

Name: _____

PrepUS History

Date: _____

Unit 3 - The New Nation

“The Hunters of Kentucky”

Angered by the effect of the British naval blockade on cotton prices and British support for Indian attacks against white frontier settlers, farmers in the South and West strongly supported the War of 1812. The war ended two years later with few issues settled between the two nations. The most significant battle took place after the peace treaty was signed in 1814, when General Andrew Jackson, a Tennessee slaveholder, decisively defeated the British forces at New Orleans. This resounding victory made him a national hero and symbol of frontier fighters and earned him the nickname “Old Hickory.” Although he secured victory using regular troops armed with artillery power, ten years later Samuel Woodward celebrated the role of sharpshooters armed with Kentucky long rifles in his song “The Hunters of Kentucky.” This immensely popular song, filled with images of Old Hickory and his men overwhelming the well-trained army of John Bull (a symbol of Britain), became an effective element in Jackson’s successful 1828 campaign for president.

Lyrics of “The Hunters of Kentucky:”

Ye gentlemen and ladies fair, who grace this famous city,
Just listen, if you’ve time to spare, while I rehearse a ditty;
And for the opportunity conceive yourselves quite lucky,
For 'tis not often that you see a hunter from Kentucky.

Oh, Kentucky! the hunters of Kentucky.

We are a hardy free-born race, each man to fear a stranger,
Whate’er the game we join in chase, despising toil and danger;
And if a daring foe annoys, whate’er his strength and forces,
We’ll show him that Kentucky boys are alligator horses.

Oh, Kentucky, &c.

I s’pose you’ve read it in the prints, how Packenham attempted
To make old Hickory Jackson wince, but soon his schemes repented;
For we with rifles ready cocked, thought such occasion lucky,
And soon around the general flocked the hunters of Kentucky.

You’ve heard, I s’pose, how New Orleans is famed for wealth and beauty
There’s girls of every hue, it seems, from snowy white to sooty.
So Packenham he made his brags, if he in fight was lucky,
He’d have their girls and cotton bags in spite of old Kentucky.

But Jackson he was wide awake, and wasn’t scared at trifles,
For well he knew what aim we take with our Kentucky rifles;
So he led us down to Cyprus swamp, the ground was low and mucky,
There stood John Bull in martial pomp, and here was old Kentucky.

A bank was raised to hide our breast, not that we thought of dying,
But then we always like to rest unless the game is flying;
Behind it stood our little force, none wished it to be greater,
For every man was half a horse and half an alligator.

They did not let our patience tire, before they showed their faces—
We did not choose to waist our fire, So snugly kept our places;
But when so near to see them wink, we thought it time to stop 'em,
And 'twould have done you good I think to see Kentuckians drop 'em

They found at last 'twas vain to fight, where lead was all their booty,
And so they wisely took to flight, and left us all our beauty,
And now if danger e’er annoys, remember what our trade is,
Just send for us Kentucky boys, and we’ll protect your ladies.

Analyzing Primary Sources – Questions

1. What opinion does the author of this song have about Jackson? Why do you think so?
2. What is the purpose of this song? Do you think it is successful in its purpose [does it do what it’s supposed to do]?