

The War of 1812 and American Self-Image

Historical Thinking Skills Assessed: Sourcing, Close Reading, Corroboration

Author/School/System: Emily Savopoulos, Howard County Public School System, Maryland

Course: United States History

Level: Middle

Task Question: How did Americans' opinion of the United States change during the War of 1812?

Learning Outcome:

Students will be able to describe the change in opinion of Americans toward the United States during the War of 1812 based on a close reading and corroboration of two editorial cartoons.

Standards Alignment:

Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies

- RH.6-8.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- RH.6-8.7 Integrate visual information (e.g. charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

National History Standards

Era 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754-1820s)

Standard 3: The institutions and practices of government created during the Revolution and how they were revised between 1787 and 1815 to create the foundation of the American political system based on the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies Standards

- D2.His.2.6-8 Classify series of historical events and developments as examples of change and/or continuity.

Materials:

- RS#01: Document A – Columbia Teaches John Bull His New Lesson
- RS#02: Document Analysis Questions for “Columbia Teaches John Bull His New Lesson”
- RS#03: Document B – John Bull and the Baltimoreans
- RS#04: Document Analysis Questions for “John Bull and the Baltimoreans”
- RS#05: Corroboration Question
- RS#06: ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubric

Background for the Teacher:

The War of 1812 is often considered America’s “coming of age,” although the war was not a conclusive victory for the United States. Prior to the war, the young republic struggled to remove British troops from western lands, faced hostile Native Americans armed by the British, and negotiated unsuccessfully for equal trading rights on the open oceans. When the U.S. declared war, its prospects for victory looked bleak. The United States’ standing army of a few hundred men faced thousands of battle-hardened British veterans of the Napoleonic Wars. The U.S. Navy’s fleet of about a dozen ships was forced to confront the Royal Navy, the strongest navy in the world with over 500 vessels. Fighting along the Canadian border did not go well for the United States in the first two years of the war, and U.S.

naval victories had little strategic value. The situation only grew worse with the defeat of Napoleon in Europe in 1814, which freed the British army and navy to focus all of its attentions on the war with America. The subsequent British invasion of the Chesapeake region resulted in the burning of the new United States capital of Washington, D.C. and the looting of many towns, but the American victory at Baltimore discouraged any further attacks in the mid-Atlantic.

Weary of fighting, the British agreed to peace with the Treaty of Ghent in December 1814. Due to the slow pace of communication, one last battle was fought at New Orleans in January 1815. The Treaty of Ghent reestablished the *status quo antebellum*, or the conditions that existed prior to the war. No territory changed hands, and none of the United States' grievances was addressed. Still, the United States' performance during the war earned the respect of the European community, evidenced in subsequent treaties with Great Britain and Spain. Perhaps more important than Europe's growing respect for the United States, however, was Americans' growing respect for themselves. As the war progressed, the American people began to view themselves differently. The war fostered the first true sense of U.S. nationalism as a developing pride in the United States began to replace loyalty to state or region.

In this performance task, students will analyze two political cartoons created by William Charles, a Scot who immigrated to the United States. The cartoons were created about a year apart (1813 and 1814) and will illustrate for students emerging American confidence and nationalism. In order to be successful, students should have prior knowledge of the colonial and revolutionary history of America, the causes of the War of 1812, and the general course and key events and figures of the war.

Key Terms:

- Assailable – vulnerable to assault or attack
- Booty – prize
- Chap – guy
- Cockburn – British naval officer who was an important advisor to General Ross and helped direct the Chesapeake campaign
- Columbia – an early symbol of America, prior to today's Uncle Sam
- Flogging – to whip or beat
- Hampton, Havre de Grace and Alexandria – all major victories for British Admiral Cockburn during the Chesapeake Campaign
- Highlander- a soldier from the Scottish highlands who fought with the British
- John Bull – a symbol of British authority, sometimes portrayed as a man and sometimes as a bull
- Kilt – traditional Scottish knee-length skirt worn by men
- Quietus – something that quiets
- Retribution – to pay back for an evil or wrong done against a person or nation
- Ross – British General in charge of all troops on the east coast during the war who was killed during the Battle of Baltimore

Procedure

Context Setting:

- Introduce the topic of representative symbols to the students. In pairs, have them brainstorm some popular symbols (donkey for Democrats, elephant for Republicans, various popular product images such as Apple's logo, McDonald's, Adidas, etc.). Alternatively, you can project various symbols, and have students identify the brand.
- Move the discussion from commercial/organizational symbols to national symbols, such as Uncle Sam and his predecessor, Columbia (you can project these images). Explain that John Bull – sometimes shown as human, sometimes as an actual bull – represented Great Britain/the British in this time period.
- This may be an appropriate time to review the elements of an editorial cartoon. Editorial cartoons utilize symbols to represent ideas/concepts, humor, irony, exaggeration, and text in order to portray a particular point of view.

Document Analysis:

- Explain to students that they will be examining two editorial cartoons to see how Americans viewed their country during the War of 1812 and how (according to the cartoonist) those views changed as the war progressed.
- Mention that the cartoons are original to the war period but that the captions have been transcribed (typed) to make for easier reading. Also, point out that the same cartoonist created both cartoons.
- Distribute RS#01: Document A - Columbia Teaches John Bull His New Lesson, RS#02: Document Analysis Questions for "Columbia Teaches John Bull His New Lesson," RS#03: Document B - "John Bull and the Baltimoreans," and RS#04: Document Analysis Questions for "John Bull and the Baltimoreans." In pairs or individually, have students analyze each source and complete the corresponding document analysis questions.

Corroborating Evidence and Constructing Interpretations – Close Analysis:

- Give each student or pair one copy of RS#05: Corroboration Question. This may be collected at the end of the period for a class-work grade. You can use RS#06: ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubric (Close Reading Strategies, Corroboration) to assess student writing.
- After the students have completed the corroboration question, conduct a whole group discussion to review the cartoons. Discuss how the cartoons point to a change in Americans' opinions about the United States from Source A to Source B.
 - In Source A, the United States is shown as a woman who is trying to teach the European countries a lesson, with little success. Napoleon completely disregards the American vow of retribution, while John Bull (representing Great Britain) insists, "power constitutes right."
 - In Source B, the Americans (Baltimoreans) are shown as powerful, while the British are shown as defeated and cowardly. This implies that the victory at Baltimore boosted the confidence and self-image of the Americans.
- Make sure students understand the symbolic meanings and are able to include specific examples from the documents to support this change of view.
- Ask students, "How could this shift in Americans' opinion of the United States influence the actions of the nation after the War of 1812?" This question will help students predict the rise of nationalism and power during the "Era of Good Feelings."

Thoughtful Application:

- Students will create a political cartoon of their own to show the rise of nationalism during the War of 1812. Topics can include military engagements, domestic politics, Native American relations, foreign relations, and issues on the home front.
- Cartoons should:
 - Include at least three symbols, people, or groups from the war period.
 - Include appropriate captions.
 - Show an increase in American strength and confidence during the War of 1812.

Resource Sheet #01

Source A – Columbia Teaching John Bull His New Lesson

Columbia (left): “I tell you, Johnny, you must learn to read Respect – Free trade – Seaman’s rights &c – As for you Mounseer Beau Napperty, when John gets his lesson by heart I’ll teach you Respect – Retribution &c. &c.”



John Bull (right): “I don’t like that lesson – I’ll read this pretty lesson.”

Book: “Power constitutes right”

Napoleon (center): “Ha ha – Begar me be glad to see Madam Columbia angry with dat dere Bull – But me no learn respect – me no learn retribution – Me be de grand Emperor”

Source: Charles, William. “Columbia Teaching John Bull his New Lesson.” Etching with watercolor, 1813. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. Accessed 7/14/14. <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/app/item/2002708984/>

Resource Sheet #02

Document Analysis Questions for “Columbia Teaches John Bull his New Lesson”

1. Sourcing: When was the cartoon created?
2. Sourcing: What is the cartoonist’s point of view?
3. Contextualizing: To what prior event(s) is Columbia referring when she says, “I tell you, Johnny, you need to read Respect – Free Trade – Seaman’s rights?”
4. Close Reading: How does the cartoonist make it clear that Columbia represents the United States?
5. Close Reading: John Bull prefers his own book to Columbia’s lesson. What does “power constitutes right” mean in relation to the War of 1812?
6. Put an X on the value line below to reflect how the Americans are portrayed in this editorial cartoon and list one piece of evidence (visual or textual) that supports your placement. **EVIDENCE:** _____

←-----→
WEAK and UNCERTAIN **STRONG and CONFIDENT**

Resource Sheet #03

Source B – John Bull and the Baltimoreans

American Sniper: "Now for this Chap on Horseback with the plaid Bonnet on – There – there's a Rifle pill for you – That's a quietus."

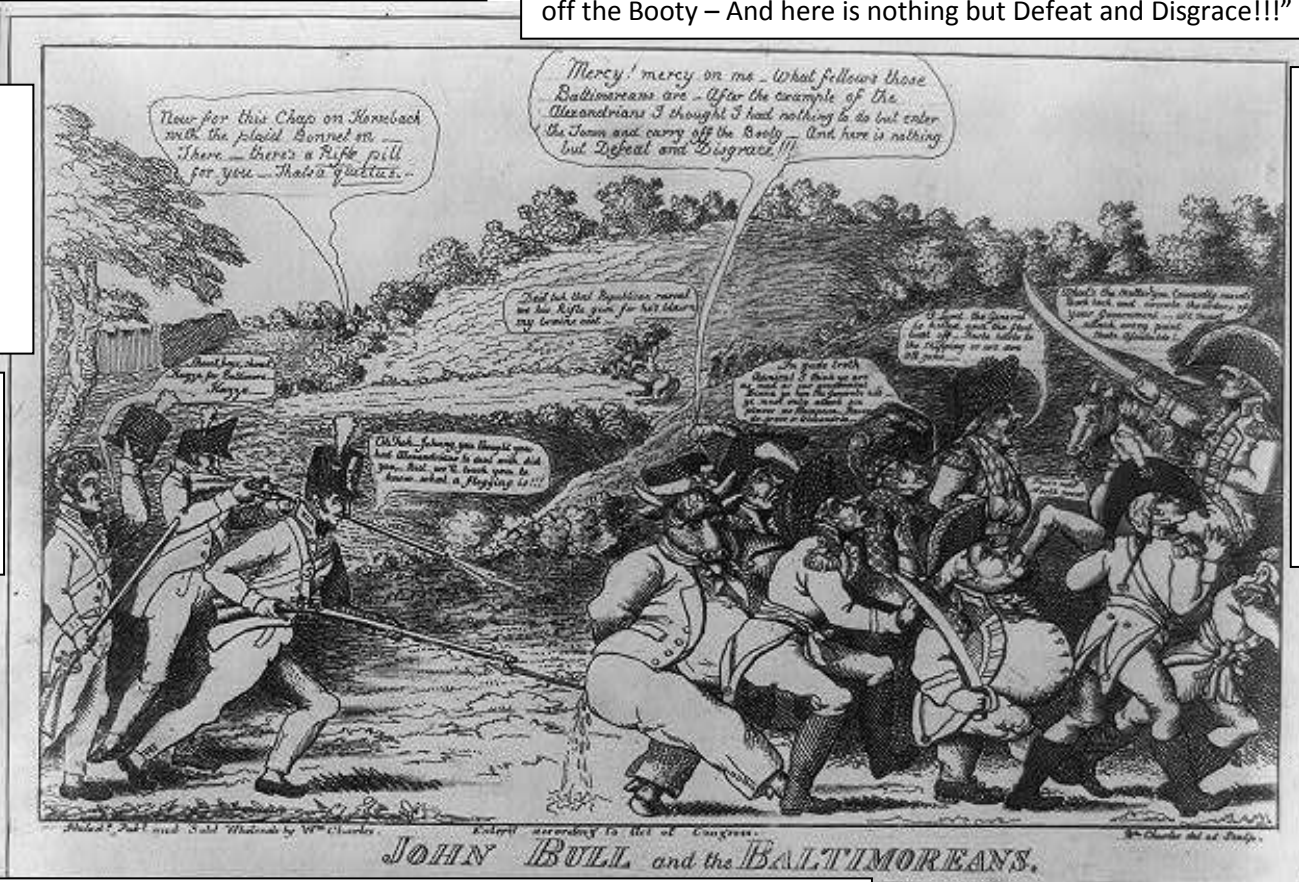
John Bull: "Mercy! Mercy on me – what fellows those Baltimoreans are – After the example of the Alexandrians I thought I had nothing to do but enter the Town and carry off the Booty – And here is nothing but Defeat and Disgrace!!!"

British General Ross on Rearing Horse: "Deil tak that Republican rascal wi his Rifle gun for he's blawn my brains out."

American soldier waving hat: "Shout, boys, shout Huzza for Baltimore – Huzza"

British Mounted Officer (Cockburn?): "What's the Matter! You Cowardly rascals! Back back and execute the orders of your Government – We must attack every point that's assailable!"

Highlander: "In gude troth Admiral I think ye are as mad as our government Dinna ye ken the General's kilt – ye must only attack sie places as Hampton, Havre de Grace, or Alexandria."



American soldier prodding John Bull: "Oh! Hoh! – Johnny you thought you had Alexandrians to deal with did you – But we'll teach you to know what a floggings is!!!"

Resource Sheet #04

Document Analysis Questions for “John Bull and the Baltimoreans”

1. Sourcing: When was this cartoon created?
2. Sourcing: What is the cartoonist’s point of view?
3. Contextualizing: What event of the War of 1812 is the cartoon referring to?
4. Close Reading: How does the cartoonist show the audience that British General Ross was killed in the battle?
5. Close Reading: Does the cartoonist support or oppose the actions of the Baltimoreans? Cite text evidence to support your point.
6. Put an X on the value line below to reflect how the Americans are portrayed in this editorial cartoon and list one piece of evidence (visual or textual) that supports your placement. **EVIDENCE:** _____

← **WEAK and UNCERTAIN**

STRONG and CONFIDENT →

Resource Sheet #06

ARCH Historical Thinking Skills Rubric

	Close Reading Strategies		Strategies/Procedural Concepts
Criteria	Sourcing	Critical Reading	Corroboration
4	<p>Identification: Fully understands the meaning and content of sources.</p> <p>Attribution: Cites all authors and all original dates of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Perspective: Evaluates the reliability sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</p>	<p>Questions the author's thesis and determines viewpoint and evidence to evaluate claims, highlighting what the author leaves out.</p> <p>Cites accurate examples of how the author uses persuasive language and specific words and phrases to influence the reader.</p> <p>Seeks answers to questions left unanswered in the source to formulate an interpretation.</p>	<p>Constructs an interpretation of events using information and perspectives in multiple sources. Identifies consistencies and inconsistencies among various accounts.</p>
3	<p>Identification: Mostly understands the meaning and content of sources.</p> <p>Attribution: Cites most authors and most original dates of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Perspective: Examines the reliability of sources based on the author's perspective and when and why they were produced.</p>	<p>Analyzes the author's thesis, determines the viewpoint and evidence to evaluate the claims; may highlight what the author leaves out.</p> <p>Cites examples of how the author uses persuasive language and specific words and phrases to influence the reader.</p> <p>Notes that the author has left some questions unanswered.</p>	<p>Explains similarities and differences by comparing information and perspectives in multiple sources.</p>
2	<p>Identification: Understands the meaning and content of sources with appropriate scaffolding and support.</p> <p>Attribution: Cites some authors and some original dates of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Perspective: Attempts to evaluate the reliability of sources.</p>	<p>States the author's claims and evidence presented to prove those claims.</p> <p>Determines the author's viewpoint.</p> <p>Notes how language is used to persuade.</p>	<p>Identifies similarities and differences in information in multiple sources.</p>
1	<p>Identification: Attempts to understand the meaning and content of sources with the appropriate scaffolding and support.</p> <p>Attribution: Cites few authors and few original dates of primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>Perspective: Does not adequately examine reliability.</p>	<p>Attempts to identify the author's claims, viewpoint, or evidence.</p>	<p>Demonstrates little to no attempt to examine sources for corroborating or conflicting evidence.</p>