

Making History at the Battle of New Orleans

Lesson Plan



THE CABILDO

A LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM

RESOURCE: In-gallery lesson plan

LOCATION: From "Dirty Shirts" to Buccaneers: The Battle of New Orleans in American Culture Exhibition on the second floor of The Cabildo, two galleries

SUMMARY:

- **Part 1: Battle of New Orleans discussion** (5-10 minutes)
Teachers will use the painting *The Battle of New Orleans* (1839) by Eugene Louis Lami to lead an overview discussion of the battle.
- **Part 2: Commemorating the battle** (10 minutes)
Teachers will show students how people commemorated the battle in the gallery titled "Remembering and Mythmaking," emphasizing that a few individuals were remembered as heroes out of a diverse group of Americans.
- **Part 3: Group activity** (10-15 minutes)
Students will learn about lesser-known groups involved in the battle by exploring objects and exhibit panels. Focusing on one of these groups, they will design their own way of creatively commemorating the Battle of New Orleans.
- **Part 4: Student presentations** (10-15 minutes, in-gallery or in class the following day)
The student groups will take turns telling the whole class what they have learned about their assigned subject and sharing their artistic creations.

LEARNING GOALS:

Goal	Impact Area
1. Students will learn who participated in the Battle of New Orleans and why they fought.	Knowledge and Awareness
2. Students will appreciate the diverse experiences of the American participants in the Battle of New Orleans.	Attitude
3. Students will practice analyzing multiple sources and narratives to build understanding of a historic event.	Skills

PART 1: OVERVIEW – What was the Battle of New Orleans? (5-10 min.)

- Gather around *The Battle of New Orleans* (1839), oil painting by Eugene Louis Lami, hanging on the back wall of the first room in the exhibition.
- Provide a brief overview of the War of 1812 and discuss the Battle of New Orleans using the painting and the table on the next page.

The War of 1812

The United States declared war on Britain to:

- Assert the independence they won from Britain during the American Revolutionary War
- Stop the British from taking property, capturing sailors, and provoking Native Americans
- Protect their borders

The British fought back to:

- Protect their land in Canada
- Stop Americans from expanding their boundaries west toward the Pacific Ocean.

The Battle of New Orleans

- Began December 14, 1814 on Lake Borgne, ended with a clash in Chalmette on January 8, 1815. Lami's painting reimagines the fighting at Chalmette.
- The Battle of New Orleans was the final battle of the War of 1812. Both sides were unaware that a peace treaty had been signed to end the war on December 24, 1814.



The Battle of New Orleans (1839) – Discussion prompt

Give students time to look at the painting. Ask the prompts from the first column, provide information from the middle columns to enhance their understanding, and use the additional questions in the last column to continue the conversation.

PROMPT	AMERICANS	BRITISH	ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
WHAT? What do you see in this painting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fought behind trenches and mounds of earth, using cannons and rifles - Wore a mix of ragged clothing and uniforms, which earned them the nickname “Dirty Shirts” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stayed in formation and advanced over an open field, fired rifles - Called “Redcoats” because of the brightly colored uniforms worn by their trained soldiers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the painting, what group is fighting on the left and what group is on the right? - What are the people doing? - What weapon is in the case behind you? Can you find it in the painting? - How might these weapons cause damage? - How might the landscape impact the battle?
WHO? Who do you think these people are?	General Jackson led a diverse group of local militia and others including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choctaws - Enslaved people of color - Free people of color - Frontiersmen from Kentucky and Tennessee - Jean Laffite and other smugglers 5,000-6,000 total troops	Sir Edward Pakenham led trained soldiers, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - British Army and Navy - Scottish Sutherland Highlanders - West India Regiments from Caribbean 11,000-14,450 total troops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you find Andrew Jackson or Sir Pakenham? - What other types of people do you see? - What are they wearing? Why might they wear that?
WHY? Why do you think they are fighting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect New Orleans from the British invasion - To maintain control of the Mississippi River, an important trade route 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To gain control of the Mississippi River, blocking trade for the Americans and stopping their westward expansion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can you find the Mississippi River in the painting? - What signs of patriotism can you see, on either side?
WHAT NEXT? What do you think happened?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Americans defeated the British, even though they were outnumbered. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 13 killed - 39 wounded - Some of soldiers were regarded as heroes - The city held annual events for years to celebrate the victory 	The British suffered many more casualties and retreated. Sir Pakenham was killed in battle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 291 killed - 1,262 wounded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is one side showing signs of defeat?

PART 2: Remembering the Battle of New Orleans (10 min.)

What's wrong with this picture? Inaccuracies in *The Battle of New Orleans* (1839)

- Lami painted the *Battle of New Orleans* in 1839. That's 24 years after the battle! Remember they did not have technologies like cameras and cell phones to instantly capture a moment.
- Lami imagined several details. For example, the buildings in the painting's background did not exist. The Scottish highlanders who fought with the British did not wear kilts.
- While many fighters are represented, many are also left out. Who was most remembered from the Battle of New Orleans?

Who was remembered?

Lead students into the next gallery, immediately to your left if you are facing the painting. Point out the following areas, allowing them to explore various ways of commemorating the battle.

- **Andrew Jackson**
 - See the panel "Cult of Jackson," nearby images, and the statue in Jackson Square.
 - The Battle of New Orleans helped Andrew Jackson gain the popularity that would lead him to become president in 1829. In 1856, the square outside was renamed Jackson Square and his statue was erected at the center.
 - Some people were concerned that Andrew Jackson abused his power before, during, and after the battle. These concerns were overshadowed by stories of his victory.
 - **ASK – Have you seen the statues of Andrew Jackson in Jackson Square? Do you think this is a good way to remember the Battle of New Orleans? Why or why not?**
- **Kentucky Frontiersman**
 - Point out the panel "Frontiersmen Mythology," the movie poster for *El Luchador de Kentucky* ("The Fighting Kentuckian"), and the song recordings of "The Battle of New Orleans."
 - Many Americans admired rugged outdoorsmen. Historians, poets, and filmmakers focused on the participation of sharpshooters from Kentucky and Tennessee.
 - However, the Americans' cannons were more important than rifles during this battle.
 - **ASK – Why do you think people enjoyed learning about the frontiersmen?**
- **Pirates - Jean Laffite and the Baratarians**
 - See the movie posters and costumes for the 1938 film *The Buccaneer*, its 1958 remake, and the panel "Pirate Mythology."
 - In the 1900s, filmmakers fell in love with the story of Jean Laffite. They blended fact and fiction to make Jean Laffite the hero of the Battle of New Orleans.
 - In reality, Jean Laffite and his smugglers played a smaller role, providing supplies and manpower to the battle. Jean Laffite was not even on the battlefield.
 - **ASK – Do you think pirates are exciting? Why would Hollywood choose to make Jean Laffite into a hero?**

Who was forgotten?

The group of Americans who fought the British was very diverse. Several groups received less attention in paintings, songs, and movies. These groups include Choctaws, Creoles, enslaved people of color, free people of color, and women on the home front.

What would a movie poster about one of these groups look like? Or a monument? Or an oil painting? Let's find out!

Part 3: Activity – Make history! (10-15 min.)

- Return to the first gallery in the exhibition (where the painting was located) and divide students into small groups or partners.
- Assign each group of students one of the lesser-known groups of people who participated in the Battle of New Orleans and give them the corresponding worksheet: Choctaws, Creoles, Enslaved people of color, Free people of color, Women on the Home Front.
- Instruct students to find the text panels, objects, and images that provide information about their group and complete their worksheets.
- Students will use the information they collect to create their own idea of how this group should be remembered. For example, they can draw a picture, design a monument, pose for a photograph, create a movie poster, or write a song.

Part 4: Presentations on the past (10-15 min.)

- After everyone has finished, each group will share what they learned and show their creation to the class in a short presentation.

OR

- Allow students to use all remaining time in the exhibition to explore, conduct research, and complete their worksheets. Use class time the following day for groups to create and present their own way of commemorating the Battle of New Orleans.



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Group Worksheet

CREOLES

Battle of New Orleans

Look around to find the exhibit panel about Creoles. Read the text and look at the objects and art nearby.

Who were the Creoles?

Why did they join the Battle of New Orleans?

What did they do during the battle?

What tools or weapons did they use? What did they wear?

Make history! How would you remember the Creoles at the Battle of New Orleans? Working with your partner/group, choose one of the following:

- Draw a picture
- Pose and take a photo
- Stage a short skit
- Write a poem
- Design a monument
- Create a movie poster
- Write a song
- Choose your own idea!

Use the pictures and objects in the exhibit to help you.

Think carefully about what to include in your project. How we remember and share history is important. It can change the way we think and act today.

Get ready to share your creation with the rest of the class!

Group Worksheet

CHOCTAWS

Battle of New Orleans

Look around to find the exhibit panel about the Choctaws. Read the text and look at the objects and art nearby.

Who were the Choctaws?

Why did they join the Battle of New Orleans?

What did they do during the battle?

What tools or weapons did they use? What did they wear?

Make history! How would you remember the Choctaws at the Battle of New Orleans? Choose one of the following:

- Draw a picture
- Pose and take a photo
- Stage a short skit
- Write a poem
- Design a monument
- Create a movie poster
- Write a song
- Choose your own idea!

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Group Worksheet

ENSLAVED PEOPLE OF COLOR

Battle of New Orleans

Look around to find the exhibit panels about enslaved people of color and Jordan Noble. Read the text and look at the objects and art nearby.

Who were the enslaved people of color?

Why did they join the Battle of New Orleans?

What did they do during the battle?

What tools or weapons did they use? What did they wear?

Make history! How would you remember the enslaved people of color at the Battle of New Orleans? Choose one of the following:

- Draw a picture
- Pose and take a photo
- Stage a short skit
- Write a poem
- Design a monument
- Create a movie poster
- Write a song
- Choose your own idea!

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Group Worksheet

FREE PEOPLE OF COLOR

Battle of New Orleans

Look around to find the exhibit panel about free people of color. Read the text and look at the objects and art nearby.

Who were the free people of color?

Why did they join the Battle of New Orleans?

What did they do during the battle?

What tools or weapons did they use? What did they wear?

Make history! How would you remember the free people of color at the Battle of New Orleans? Choose one of the following:

- Draw a picture
- Pose and take a photo
- Stage a short skit
- Write a poem
- Design a monument
- Create a movie poster
- Write a song
- Choose your own idea!

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Group Worksheet

WOMEN ON THE HOME FRONT

Battle of New Orleans

Look around to find the exhibit panel about the Home Front. Read the text and look at the objects and art nearby.

Who were the women on the home front?

Why did they join the Battle of New Orleans?

What did they do during the battle?

What tools or weapons did they use? What did they wear?

Make history! How would you remember the women on the home front during the Battle of New Orleans? Choose one of the following:

- Draw a picture
- Pose and take a photo
- Stage a short skit
- Write a poem
- Design a monument
- Create a movie poster
- Write a song
- Choose your own idea!

Use the pictures and objects in the exhibit to help you.

Think carefully about what to include in your project. How we remember and share history is important. It can change the way we think and act today.

Get ready to share your creation with the rest of the class!
