



THE CABILDO
A LOUISIANA STATE MUSEUM

History and Art: The Battle of New Orleans

The Battle of New Orleans took place in 1815 and was an important event in the history of New Orleans and the United States of America. What can we learn about this battle by looking at a painting?

The artist Eugene Louis Lami created the giant oil painting *The Battle of New Orleans* in 1839. It's more than 10 feet tall and 16 feet wide! Today, the public can see this painting hanging in the Cabildo. Looking at *The Battle of New Orleans* teaches us about the past, but also reveals the limitations of using a single source to learn about history.

Instructions

1. Ask students to look at the photograph of the painting on the next page.
2. Use the discussion prompt on page 3 to guide students as they look at the painting.
3. Share the details on page 4, which provide more context for the battle and the painting.
4. Encourage students to create their own depiction of the Battle of New Orleans!



The Battle of New Orleans

Eugene Louis Lami, 1800 - 1890

1839

Oil, 129 x 196 inches

Louisiana State Museum, Gift of the State of Louisiana, 1991.080

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. Use the additional questions in the last column to continue the conversation.

PROMPT	AMERICANS	BRITISH	ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS
<p>WHAT?</p> <p>What do you see in this painting?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fought behind trenches and mounds of earth, using cannons and rifles - Americans used the landscape to their advantage; the British were surrounded by water and swamps - 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 toward Americans, fired rifles - Were 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? - How weapons do you see? How might they cause damage? - How might the landscape impact the battle?
<p>WHO?</p> <p>Who do you think these people are?</p>	<p>General Jackson led a diverse group of local militia and others including:</p> <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 <p>5,000-6,000 total troops</p>	<p>Sir Edward Pakenham led trained soldiers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - British Army and Navy - Scottish Sutherland Highlanders - West India Regiments from Caribbean <p>11,000-14,450 total troops</p>	<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?
<p>WHY?</p> <p>Why do you think they are fighting?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect New Orleans from the British invasion during the War of 1812 - 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?
<p>WHAT NEXT?</p> <p>What do you think happened?</p>	<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 	<p>The British suffered many more casualties and retreated. Sir Pakenham was killed in battle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 291 killed - 1,262 wounded 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is one side showing signs of defeat?

The Battle of New Orleans – Additional details

The Battle

- The Battle of New Orleans was the final battle of the War of 1812.
- The United States declared war on Britain because the British were stealing property, capturing sailors, and provoking Native Americans.
- The British fought back to protect their land in Canada and stop Americans from expanding their boundaries west.
- The British intended to capture New Orleans to gain control of the Mississippi River. This would block American trade and prevent the Americans' westward expansion.
- The Battle of New Orleans began on December 14, 1814 on Lake Borgne and ended with a clash in Chalmette on January 8, 1815.
- The Americans won the battle! Both sides were unaware that a peace treaty ended the war on December 24, 1814.

The Painting

- Eugene Louisis Lami painted *The Battle of New Orleans* in 1839. That's 24 years after the battle! Remember, they did not have cameras to record the battle as it happened.
- Lami's painting depicts the clash at Chalmette, but not the earlier events of the battle that occurred on Lake Borgne.
- 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 actually wear kilts.

Your turn!

The Battle of New Orleans has been remembered in artwork, movies, songs, monuments, and books. How would you remember the Battle of New Orleans?

- 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!

Space to create!

