

PROJECT TITLE: The French and Indian War, a Global Conflict	
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SCHOLARSHIP & RESEARCH

1. **Primary Investigative Question(s)** – In what ways did the French and Indian/Seven Years War impact the world?

2. **Contextual Essay**

George Washington's actions of 1754 in the Ohio back country would ignite a powder keg of imperial conflict between France and England, and with it affect the entire world. This struggle would continue throughout the Seven Years War/French and Indian War affecting millions of people in Europe, North America, Africa, and Asia. Even after the Treaty of Paris in 1763 ended the fighting, another struggle born out of the Seven Years War/French and Indian War would take root and pit the French and the British against each other, with Americans right in the middle, only this time fighting for their freedom with the French as their allies in the American Revolution.

The lands that lay between the forks of the Ohio and the Mississippi river were disputed by the French and British as to who owned them. In 1753 the colonial governor of Virginia, Robert Dinwiddie, sent George Washington with a message to the French instructing them to leave the Ohio River Valley at once. Far from complying to these demands, the following year the French move further south in the valley, building Fort Duquesne at the confluence of the Ohio, Alleghany, and Monongahela Rivers (Anderson, 2005). George Washington then received orders to remove the French from the fort. However, before he was able to make it to the fort, he encounters a small group of Frenchman on a diplomatic mission. Not knowing this, Washington and his men attacked the party and killed the French leader of the mission, Ensign Joseph Coulon de Villiers de Jumonville (Anderson 2005). A month later, Washington's forces were defeated by a French and Indian force at the quickly built Fort Necessity. Soon, British regulars, American colonists, Indians of many different tribes, French regulars, and French Canadian colonists were fighting from Quebec to Fort Duquesne (Pittsburgh). The fighting would eventually reach the Caribbean as the British and French navies battled over the valuable sugar islands.

The intense French and British imperial rivalry wouldn't allow for the fighting to be contained in the Western Hemisphere. Within two years of the battle at Fort Necessity, the war spilled to European soil when the French besieged the British held island of Minorca off the eastern coast of Spain. After analyzing their military situation in Europe, Britain decided to ally itself to Prussia. At the same time France had gained a formidable alliance with Russia, Saxony, and Sweden. This meant that all the major European powers were now engulfed in war. This European war would drag on for seven years with hundreds of thousands of casualties resulting with neither side able to declare a decisive overall victory.

By 1758, the fighting had spread to Asia and Africa where battles over control of trade ports took place. In India, the French and British trading companies fought each other for dominance of eastern trade. The French, just as in North America, were able to use the native peoples as their allies against the British. However, by 1761, the British had defeated the French and pushed them out of India. Just as they had succeeded in taking French trading ports in India, the British were able to easily take the west African trading posts of Sengal, Gambia, Goree away from the French (Anderson, 2000). In two years, the war that started in the wilderness of North America had reached four continents.

In North America, where it all began, the French fared the same as they did in Africa and India. While they were able to have success early in the war with victories at Fort Duquesne, Fort Oswego, Fort William Henry, and Fort Carillion, by 1758, the tide had turned in Great Britain's favor as they seized Louisbourg and Fort Duquesne. In 1759, the French were defeated at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham causing Quebec to fall. Within a year, the French Canadian capital city of Montreal was surrendered, marking the defeat of the French in North America (Anderson 2005).

After the Treaty of Paris in 1763 concluded the war, the status quo of power remained the same in Europe as before. However, the British had won a decisive victory in North America, India and West Africa. According to the treaty, Great Britain now dominated trade with Asia, and the French were expelled from North America leaving the British with all the lands east of the Mississippi. In order to maintain control of such a vast colony, King George III issued the Proclamation of 1763. This made it illegal for colonists to settle west of the peak of the Alleghany Mountains. This law attempted to quiet hostilities between Native Americans and colonists which in turn would save the British government money. However, it didn't have the desired effect because the colonists were upset about the law and largely ignored it.

In addition to facing the challenges of maintaining peace in the newly acquired Ohio Valley, Great Britain faced a tremendous national debt. At the beginning of the French and Indian War the debt was 76,100,000 pounds, and by the time it ended in 1763, it had nearly doubled to 132,600,000 pounds (Brewer, 1988, p.30). With such a large debt, the British government decided to make the colonists carry some of the burden. In an effort to increase revenues to pay down this awesome debt, Parliament asserted its right to tax American colonists who had been direct beneficiaries of the war. It was these actions, that Parliament began in 1763 with the Proclamation Act, that caused the relationship between the American colonists and the British government to deteriorate. Ben Franklin stated in 1766 that Americans' temperament to the crown before 1763, was "The best in the world. They submitted willingly to the government of the Crown, and paid, in all their courts, obedience to acts of Parliament." However by 1766 when he was testifying before Parliament he concluded that "A total loss of the respect and affection the people of America bear to this country [Great Britain]" could happen if the repressive laws passed on them by Parliament, specifically the Stamp Act, were not stopped. In the three years after the war, Great Britain's efforts to stabilize North America and recover financially from the war had dramatically changed the views of many American colonists towards the British government. The Americans had come to think of themselves as partners with Great Britain during the successful campaigns of the French and Indian War and expected for this partnership to remain. When it did not, the American citizens were not willing to be subjugated by Parliament without their consent because they saw themselves as Englishman with the same rights as those living in Great Britain. Therefore, protests in the forms of marches, petitions, boycotts, violence against public officials, destruction of property, and more went on throughout the colonies in response to laws that were passed as a direct result of the French and Indian War. For nearly a decade the struggle between colony and mother country continued in this form, until arms were picked up against each other and the Revolutionary War was fought.

While George Washington's skirmish in the wilderness of North America involved less than 100 men, it marked the beginning of the world's first global war. The French and Indian War/Seven Years War clearly marked a shift of imperial power to Great Britain. However, it simultaneously led to internal

conflicts within England's realm, as the colonists in America became more and more discontent with British rule because of policies that directly derived from problems created by the war. These complaints eventually lead to rebellion by the colonists who in turn allied themselves with a French government eagerly awaiting a chance to take revenge on Great Britain. Not only did this war involve all of the major powers of eighteenth century Europe, it also facilitated the creation of what would become a global power in its own right, The United States of America.

Postlude: This information is very useful when teaching of the American Revolution.

France's foreign minister, in speaking to the king, stated that "It is enough to read the Treaty of Paris to realize ... how much that arrogant nation [England] savours the pleasure of having humiliated us (Anderson 136). And It was with this attitude that he decided "France was obligated to take revenge when the opportunity appeared, as it soon did, in the breach between Britain and its colonies. From the outset of the American Revolution, France and Spain were supporting the colonials by secretly giving them what equated to 1,000,000 pounds which in turn, among other things, was used to get eighty percent of the gun powder used in the first year of the war (Bender, 2006). By February of 1778, the French had gone a step further by formally allying themselves with the Americans. After entering the war, the French and British navies began once again fighting in the Caribbean. The fact that their military exploits against each other weren't confined to the thirteen mainland colonies exclusively, shows that once the French entered the war, it became more about imperial dominance, than the Americans winning their independence. As John Adams observed that throughout history great powers tended to seek the destruction of each other often to the advantage of weaker nations. "It is to this principle we owe perhaps our liberty" (Bender, 2006, p.62).

3. Annotated Bibliography-

Anderson, F. & Cayton, A. (2005). Washington's Apprenticeship. In *The Dominion of War* (pp.104-159). London: Penguin Group.

This chapter of Dominion of War explores the early career of George Washington from a member of the First Virginia Regiment up to the point in which he accepts becoming the leader of the Continental Army. It chronicles his actions in the Ohio Valley backcountry that lead to the French and Indian War as well as the challenges he faces throughout the war. There are also a considerable number of pages devoted to the reforms that Great Britain imposes on the colonies after the war.

Anderson, F. (2000). American Duties Act. In *Crucible of War*. pp (572-580). NY: Vintage Books.

This chapter of Crucible of War deals extensively with the particulars of the "Sugar Act" detailing the language and desired outcomes of Parliaments first attempt to assert a tax law after the French and Indian War. By reading this chapter, one will get a sense of the sovereignty and dominion that Parliament was trying to assert over the colonies.

Anderson, F. (2000). Britain Drifts into a European War. In *Crucible of War*. pp (169-175). NY: Vintage

This chapter of Crucible of War is essential in understanding the basics of the war that went on in Europe. It covers the beginning of the war in Europe, the attack of Minorca, and outlines the major European alliances. Also, this chapter deals with the politics of Parliament and how they affect decisions that are made concerning geographic areas of military focus throughout the war.

Anderson, F. (2000). Stamp Act and Quartering Act. In *Crucible of War*. pp (641-651). NY: Vintage Books.

This chapter of Crucible of War deals extensively with the background of the Stamp and Quartering Acts exploring the actual language of the laws, the Parliamentary process in which they were created, causes for their creations, and the colonists response to them. It is valuable as a resource for understanding the strain that the French and Indian War put on the relationship between the American colonists and the British Government.

Anderson, F. (2005). *The War that Made America*. London: Penguin Group

This book gives a complete detailed portrayal of the North American events leading up to, during, and after the French and Indian War. It details the major battles fought during the French and Indian War. Also, it links colonists unhappiness with Britain to many of the ideas and laws that come out of the French and Indian War.

Bender, T. (2006). The “Great War” and the American Revolution. In *A Nation Among Nations* (pp. 61-115). NY: Hill and Wang.

This chapter of A Nation Among Nations illustrates how the French and Indian War/Seven Years War and the American Revolution are a continuous struggle between the French and British Empires in which Americans are stuck in the middle. Throughout the chapter, Bender demonstrates the growing conflict between the British colonists and the mother country which was directly due to the French and Indian War. He also focuses on the rivalry between France and Great Britain and how that carried throughout from 1754-1783.

Brewer, J. (1988). *War, Money, and the English Estate, 1688-1783*. London: Century Hutchinson.

This book was used solely for statistics: the number of soldiers in the British Army and Navy, average annual British revenue, and average annual British expenditures. The statistics show the staggering show

that the national debt nearly doubled during the Seven Years War. Therefore, leading the British government to create laws attempting to deal with this debt.

Franklin, B. (1766). Testimony to Parliament. Retrieved May 1, 2010 from http://wps.prenhall.com/wps/media/objects/171/175199/06_stamp.HTM courtesy of Parliamentary Archives.

This is a testimony of Benjamin Franklin in 1766 in which he is standing before Parliament where he is speaking on behalf of the American colonists about their views on the Stamp Act. He reports that before 1763 the relationship was great between American and Great Britain. However, he states in 1766 it is poor because Parliament is unjustly taxing the people of the colonies. He also speaks as to how the colonists will never pay such taxes and there is no power on the Earth that could make them change their minds.