

USS *Constitution* vs HMS *Guerriere*

Classroom Activities

1. The classroom skit, *USS Constitution vs HMS Guerriere*, uses quotes taken from period letters, reports, and journal entries for over 90% of the lines. Talk about the difference between primary and secondary sources and perform the skit with your students.
2. When *Constitution* returned to Boston, the city and nation celebrated the victory. A “Broadside of *Constitution’s* Engagement with *Guerriere*, 1812” was posted all across the city to spread the news of the Ship’s victory over *Guerriere*. Grateful citizens presented Captain Hull with gifts such as the silver urn attached to the annotated scene. Study the two commemorations of the battle and “translate” both of them. An essay on the urn can be found using the search feature which will describe the symbolism used in its creation. The broadside was set to the popular tune, *Yankee Doodle* and tells the battle’s story. Perform the song together as a class and assign each stanza to a different group of students to analyze and translate into their own words.
3. Marine Lieutenant William Bush was killed during the battle. He was the first Marine officer to die in the war. A letter from Lieutenant John Contee to Bush’s brother Lewis is a touching reminder of the courage of Lt. Bush and the admiration in which he was held. A Bush descendent carried the letter during his service in World War II. Ask students to read the letter and write a response paper. You may ask why a descendent would hold onto this letter when entering combat himself, or what details they found most touching. The letter can be found attached to this annotated scene.
4. Study the battle diagram and the painting depicting the battle and ask students to compare them to those of the other two battles *Constitution* fought in the War of 1812. How are they the same? How do they differ? Fill out the compare and contrast chart in Appendix 1.

Appendix 1

Compare and Contrast *Constitution's* Battles in the War of 1812

	Major Turning Points or Interesting Facts	American Captain	Length of Battle	Damage done to British Ship (masts, etc)	Battle Outcome
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Guerriere</i>					
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Java</i>					
USS <i>Constitution</i> vs HMS <i>Cyane</i> and HMS <i>Levant</i>					