

Andrew Jackson and the War of 1812

Essential Question: What were the causes and consequences of the Battle of Horseshoe Bend?

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 had profound consequences for the young United States. Many Americans cheered the Revolutionaries who were motivated by many of the same ideals of liberty that had inspired the American Revolution.¹ However, the French Revolution quickly became much more radical than the American Revolution. French Revolutionaries seized the property of the middle and upper classes and executed hundreds of people, including King Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. France's declaration of war against Britain in 1793 put President Washington in a difficult position. Secretary of State Thomas Jefferson thought that the United States should support France because France had aided the Patriots during the American Revolution and because a French victory would weaken Britain's hold on North America. Conversely, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton advocated support for Britain, the United State's most important trading partner.² Washington chose a policy of neutrality, but the British eventually began seizing American ships that traded with France and impressing or forcing American sailors to serve in the British navy.³

The conflict between Britain and France had important consequences for the United States including Napoleon's decision to sell Louisiana to the United States in 1803. Presidents Washington, Adams and Jefferson all dealt with foreign policy issues

¹ Joyce Appleby et al., *The American Journey*. (Columbus, Ohio: Glencoe McGraw Hill, 2003), 264-65.

² Ibid.

³ "Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812." Tennessee State Library and Archives. 2014. <https://sharetn.gov.tnsosfiles.com/tsla/exhibits/1812/index.htm>. Accessed 5 July, 2018.

stemming from the war between Britain and France, but were able to avoid war with either country. By the time that James Madison took office in 1809, tensions between the United States and Britain had skyrocketed due to the continued British practice of searching and seizing American ships and arming American Indians, led by Tecumseh, along the frontier. On June 1, Madison, urged on by War Hawks Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun, asked Congress to declare war on Britain.⁴ While the United States dealt with British forces along the Great Lakes, Tennessee's militiamen, led by Andrew Jackson, fought with members of the Creek nation who were part of Tecumseh's alliance.

Following Tennessee's admission to the Union in 1796, settlement in middle and western Tennessee increased. The increase in white settlers led to tensions with the Creeks who lived in a loose confederation of towns along the rivers of Georgia and Alabama. In 1811, the Shawnee leader, Tecumseh visited the southeastern tribes as part of his plan to build an alliance of tribes to stop the spread of white settlements.⁵ While the southern Creeks were uninterested in Tecumseh's plan, many people in the northern towns supported it. A few warriors joined Tecumseh and the British in fighting the Americans at the beginning of the War of 1812. The War of 1812 triggered a civil war in the Creek towns. The Creeks friendly to the United States were known as the White Stick Creeks and those hostile to the United States were known as the Red Sticks.⁶ When members of the Mississippi militia attacked the Red Stick Creeks in 1813, they retaliated by killing 250 settlers at Fort Mims, located just north of Mobile, Alabama.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ove Jensen, "Battle of Horseshoe Bend." Encyclopedia of Alabama. 2017. <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1044> accessed 5 July 2018.

⁶ Ibid.

The Fort Mims Massacre as it was called caused the civil war to expand into a larger conflict between the Creeks and forces from Tennessee, Georgia and Mississippi.⁷ Andrew Jackson was selected to lead Tennessee's volunteer militia. He was first ordered to New Orleans, but was stopped in Natchez. On the march back to Nashville, Jackson earned the nickname "Old Hickory" by marching alongside his men.⁸ Following the Fort Mims Massacre, Jackson took his army south into Creek territory. By December of 1813, most of Jackson's volunteer force was ready to return home. They believed that their one year enlistment was about to expire, but Jackson believed the men were obligated to stay. The conflict eventually led to a number of men being court-martialed, but the volunteers returned home.⁹ Jackson's expedition was saved by the arrival of 900 new recruits in January of 1814. By March, the Red Sticks had taken refuge in the Horseshoe Bend of the Tallapoosa River. On March 27, Jackson launched a two pronged assault.¹⁰ A force of Creek and Cherokee warriors crossed the river downstream to attack the Red Stick village from the rear. At the same time Jackson's force attacked the barricade using artillery fire and then a frontal assault. Young Sam Houston took part in the charge and was seriously wounded. Red Sticks who tried to escape across the river were gunned down by the militia on the opposite shore. Approximately, 800 Red Stick Creeks were killed and 350 women and children made prisoners of the White Sticks and Cherokee allies. Jackson's force had 49 men killed and 154 wounded.¹¹ The Creek War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Fort Jackson on August 9, 1814. Jackson forced the Creeks to cede 23 million acres of land

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812."

⁹ Robert Morgan, *Lions of the West: Heroes and Villains of the Westward Expansion*. (Chapel Hill, NC: Shannon Ravenel, 2011), 78.

¹⁰ Jensen, "Battle of Horseshoe Bend."

¹¹ Ibid.

to the United States government. The White Sticks who had fought as allies of Jackson were furious that they too had their lands taken from them.¹² Junaluska, the Cherokee chief who saved Jackson's life during the battle later said that if he had known Jackson would one day drive the Cherokee from their homes, he would have killed Jackson at Horseshoe Bend.¹³

Following his victory over the Creeks, Andrew Jackson traveled south to New Orleans and began to strengthen the city's defenses against the British in December, 1814.¹⁴ Jackson pieced together a defensive force that included enslaved men, free Blacks, Choctaws, and Tennessee, Kentucky and Louisiana militia units. Jackson promised the enslaved men their freedom in return for their service. When British General Pakenham attacked the strongly fortified American position on January 8, 1815, his forces were devastated by deadly accurate fire from the American riflemen. The British suffered over 3,000 casualties including Pakenham who was killed.¹⁵ Conversely, Jackson's forces only lost thirteen men. Jackson's stunning victory in the Battle of New Orleans, despite occurring after the Treaty of Ghent was signed in December of 1814, filled most Americans with a sense of national pride.¹⁶ However, the enslaved men who fought at the Battle of New Orleans felt differently. Following the battle, Jackson went back on his promise and ordered the men to return to their enslavers. James Roberts was so angered by Jackson that he readied his gun and would have killed Jackson except Jackson had taken the precaution of taking the

¹² "Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812."

¹³ Morgan, *Lions of the West*, 85.

¹⁴ "Answering the Call: Tennesseans in the War of 1812."

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

ammunition from the enslaved men's guns. Roberts and the other enslaved men were returned to their enslavers, while Jackson was hailed as a national hero.¹⁷

Jackson reinforced this view when he seized two Spanish forts in Florida in 1818. His actions led Spain to sign the Adams-Onís Treaty in 1819 which ceded Florida to the United States. Jackson, along with Isaac Shelby, also acquired the land between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers from the Choctaw in 1818.¹⁸ The land deal was known as the Jackson Purchase. Jackson, John Overton and James Winchester established the town of Memphis and began to encourage settlement in 1819.¹⁹ Andrew Jackson's actions in Florida and land deal in west Tennessee reinforced the popular image of him as a hero of the common man.

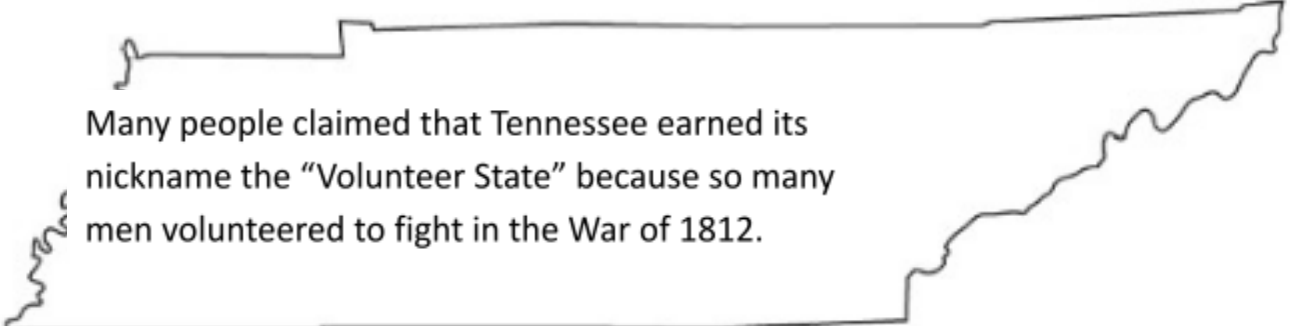
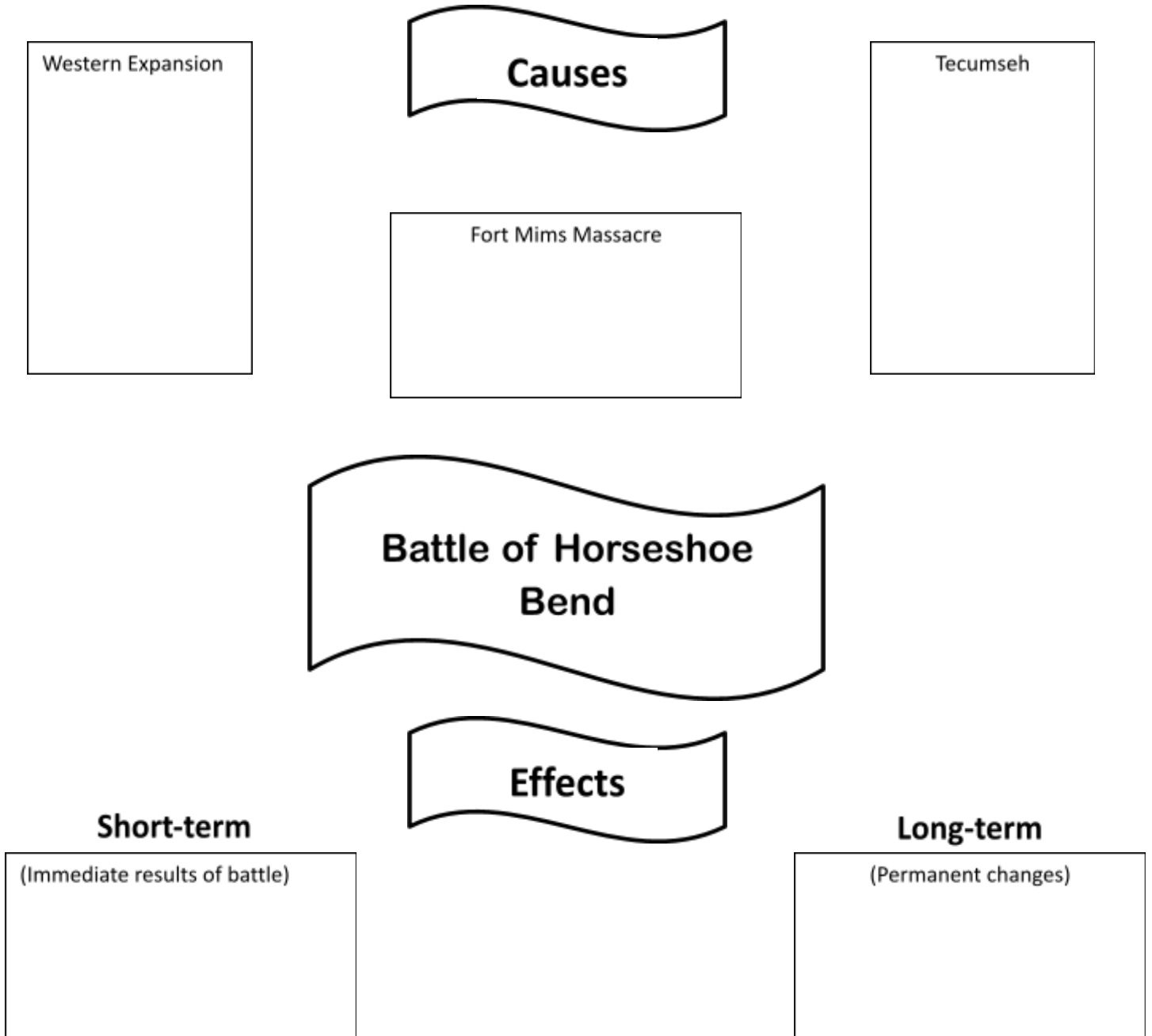
¹⁷ Skyler Gordan, "Enslaved soldiers and the Battle of New Orleans." Tennessee Historical Society. <https://tennesseehistory.org/battle-of-new-orleans/> accessed 10 June 2021.

¹⁸ Blythe Semmer, "Jackson Purchase." Tennessee Encyclopedia. October 8, 2017. <https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/jackson-purchase/> accessed 5 July 2018.

¹⁹ Ibid.

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Complete the cause and effect chart below using information from the reading.



Many people claimed that Tennessee earned its nickname the "Volunteer State" because so many men volunteered to fight in the War of 1812.