



# The Seven Years War: 1755 - 1762



## England Defeats France But Is Left with a Huge Debt After the War



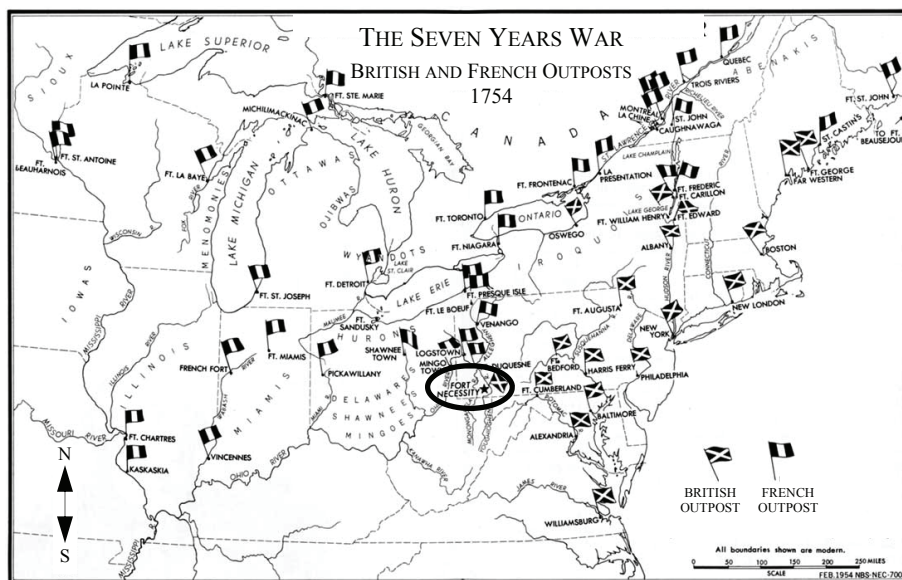
*In one of the first battles of the Seven Years War, a young George Washington and his English troops were defeated at Fort Necessity.*

One of the most important wars in the history of the world was the Seven Years War. This war featured intense fighting between the French and English for control of North America. Because many Native American tribes allied themselves with armies on both sides, this conflict is sometimes called the French and Indian War. At the end of this war, England had soundly defeated the French forces and gained control of all land east of the Mississippi River.

When the Seven Years War began, France's North American empire stretched along the Mississippi River and into Canada (*for details, see map below*). England had established thirteen colonies along the Atlantic coast. As more and more English colonists arrived, the pressure to expand British territory into western lands increased. Standing in the way were the French and their Indian allies.

The first battle between the French and the English took place in the summer of 1754 at Fort Necessity in the Ohio Valley. Led by 21-year-old George Washington, the English forces were soundly defeated and forced to retreat. This began a series of victories for France, who held the upper hand in the early stages of the war.

In the years that followed, however, the English were able to take advantage of their superior numbers (there were ten times more Englishmen than Frenchmen in North America) and they gradually gained the upper hand. In 1757, British forces invaded French strongholds in Canada. After several victories, the English army captured the important city of Quebec and France was soon forced to leave Canada entirely.



*While England established its thirteen colonies along the Atlantic Coast, France established outposts to the west and north. Fort Necessity (circled above), which stood right on the border of French and English claims, would become the site of the first true battle of the Seven Years War.*



# The Seven Years War: 1755 - 1762



*Before the Seven Years War the presence of the French in North America posed a serious military threat to the 13 British colonies.*

*After the Seven Years War the French fled from Canada and the Ohio valley. The amount of land controlled by England more than doubled.*

England emerged from the Seven Years War victorious. In the process, they more than doubled the size of their North American empire when they gained control of all the land east of the Mississippi River with the signing of the Treaty of Paris (*see maps above*). However, financing the war had left England with a very large debt. In order to raise money to pay off this debt, the British government decided to tax the colonists.

Soon after the Seven Years War, Parliament established laws such as the Stamp Act, the Townshend Acts and the Tea Act which were intended to help England raise money from the thirteen colonies. To the English, it made perfect sense to have the colonists help pay off their war debt since the British military had been fighting to protect them from France in the first place. However, many colonists were angered that they had not been consulted when these taxes were created. They protested the British policy of “taxation without representation”. Disputes over these taxes led to demonstrations and even violence against British officials in many colonial ports. In a few short years, England and the colonists would go to war to settle their differences.