Chapter 16 – Manifest Destiny and Settling the West

Section 1 – Introduction

In Chapter 15, you learned how leaders of the young nation added the Bill of Rights to the Constitution to protect the rights and freedoms of Americans. At that time, the United States stretched from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. In this chapter, you will read about how the United States spread west across North America by taking control of territories, or large regions of land.

In the 1800s, the lands west of the Mississippi River were claimed by several nations. Many Americans wanted these lands. Some people believed that it was their natural right to take these territories for the United States. They said that expanding westward was the nation’s fate.

American leaders used a variety of methods to annex, or add, territory to the United States. Sometimes they bought land. Sometimes they made agreements with other countries for land. One time, the United States was able to add land after fighting a war.

Many Americans thought that expanding the United States was good for the country. But as you will see, it was not good for everyone.

The map to the right shows the United States’ acquisitions, or lands gained, between 1783 and 1853. As you read this chapter, look back at this map. How did the United States gain control of each territory? What happened to the people who already lived there?

Section 2 – The United States in 1783

When the American Revolution ended in 1783, the original 13 colonies along the Atlantic Coast became the United States. The new nation also gained most of the land that stretched from the colonies to the Mississippi River, which had previously been under British control. Soon, more settlers began moving west into this territory, where only American Indians had lived before. Some settlers wanted to go even farther, across the Mississippi River.
Several nations claimed territories that Americans wanted for themselves. In the Southeast, Spain controlled Florida. France claimed much of the land west of the Mississippi River. Farther west, first Spain and then Mexico controlled huge territories. These territories included the places we know today as Texas, the Southwest, and California. Great Britain still claimed large areas in the Northwest. These included the present-day states of Oregon and Washington. Russia claimed a part of the Northwest, too.

Americans wanted these lands for many reasons. The U.S. population was growing, partly because people from other countries were moving to the United States. Settlers wanted land on which to live and farm. They wanted to work and to build homes. Businesses wanted resources, like wood and minerals, as well as new places to sell their goods. Leaders wanted the United States to be strong—and safe from attacks by other countries.

Americans were proud of their new country. Many Americans believed that it was their natural right to spread their religions, government, and ways of life westward across North America to the Pacific Ocean. In 1845, a newspaper writer called this idea the manifest destiny of the United States.

Section 3 – Louisiana Purchase (1903)

The first land added to the nation was the Louisiana Purchase of 1803. The United States bought most of the land between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains from France.

This was important because Americans had interests in this area. People shipped goods down the Mississippi River to the port city of New Orleans. From there, ships took goods to the Atlantic Coast. This was easier and cheaper than moving goods by land over the Appalachian Mountains.

But New Orleans was controlled by France. To ensure that Americans could move their goods, President Thomas Jefferson wanted to buy New Orleans. He was willing to pay up to $10 million for the port city.

At this time, France feared a possible war with Great Britain. The French needed money for their army. And they were ready to give up their claims in North America. They surprised Jefferson by offering to sell all of the Louisiana Territory for $15 million. American representatives James Monroe and Robert Livingston agreed to the sale. This land doubled the size of the nation.

But the Louisiana Purchase was not good for everyone, especially American Indians. For years, settlers had wanted to push American
Indians westward. Now, there was a place to put them. In the 1830s, the U.S. government forced several tribes from their homelands in the South. Thousands of Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Cherokees had to move onto reservations in what is now Oklahoma. Many starved, froze to death, or died from diseases on the brutal trip west.

Section 4 – Lewis and Clark Expedition

Shortly before he completed the Louisiana Purchase, President Jefferson made plans for an expedition to explore the huge territory. Two former soldiers, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, led the group. They would map the Louisiana Territory. They would also look for a Northwest Passage to the Pacific Ocean. Jefferson asked them to take notes on the soil, plants, animals, and American Indian tribes that they came across in their travels. He also wanted the explorers to scout locations for trading posts and settlements.

In May 1804, Lewis and Clark started up the Missouri River from St. Louis, Missouri. They took more than 40 other men with them. One of these men was Clark’s slave, York. York would become the first black man to cross North America.

As the expedition moved along the Missouri, the men found high, cold plateaus. The explorers spent the winter with a group of American Indians, the Mandans, in what is now North Dakota.

There, Lewis and Clark met Sacagawea (sah-keh-jeh-WEE-uh), a young Shoshone woman. The next year, she joined the group as they crossed the Rocky Mountains and struggled through early snows. She helped them speak with tribes they met along the way. The group followed the Snake and Columbia rivers, finally reaching the Pacific Ocean in November 1805.

On their return journey, Lewis and Clark mapped two more routes across the Rocky Mountains. In 1806, they returned as heroes. Now settlers could move even farther west.

Section 5 – Florida Acquisition (1819)

In the early 1800s, most of the land we know today as Florida was under Spanish rule. Americans in the Southeast wanted this land. Slave owners in Georgia were angry because some slaves were escaping to Florida. Often, the runaways hid with the Seminoles, a tribe of American Indians. Some
runaway slaves even became members of the tribe.

Also upsetting were the raids, or attacks, by the Seminoles on settlements in Georgia. The Seminoles made these raids out of fear that the white settlers would eventually attack them.

In 1817, General Andrew Jackson marched his army into Florida. He ended the Seminole raids. And he captured two Spanish forts, including the one at Pensacola, the capital of Spanish Florida. President James Monroe did not fully support General Jackson’s actions. But Monroe wanted Florida and he did not stop Jackson.

Spain soon realized that it could not defend its land from U.S. attacks. In 1819, Spain agreed to give Florida to the United States. In return, the United States agreed to give $5 million to the settlers in payment for slaves lost and property damaged in the Seminole raids.

Within 10 years, many Americans had moved to Florida. The U.S. government ordered the Seminoles to leave, but many refused. The tribe fought one more war against the United States before most of its members were either killed or forced to move to the West.

Section 6 – Texas Annexation (1845)

In the early 1800s, Spain ruled Mexico and most of what are now the southwestern and western parts of the United States. In 1821, Mexico gained its independence from Spain and took control of this land. Part of the region was known as Texas.

Many of the people in Texas were American Indians, including Apaches and Comanches. The Mexican government wanted more settlers in Texas who would raise crops and animals, pay taxes, and follow the Catholic religion. Mexican officials offered free land in Texas to Americans. The settlers had to promise to obey Mexican laws and to become Catholic.

By 1830, about 16,000 white Americans lived in Texas. They outnumbered the Mexicans. Soon, tensions grew between the settlers and the Mexican government. One issue was slavery. Mexico had outlawed slavery, but many of the American settlers owned slaves. Mexico allowed settlers to own some slaves in Texas. But the American slave owners worried that Mexico might one day free the slaves. Another issue was that most of the settlers wanted Texas to join the United States. Many settlers did not even speak Spanish. Mexico passed a law to stop more Americans from settling in Texas.

In 1833, a group of settlers asked the Mexican government to allow Texas to have its own government. Stephen Austin, who had been a loyal
Mexican citizen, gave the group’s message to the government. The Mexican government angrily refused. By 1835, groups of Texans and Mexican soldiers were fighting. In 1836, Texas declared independence. In response, the president of Mexico, Antonio López de Santa Anna, led an army into Texas. He planned to punish the American settlers for trying to break away from Mexico.

When the Mexican army reached the town of San Antonio, Santa Anna found fewer than 200 Texans and other Americans who had come to help them. These men took a stand at an old mission, or church, called the Alamo. Santa Anna demanded that they give up. They replied by firing a cannonball. “Victory or death!” was their message.

For more than 10 days, the small group fought off Santa Anna’s large army. Then, the Mexicans climbed the walls and took over the Alamo. Nearly all the Americans were killed, including Jim Bowie and Davy Crockett, two famous pioneers. During the battle at the Alamo, a group of Texans met in another town and organized a temporary government. They appointed Sam Houston to lead the Texas army.

Six weeks later, in April 1836, General Houston led more than 800 Texans in a surprise attack against Santa Anna’s army at San Jacinto. The Texans charged the Mexican troops, shouting, “Remember the Alamo!” They won the battle and captured Santa Anna. The Texans let him go when he promised to give Texas its independence.

Texans approved a new constitution for the Republic of Texas. They chose Houston as their president. For nine years, Texas ruled itself. Its flag showed one white star on a red, white, and blue background. People called Texas the Lone Star Republic. Some Mexicans moved away to Catholic, Spanish-speaking Mexico. Others stayed on to marry and do business with American Texans. They worked in the government. But, in time, most of the Mexicans lost their lands and government positions. Many Texans still wanted the United States to annex Texas. U.S. President John Tyler agreed. In 1845, Congress made Texas the 28th state.

Section 7 – Acquisition of Oregon Country

From the early 1800s, Americans had dreamed that their nation would control the territory called Oregon Country. This northwestern area included the present-day states of Washington and Oregon, as well as parts of other states and western Canada. For years, Oregon Country had
been occupied by both Great Britain and the United States. To the north of this region, Russia controlled Alaska.

In 1844, James Polk was elected president of the United States. He promised to take control of all of Oregon Country, from the northern border of California to the southern edge of Alaska. This area’s northern boundary was deep in British-controlled territory. The boundary was located at latitude 54°40’ north. Polk’s supporters demanded, “Fifty-four forty or fight!”

Neither Great Britain nor the United States wanted to fight a war over Oregon Country. Great Britain knew that the southern part of the territory already contained more Americans than British and Canadians. Besides, most of the British in the area trapped beavers or traded beaver furs. By the mid-1840s, few beavers were left.

In 1846, Great Britain agreed to a boundary drawn at latitude 49° north. It reached from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The British gave up any land claims south of this line.

The lives of American Indians in Oregon Country soon began to change for the worse. By 1850, Congress was giving away tribal lands to American settlers. The settlers took American Indian hunting lands and turned them into farms and ranches. For many years, there were wars between American Indians and U.S. settlers and soldiers. But in time, most tribes were forced onto reservations.

**Section 8 – Mexican Cession (1848)**

The next large addition to the United States came as a result of what Americans now call the Mexican War. One cause of this war was that the United States had annexed Texas. The Mexican government wanted Texas back. And Mexico knew that many Americans wanted other Mexican lands, including California.

The two countries also disagreed about the southwestern boundary of Texas. Americans wanted the boundary to be the Rio Grande. Mexico wanted it to be about 150 miles farther north and east.

In 1846, President Polk sent an army, led by General Zachary Taylor, to protect the Rio Grande. A group of Mexican soldiers tried to defend the area, believing that it belonged to Mexico. Crossing the river, they fought a small group of Americans. “American blood has been spilled,” General Taylor wrote to President Polk. Now the president had an excuse to go to war. Mexico, he told Congress, had started the fighting. On May 13, 1846, Congress voted to declare war.
Many Americans were against the war. They felt that the United States was just trying to get more land. Others supported President Polk and cheered each U.S. victory.

The war went on for nearly two years. The United States won the first battle at Santa Fe easily. But Mexico did not give in. President Polk then ordered U.S. troops to capture Mexico City, the capital.

Mexican soldiers battled fiercely to defend their country. Both sides suffered great losses. In one battle at Mexico City, about 800 U.S. soldiers and 3,000 Mexican soldiers died or were captured. Even when U.S. soldiers captured the capital, Mexico did not admit defeat. Volunteer American soldiers continued to attack, rob, and kill Mexican citizens.

Finally, the Mexicans surrendered. In February 1848, Mexico signed the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In this agreement, Mexico ceded a huge amount of territory to the United States. This land was called the Mexican Cession. It included the present-day states of California, New Mexico, Utah, and Nevada, as well as parts of four other states. Mexico also agreed to the Rio Grande as the border of Texas. The United States paid Mexico $15 million for this land.

Five years later, in 1853, Congress bought one last piece of Mexican land for $10 million. It was an area south of the Gila River, in present-day Arizona and New Mexico. This land contained a pass through the mountains. The pass would make it easier to build a railroad across the southern United States. This land sale became known as the Gadsden Purchase. It was named for the American who had worked out the agreement.

After the war with Mexico, American farmers, ranchers, and miners poured into the new lands. Their arrival changed the lives of people in the Southwest. These newcomers often took land that had previous claims on it. Mexicans and American Indians were offered the poorest jobs. In the years to come, these new settlers would fight many wars against Apaches and other American Indians before finally forcing them onto reservations.
Summary

In this chapter, you read about how the United States spread across North America between 1783 and 1853. You used a map to study key U.S. acquisitions made during this time through purchase, agreement, and war.

Many Americans believed that it was their manifest destiny to spread their way of life all the way to the Pacific Ocean. As the nation gained each new territory, more settlers pushed westward. Their desire for land led to deadly conflicts with American Indians and with Mexico.

Although ranchers, miners, and farmers created new settlements and opportunities, their westward movement also forced American Indians from their homelands and onto reservations. Sometimes, the new settlers took land from former Mexican citizens.

How did the arrival of these new settlers affect the lives of American Indians in the West? How were American Indians treated? What happened to their way of life? Read on to find out.
Reading Further – The Cherokee Trail of Tears

The Cherokees had fought other tribes to hold their land. But American settlers were harder to defeat. In the 1830s, the Cherokees were forced to leave the land they loved. They made a harsh journey called the Trail of Tears to their new home. What events led to this move?

In the spring of 1838, 7,000 American soldiers arrived. They had come to round up the Cherokees in New Echota, Georgia and in other parts of the Southeast—and to force them from their homes.

Some soldiers mistreated the Cherokees. Other soldiers felt badly for them. The general in charge thought that he saw tears in the eyes of some troops. The Cherokees had been warned for two years that this day was coming. Still, many tribal members were unprepared. They begged for more time to collect their things, but the soldiers refused.

The scene was heartbreaking. Families picked through their belongings and made agonizing choices. =What could they carry with them? What must they leave behind? For many, the move meant leaving the family pet or cherished personal treasures.

A crowd of Americans waited for the Cherokees to depart. It was clear that they would take whatever the tribe left behind. In desperation, a few Cherokees tried to sell items they could not carry. But there was little time to bargain. The soldiers forced the Cherokees to begin a long and brutal march. It would lead to a strange new place, hundreds of miles away.

Americans Want Land

The events of 1838 had been building for years. The Cherokees were among the last tribes to leave their homes in the Southeast. Others, such as the Choctaws, Creeks, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, had already moved on or been forced out.

The mighty Cherokees had held their homeland for a long time. Their lands once stretched across the Southeast. They had defeated many tribes who wanted their land. These tribes included the Creeks, the Shawnees, and even the powerful Iroquois. But the Cherokees had survived and thrived.
Then, in the late 1700s and early 1800s, white American settlers had begun a steady advance to the west. They had moved beyond their land along the Atlantic Coast. The settlers wanted more land. They saw the forests used by the Cherokees and other tribes for hunting. American farmers could clear and use this land, the settlers had said. Only the American Indians stood in the way of progress.

The U.S. government began working to push the American Indians off their land—to force them west, beyond the Mississippi River. There, the Americans said, the tribes would not be in the way of U.S. settlement.

The United States used several methods to get the American Indians to leave. The government bought their land and gave them new western homes. It harassed them and took their land illegally. It waged war against them.

In all of these ways, American Indians steadily lost their lands east of the Mississippi. The Cherokees were among the last to remain in their eastern homes.

**Cherokees Try to Live Among Americans**

The Cherokees had wanted to keep their lands. But they had chosen not to fight the new settlers. They knew that the Creeks and the Seminoles had suffered serious losses when they had battled the Americans.

Instead, the Cherokees tried to fit in with the settlers. Some Cherokees lived on American-style farms. They sent their children to American-style schools. A Cherokee named Sequoyah created a written form of the Cherokee language. Soon, thousands of Cherokees had learned to read and write.

Still, white settlers did not accept the Cherokees. Settlers fought the Cherokee people and took their land. In 1829, gold was found on Cherokee land in Georgia. Hundreds of gold-seekers rushed to the area. Now there was a greater demand for the U.S. government to remove the Cherokees.

U.S. President Andrew Jackson agreed that the Cherokees must go. He wanted them to leave on their own. He offered to trade their land in the East for land in the West. When they refused, Jackson got angry. He did not stop Georgia’s government from sending soldiers to attack the Cherokees. In 1831, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Georgia’s actions were illegal. But President Jackson did not enforce the ruling.

A small group of Cherokees feared that they would lose their land. They signed a treaty with the U.S. government saying that all the...
Cherokees would leave their homes by 1838. The tribe would move to new homes in present-day Oklahoma.

Many Cherokee tribe members were furious about the group’s actions. They said that the group had had no right to speak for the whole tribe. The treaty should not stand. But the U.S. government disagreed. A few thousand Cherokees gave up and left. Some 16,000 refused to go. And so, in May 1838, the American troops arrived to force the Cherokees out.

The Terrible Journey

The journey west was grueling. A few Cherokees traveled by water. Most of them, however, traveled hundreds of miles on foot. The children and the elderly moved slowly. The trip would last for months.

Along the way, the Cherokees suffered terribly. They had little food and water. Heat, cold, snow, and rain caused great misery. And disease spread quickly in the crowded camps.

The young and the old died first. But soon, even strong men and women began to fall. About 4,000 of the 16,000 Cherokees who began the trip did not survive it. Graves littered the roadside. One survivor wrote, “Children cry and many men cry, and all look sad when friends die, but they say nothing and just put heads down and keep on go towards West.” The Cherokees’ path became known as the Trail of Tears.

At the journey’s end, the Cherokees faced another ordeal. The tribe was still divided over the treaty that had led to their removal. Many leaders that had signed the treaty were killed.

Despite these hardships, the Cherokees survived. They formed a new tribal government in Oklahoma. They settled into new homes. And they kept alive their proud traditions.

Meanwhile, the United States would continue to expand and grow. Settlers quickly filled the land that the Cherokees and the other tribes of the East, such as the Creeks, Choctaws, Chickasaws, and Seminoles, had left behind. Still, Americans kept pressing to the west. The Cherokees would not be the last tribe to come into conflict with the restless, determined people of the young country.
Science and technology have helped to shape life in the United States from our nation's beginning. Technology is the use of science to do practical things. Usually it involves some kind of machine. Americans are known around the world for their skill in technology.

In the 1800s, the United States expanded from the East Coast all the way across the continent to the Pacific Ocean. Pioneers and soldiers played a big part in the growth of the nation. So did machines.

Here are three examples of how machines contributed to the settling of the West. How is your life different today because of these uses of technology?

**Machines for Farming: The Agricultural Revolution**

In the 1800s, new machines began doing work that farmers once had to do by hand. This change is called the *agricultural revolution*. Because the revolution involves machines, it is also called "the mechanization of agriculture."

A good example is the reaper. The reaper is a machine for cutting wheat. It was invented by Cyrus McCormick in 1831. Before the reaper, farmers cut their wheat with a scythe. A scythe is a hand tool with a long, curved blade. Using a scythe, it took 20 hours to harvest one acre of wheat.

The reaper, which was drawn by horses, was much faster. By 1895, it took less than an hour to harvest an acre of wheat using a reaper.

The reaper helped farmers turn the Midwest from a frontier into the nation’s "bread basket." Later inventions, like hay loaders, mowers, and gasoline-powered tractors, made farming even more efficient.

Machines have not changed farm work completely. For example, much of the work of picking fruits and vegetables is still done by hand. Farm workers usually earn low wages for working long, hard hours in the fields. Many workers travel from place to place, following the crops to find work.

Still, the agricultural revolution changed the way Americans live. With new machines, fewer farmers could grow crops for many more people.

In 1800, most Americans lived on family farms. Most families grew just enough food for themselves. Today, few of us live on farms. Yet American farms grow more than enough food to feed everyone in the country, and to sell food to other nations.

**Machines for Moving People and Goods: The Transportation Revolution**
For centuries, people could travel overland only as fast as horses could take them. This changed in the 1800s with the invention of the Iron Horse.

The Iron Horse was a steam-powered locomotive. (A locomotive is the engine car that pulls a train.) The first American steam locomotives began regular service in 1830. Soon railroad building became one of the biggest businesses in the country.

Early trains weren't fast by modern standards. They rolled along at about 10 miles per hour. But that was more than twice as fast as a horse-drawn stagecoach. And trains could haul much bigger loads than horses, oxen, or mules.

As Americans moved west, the railroads followed. In 1869, workers hammered the last spike into a railroad that crossed the continent, joining the East and West coasts. This railroad was called the **transcontinental railroad**.

Railroads were very important to the settling of the West. Now goods could travel over long distances. Farmers and ranchers could ship their crops and cattle to markets hundreds of miles away. Mining companies could ship ore from their mines. Banks could send money where it was needed.

Of course, the railroads also moved people. By making it easier to travel, they encouraged settlement. And they encouraged people to start new businesses. Brand-new towns grew up at railroad stops throughout the West.

Railroads were part of a transportation revolution in the 1800s. Better roads, new canals, and steamboats also helped move people and goods faster than ever before. These changes helped the economy to grow. They also helped connect Americans with one another.

Today, cars, trucks, and planes do most of the work that the railroads used to do. Americans of the 1800s would be amazed to learn that our flying machines can take us across the country in about four hours!

**Machines for Sharing News: The Communication Revolution**

When George Washington needed more soldiers and guns during the American Revolution, he sent messages to Congress by express rider. Express riders carried important messages on horseback. It took days for Washington's messages to get to Congress. But that was as fast as a message could travel in those days.

As Americans pushed westward, communication took even longer. Messages had to cross greater distances, often over rough land. Then, in the 1830s, Samuel F. B. Morse invented the telegraph. The telegraph was a machine that used electricity to send messages in code over wires.
In 1844, the first telegraph line was strung from Washington, D.C., to Baltimore, Maryland. Morse’s first message on the new line was "What hath God wrought!" ("What has God made!") Morse was right to be excited. His invention changed the speed of communication forever. For the first time in history, messages could move faster than people.

Telegraph wires followed the railroads west. Once the wires were in place, messages could be flashed across the continent in minutes.

Later inventions like the telephone, radio, and television continued the communication revolution. Today, the Internet makes the world seem smaller by letting us send instant messages around the globe. In a similar way, the telegraph made the United States seem smaller as settlers moved west in the 1800s.

These revolutions in technology helped to unite a country that spread over a continent 3,000 miles wide. Today, technology connects people around the world.
Enrichment Reading – The War of 1812

After the American Revolution, the nation’s early presidents wanted peace. They tried to have good relationships with other countries. However, in 1812, the new nation could not escape war. So soon after Americans formed a new nation, what caused the United States to give up peace?

In the early 1800s, France and Britain were at war. Both nations began to capture American ships. They felt that America was trading with the enemy. This made Americans angry. Then British captains forced American sailors to work on their ships. This made many Americans furious. Americans who wanted to go to war were called "war hawks." They came up with the saying, "Free Trade and Sailors’ Rights!" Other Americans wanted peace.

Many Americans who wanted peace lived in New England. People thought that the war would cost too much. They also feared that the United States would lose a war against the British. The U.S. navy had just sixteen ships. Great Britain had hundreds of ships. How would the United States defeat the most powerful navy in the world?

Most war hawks were from the South and the Northwest Territory (the present-day Midwest). They were angered by the actions of British sailors at sea.

The war hawks had other reasons to be angry at the British. After the American Revolution, the British had agreed to give up their forts in the Northwest Territory. But this had not happened. Many also accused Great Britain of causing trouble between American settlers and Indian tribes.

Leading up to the War of 1812, there were problems in the Northwest Territory. Settlers moving into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys pushed Indians off their lands. Some Indians, such as Shawnee leader Blue Jacket and Miami chief Little Turtle tried to stop settlers from living on Indian lands. They had support from other tribes, such as the Delaware, Chippewa, and Iroquois.

The Indians won more than one battle against the U.S. army. However, in 1794, American General Anthony Wayne defeated Blue Jacket at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. After the defeat, the Shawnees agreed to reach a deal with the Americans. In 1795, Blue Jacket signed the Treaty of Greeneville. The Indians had to give up all the land in what is now Ohio except for a small area in the northwest.

Other Indians also tried fighting back. Two Shawnee Indians—a chief named Tecumseh and his
brother, the Prophet, tried to unite all the American Indian tribes. They knew that one tribe alone couldn’t stop white settlers from taking more land. Tecumseh said, “Unless we support one another with our collective forces . . . we will be driven away from our native country and scattered as leaves before the wind.”

On November 7, 1811, Shawnee warriors fought against soldiers led by William Henry Harrison. The fight was called the Battle of Tippecanoe Creek. Harrison defeated the Indian forces. After the battle, Harrison’s men found out that the Indians were armed with British guns. Many Americans were very angry.

Meanwhile, the war hawks wanted the United States to expand. Some wanted more American Indian lands in the Northwest. Others wanted Spanish Florida to the South. Because Spain and Great Britain were allies, Southerners hoped that defeating the British would help them achieve this goal. Still others wanted land to the north in Canada. These Americans thought that settlers in Canada would want to become part of the United States rather than stay under British rule. They were wrong.

**Fighting the War of 1812**

The actions of the British at sea and on American land, as well as conflicts with Indians finally pushed the United States into war. On July 17, 1812, Congress declared war on Great Britain. This was a daring step for a nation with an army of 7,000 poorly trained men and a navy of only sixteen ships.

The United States planned an invasion of British Canada. The war hawks thought that conquering Canada would be easy. However, the war began badly for the United States. The invasion of Canada was a disaster.

In 1813, Americans did have some success. The United States built Fort Meigs in present-day Ohio. The fort became an important place to stage an American invasion of Canada. British forces tried to capture the fort twice in 1813, but were defeated.

Then, on September 10, 1813, the Battle of Lake Erie took place. U.S. Captain Oliver Hazard Perry and the navy captured British warships on the lake. It was an important victory. Both sides wanted control over the lake. The lake was the best way to send troops and supplies into the enemy’s territory. Now the United States had control over the lake. The British supply line into the American northwest was cut. This also meant that the British could no longer provide American Indians with weapons.
The victory at Lake Erie helped the American General William Henry Harrison to push into upper Canada. He defeated the British and their Indian allies in a major battle. In this battle, Tecumseh was killed. With him died his dream of uniting all American Indians.

By 1814, the war in Europe between the British and the French had ended. The British had won. This was very bad news for Americans. The British were able to send many more troops to fight in the United States. In August 1814, British soldiers landed near Washington, D.C. They marched to the Capitol and set it on fire. They burned the Library of Congress and all the books inside. Then they marched to the president’s house. (It was not yet called the White House.) They burned that, too. Next, they attacked Baltimore, a city in nearby Maryland. An American named Francis Scott Key watched the “rockets’ red glare” and the “bombs bursting in air” as British ships fired at Fort McHenry in Baltimore harbor. He wrote the words that became the national anthem of the United States.

In the end, the British decided they did not want to fight another long, costly war in North America. In the peace treaty, both sides agreed to go back to the way things were before the war. Nothing would change.

**After the War of 1812**

However, the War of 1812 did cause some changes. In the West, American Indians lost their only ally when the British withdrew. Many American Indians also lost their land in the peace agreement. During the war, the Sauk and Fox peoples fought beside the British. The British included nothing in the treaty to protect them or their other American Indian allies from U.S. settlers.

The War of 1812 led to other changes, too. The president’s home had to be repaired and painted. It later became known as the White House. The war gave Americans new symbols, such as the national anthem and new pride in their nation. The United States had faced one of the most powerful countries on Earth, and peace had been restored.
Enrichment Reading – Making Economic Choices

Economics is the study of how people use resources to produce and exchange goods and services to meet their wants and needs. This essay will explore these key economics concepts:

• The resources with which people meet their wants and needs are scarce.
• The economic decisions people make involve opportunity costs.
• To make a decision, people must look at costs and benefits.

In 1821, Stephen F. Austin rode into New Orleans, Louisiana. He had exciting news. He had just been to Texas, which at that time belonged to Mexico. Austin had made a deal with Mexican officials. These officials hoped to attract settlers to Texas. They had agreed to offer land at very low cost. Each couple could buy nearly 1,000 acres. They could get even more land if they had children. The land cost only twelve-and-a-half cents per acre.

Austin knew this offer was a very good value. Just the year before, the United States government had lowered its price for public land from $2.00 to $1.25 per acre. This was still ten times the price of an acre in Texas. Also, the American government had stopped loaning money to help people buy land. This made it harder for poor people to get their own farms. The low Texas price meant even someone with very little money could buy a parcel of land there.

Soon people were racing to Texas. They were willing to move to the Texas territory of Mexico to get land they could afford.

Scarcity and Choices

This story explains why many Americans first came to Texas. It also teaches some basic economics. In economics, we study how people use natural resources to meet their basic wants and needs. Land is one natural resource. Others include minerals, trees, and water.

But all natural resources are limited. There are not enough natural resources to meet all our needs and wants. The fact of limited resources is known as scarcity. Because of scarcity, all people face choices. We must decide which things we will get and what we will live without. Communities and countries face these choices, too. The available resources affect the choices of individuals, communities, and countries.

In 1821, wealthy farmers owned much of the fertile land in the United States. Many people did not have enough money to buy land. Therefore, when Mexico offered cheap land in Texas, some Americans chose to move there.
Opportunity Costs
All economic choices have a cost. Every time someone decides to do one thing, he or she is deciding not to do another. The cost of the choice that is passed up is called opportunity cost.

Opportunity cost is sometimes measured in money. For example, suppose a person has a babysitting job. He makes $15 every Friday evening. But one Friday, he has the chance to see a movie with friends. If he goes to the movie, he cannot work. He would not earn $15. The opportunity cost of going to the movie is $15.

Opportunity cost is not always measured in money. For example, suppose an athlete is hoping to make the basketball team. She has been practicing every day. But, just before the season begins, she decides to start ice skating. This decision has an opportunity cost. It costs her the time she has used for basketball practice.

The Americans moving to Texas in the 1820s faced opportunity costs. For example, moving to Texas at that time meant leaving the United States. People may also have been leaving family behind. These costs are sometimes hard to measure. But they are real costs.

Costs Versus Benefits
When making economic decisions, people must think about the costs of each of their choices. They must compare those costs to the benefits. Benefits are the good things someone hopes to get from a choice. In a good decision, benefits will be greater than costs. Americans moving to Texas saw the chance to own land for very little money. They knew there were costs. But they believed the benefits were greater.

Individuals make these sorts of decisions all the time. So do countries. It is not always easy. It may be hard to measure costs. And people do not always get the benefits they expected.

Incentives
Incentives affect choices. An incentive is something that encourages people to act in a certain way. An incentive can be positive. That is, it makes people better off so it makes a decision more likely. Mexico’s cheap land was a positive incentive to encourage people to settle there. There are also negative incentives. These make a choice less likely. Leaving the United States may have been a negative incentive for some settlers. It may have encouraged them to stay where they were, even if they couldn’t own land.