

The French and Indian War

Britain and France fought four wars against each other during the 1600's and 1700's. The last of these, the French and Indian War (also known as the Seven Years War), was the only one in which major fighting took place in America as well as Europe.

The French and Indian War began in 1754 when both Britain and France claimed the Ohio River Valley. The French built forts in the region to protect their fur trade. British settlers wanted the rich farmlands in the Ohio River Valley. Fighting broke out when a group of Virginia soldiers under the command of a young colonist by the name of George Washington encountered a group of French soldiers in what the Virginians considered their western lands.

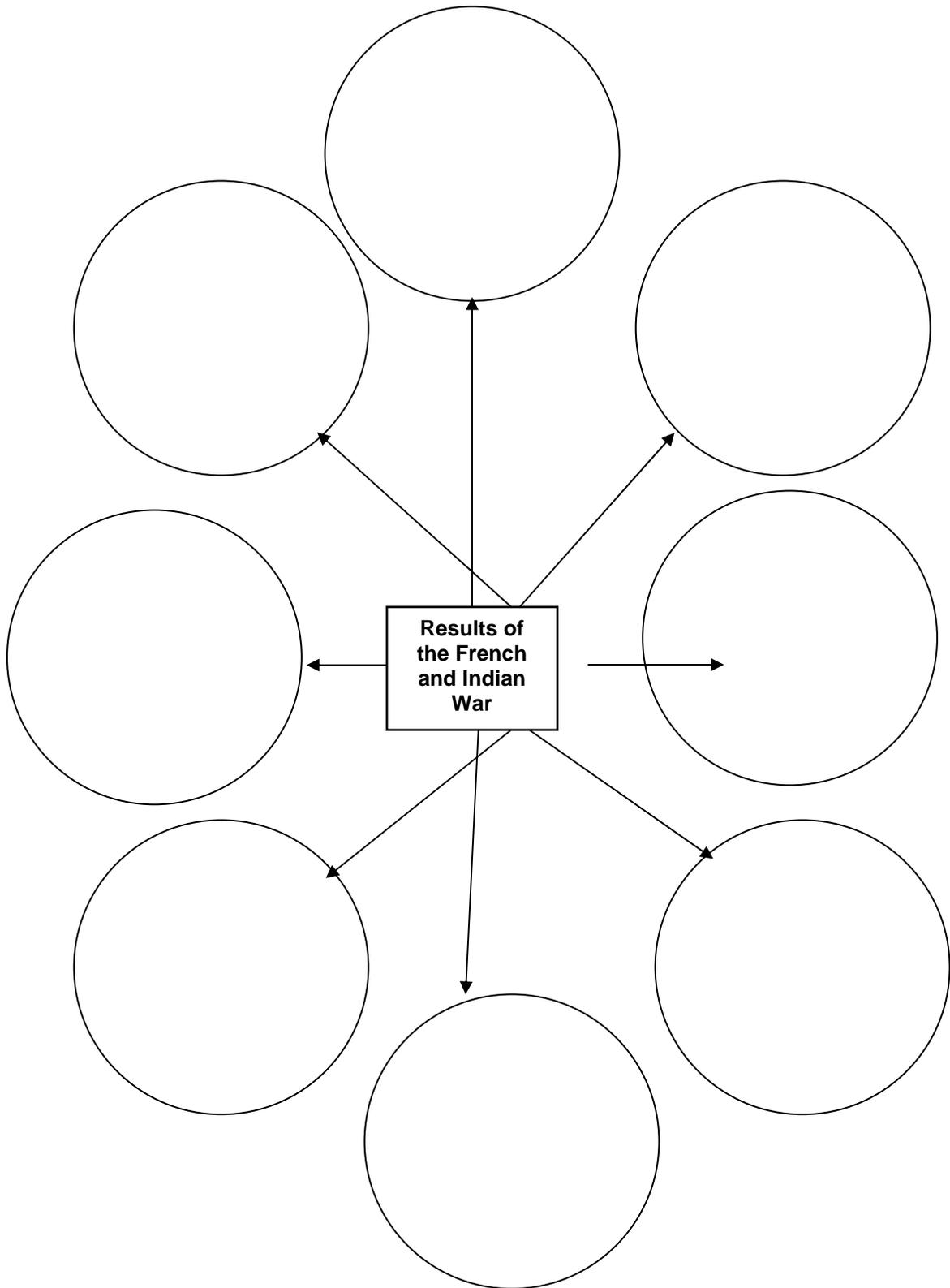
Britain and France sent soldiers from Europe to North America to defend their colonies. Both sides also had the help of different Native American tribes: The Iroquois helped the British and the Algonkians (Algonquins) sided with the French. British colonists also fought, in units known as colonial militia (part-time soldiers who fight during emergencies).

During the first years of the war, most victories belonged to the French who were more experienced in fighting in the wilderness. Eventually, however, the stronger and more numerous British forces turned the tide of war in their favor. In 1763, the Treaty of Paris brought an official end to the French and Indian War.

The war had important results for the future of the 13 British colonies:

1. Many colonial militia soldiers had fought successfully in the French and Indian War. Also, many American commanders gained valuable experience in the field, including George Washington, a young colonel from Virginia.
2. The victorious British gained control of all French territory on the mainland of North America east of the Mississippi River. Spain took ownership of all lands west of the Mississippi River.
3. Colonists were overjoyed to hear that the land between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River now belonged to their country. Many colonial militiamen expected to be paid with the rich lands of the Ohio River Valley for their years of fighting.
4. King George III of Britain, however, in order to keep peace with the Native Americans, forbade colonists to move west of the Appalachian Mountains under the Proclamation of 1763. (The British government had settled with the French, but did not want the expense of continuing to fight against Native Americans in their homeland.)
5. Colonists were outraged by the Proclamation of 1763, feeling that they had been cheated of their part in securing the victory against the French. Many ignored the Proclamation of 1763 and moved west.
6. Parliament (the British lawmakers) decided they needed to increase taxes on the colonists to help pay for the great expenses of the war. The first direct tax imposed on the colonies by Parliament was the Stamp Act of 1765. The Stamp Act required colonists to purchase stamps from the British government to place on a variety of paper items, including legal papers, newspapers, advertisements, and playing cards.
7. Colonists protested the Stamp Act because they elected no representatives to the Parliament; Parliament was chosen only by the by citizens who lived in Britain. Colonists like Samuel Adams of Boston, Massachusetts, organized protests against the Stamp Act, declaring that they would have, "No taxation without representation!"
8. Under the Quartering Act, Britain sent 10,000 soldiers to America to enforce the Proclamation of 1763. The Quartering Act also required the colonies to quarter (feed and house) those soldiers, effectively acting as another tax on the colonists.

Results of the French and Indian War



Questions for Discussion: THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR

1. Which countries fought in the French and Indian War? Where did the fighting take place? What is another name for this war? Why do you think it had two different names?
2. Why did the French claim the Ohio River Valley and what made this land valuable?
3. Why did the British colonists want the Ohio River Valley and how would it benefit them?
4. For which country did the Iroquois fight?
5. Which country won the war? What treaty ended the war and when was it signed?
6. As a result of the war, what became the western boundary of the British colonies? Why do you think this boundary was chosen?
7. What were the provisions of the Proclamation of 1763? Why were the colonists upset by this law and why did the British government pass such a law?
8. How did colonists respond to the Proclamation of 1763?
9. Why did the British pass the Stamp Act?
10. Why did colonists protest against the Stamp Act?
11. What was the purpose of the Quartering Act? How would colonists react to this law?
12. How would the results of the French and Indian War contribute to future conflicts between the colonists and Britain?

Suggested Answers to the French and Indian War Questions for Discussion

1. Britain and France; both in the colonies and in Europe; The Seven Years' War; answers will vary but should include something about how Native Americans helped the French during the fighting in the colonies and in North America.
2. The French built forts in the Ohio Valley and the western lands to protect their fur trade.
3. British colonists wanted the rich farmland to extend settlements beyond the Appalachian Mountains.
4. The Iroquois fought with the British and the colonial militia against the French and their Native American allies.
5. Britain won, helped by colonial militia, and a few Native American tribes; Treaty of Paris, 1763.
6. The Mississippi River became the western boundary of the British colonies in North America; Answers will vary but should include something about this being a large natural barrier.
7. The Proclamation of 1763 forbade American colonists from moving into newly acquired lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River – the rich farmlands for which many colonial militiamen were actually fighting. The British government (George III and Parliament) passed this law because they had come to peaceful terms with the French and did not want to continue an expensive war in the colonies against Native American tribes and nations.
8. Colonists felt angry and cheated. They mostly ignored the Proclamation of 1763 because they believed that they had helped win the war and the Proclamation wrongly denied them their just reward in land.
9. The British government passed the Stamp Act because they needed money to pay for expenses from the French and Indian War. The government in England felt that it was only “fair” that the colonists pay part of the expense for a war fought on their soil (for them).
10. Colonists began to use a phrase: “No taxation without representation!” Colonists did not elect representatives to Parliament and as Parliament passed various taxes and other laws people in the colonies began to get upset.
11. The government (British) needed soldiers in the colonies to enforce the provisions of the Proclamation of 1763 and other laws. Through the Quartering Act, colonists were forced to house soldiers in their homes and feed them. This was like another tax. Colonial feelings of anger and resentment against Britain grew and many colonists began protests in response to British policy.
12. Answers will vary, but should include reference to a group of former colonial militia (with experienced leaders) feeling angry and cheated about not getting the land they fought for and having to pay additional taxes; The colonists had no representatives or voice in the taxes passed by Parliament in England. The colonists felt like they (and their position) were not being represented in government.