The War of 1812

Causes of the War

- Britain and France are at war in Europe. This means that many of the British ports are closed. American ships cannot deliver their cargoes to sell in Britain.

- Britain is stopping and searching American ships to look for deserters from the British army. They are still treating the United States as though it is a colony and not an independent country.

- The United States is growing rapidly and its people are always looking for new farmland. They are expanding westward but the First Peoples in that area are hostile to this expansion.

- Some Americans see British North America, especially the rich, inexpensive land in Upper Canada, as an excellent way to gain more farmland. They also believe that if they could make Canada a part of the United States, they would gain some allies with the First Peoples.

Main Events of the War

June 1812	The United States declares war on Britain.
July 1812	The American army enters Upper Canada. American General William Hull tries to persuade Canadians to surrender rather than fight with the British, saying that becoming part of the United States would free them from the tyranny of Britain. He warns them not to make alliances with the Indians against the U.S.
July 1812	British army captures the American Fort Michilimackinac on Lake Huron.
August 1812	British General Isaac Brock and Shawnee Chief Tecumseh capture Detroit from the Americans.
October 1812	General Brock is killed at the Battle of Queenston Heights.
April 1813	The Americans are advancing farther into Upper Canada, and they capture York (today's Toronto, the capital of Upper Canada, on Lake Ontario), burning the Parliament Buildings.
October 1813	Chief Tecumseh is killed. The Americans destroy British ships on Lake Erie.
Summer 1814	Americans retreat to Fort Erie. British attack the American President's house in Washington (today's White House).
December 1814	A Peace Treaty is signed to end the war. Neither the Americans nor the British claim victory.

Effects of the War

- The Americans gave up on the idea of making Canada part of the United States. Instead, they expanded to the west and the south in the U.S.

- Britain started to treat the United States as an independent country. However, after this war, Britain stopped encouraging American immigration to Canada.

- Upper Canada and Lower Canada began to feel a connection to one another because they had fought together against the Americans.

- The U.S./Canada border was established more or less as it is today.

- All military forces were removed from the Great Lakes.

This war has been called the "war that nobody won". Why do you think this is so?

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It has also been said that, in fact, there is never a "winner" in a war, and that everyone loses. Knowing what you now have learned about Canadian history do you think this is true?

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Why do you think that war sometimes creates a feeling of national unity among the citizens of a country?

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