early years of the war. The second campaign ended with the Battle of Quebec in which English troops won a great victory in the deciding battle of the war.

Information about the attack on Fort Duquesne and the Battle of Quebec is given in note form on the next page. Use the information to help you write a story about the French and Indian War. Pretend that you were an American soldier who was on the losing English side at Fort Duquesne, and later on the victorious English side at Quebec. Write your story in such a way that it shows you to be a war hero. Mention at least two brave or heroic things that you did during the defeat at Fort Duquesne and during the victory at Quebec.

Although you are making up a hero's story, be sure that you include the facts given in the notes below. But do not copy the notes word for word. Use the facts, but present them in your own way. A few "heroes" will have a chance to read their stories to the class.

The Unsuccessful English Attack on Fort Duquesne

- Fort Duquesne, located in western Pennsylvania, was one of many French forts in the Ohio Valley
- battle took place July 9, 1755
- English army was led by General Edward Braddock
- English army included 1,750 British regulars and 450 colonial militia
- General Braddock marched his army through the wilderness toward Fort Duquesne; red British uniforms were easy to see in the forest; some soldiers carried flags, while others played music as the army marched along
- French army commanded by Captain Beaujeau
- French army, which included Indians, numbered less than 1,000 men
- General Braddock and English army believed the correct way to fight a battle was to position themselves in an open area
- French and Indians hid behind trees
- French made a surprise attack on English ten miles from Fort Duquesne
- most of British regulars were wiped out; Braddock had four horses shot from under him before he was killed
- more English bullets hit trees than hit French and Indians
- 23-year-old George Washington led the colonial militia on a retreat to safety; Washington was not wounded, but had two horses shot from under him; four bullets went through his coat

The English Victory at the Battle of Quebec

- after the fighting at Fort Duquesne, William Pitt became the leader of the English government; because of his determination to win the war, more troops and younger and better commanders were sent into battle; more money was spent on guns and ammunition
- English won many battles leading up to their attack on Quebec, a French city along the St. Lawrence River
- English army, commanded by General James Wolfe, approached Quebec which was defended by French army under General Louis Montcalm
- English surrounded Quebec, but could not directly attack city, which was located on a high cliff
- finally, on the night of September 12-13, 1759, the English found a path leading to the cliffs; English army secretly climbed to the top during night
- French awoke to find enemy positioned on the Plains of Abraham outside the city
- the English then defeated the French in the Battle of Quebec; both General Wolfe and General Montcalm were killed; in the battle, the French fired too quickly at the English, who held their fire until drawing closer to the French; the English then fired, reloaded, fired again, and then charged with bayonet and sword; after 15 minutes of fighting, the French retreated in a hasty, disorganized manner; the French surrendered the city of Quebec five days later