**The French and Indian War (7 Years War)**

The Seven Years' War (called the French and Indian War in the colonies) lasted from 1756 to 1763, forming a chapter in the imperial struggle between Britain and France called the Second Hundred Years' War. In the early 1750s, France's expansion into the [Ohio](http://www.history.com/topics/ohio) River valley repeatedly brought it into conflict with the claims of the British colonies, especially [Virginia](http://www.history.com/topics/virginia). During 1754 and 1755, the French defeated in quick succession the young [George Washington](http://www.history.com/topics/george-washington), Gen. Edward Braddock, and Braddock's successor, Governor William Shirley of [Massachusetts](http://www.history.com/topics/massachusetts). In 1755, Governor Shirley, fearing that the French settlers in Nova Scotia (Acadia) would side with France in any military confrontation, expelled hundreds of them to other British colonies; many of the exiles suffered cruelly. Throughout this period, the British military effort was hampered by lack of interest at home, rivalries among the American colonies, and France's greater success in winning the support of the Indians. In 1756 the British formally declared war (marking the official beginning of the Seven Years' War), but their new commander in America, Lord Loudoun, faced the same problems as his predecessors and met with little success against the French and their Indian allies.

The tide turned in 1757 because William Pitt, the new British leader, saw the colonial conflicts as the key to building a vast British empire. Borrowing heavily to finance the war, he paid Prussia to fight in Europe and reimbursed the colonies for raising troops in North America. In July 1758, the British won their first great victory at Louisbourg, near the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. A month later, they took Fort Frontenac at the western end of the river. Then they closed in on Quebec, where Gen. James Wolfe won a spectacular victory on the Plains of Abraham, September 1759 (though both he and the French commander, the Marquis de Montcalm, were fatally wounded). With the fall of Montreal in September 1760, the French lost their last foothold in Canada. Soon, Spain joined France against England, and for the rest of the war Britain concentrated on seizing French and Spanish territories in other parts of the world.

At the peace conference in 1763, the British received Canada from France and [Florida](http://www.history.com/topics/florida) from Spain, but permitted France to keep its West Indian sugar islands and gave [Louisiana](http://www.history.com/topics/louisiana) to Spain. The treaty strengthened the American colonies significantly by removing their European rivals to the north and south and opening the [Mississippi](http://www.history.com/topics/mississippi) Valley to [westward expansion](http://www.history.com/topics/westward-expansion).

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http://www.history.com/topics/french-and-indian-war