

**Oliver Hazard Perry**

Answer the question below  
on lined paper after reading the  
bio.

(1785–1819). “We have met the enemy and they are ours—two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop.” This was the famous victory dispatch of Oliver Hazard Perry after his fleet defeated the British on Lake Erie during the War of 1812.

Perry was born on Aug. 20, 1785, in South Kingston, R.I. He had four brothers and three sisters. Oliver and his brothers followed in the footsteps of their father, Christopher Raymond Perry, who was a naval officer. After schooling at South Kingston and Newport, R.I., young Oliver was appointed a midshipman in the United States Navy in 1799. He joined his father’s ship, the *General Greene*.

In the following years Perry fought in the naval war against France and against the Barbary pirates. He was made an acting lieutenant in 1803 and a permanent lieutenant in 1807. By 1811 he was commanding a gunboat flotilla from his headquarters at Newport. That year he married Elizabeth Champlin Mason. They had five children.

As war with Britain approached, Perry asked for active duty. He was placed in command of naval operations on Lake Erie. In May 1813 he began to build and train his fleet at Presque Isle, near Erie, Pa. Perry took command of the brig *Lawrence*. In August the fleet sailed up the lake to meet the British.

The rival fleets met on Sept. 10, 1813. The battle began just before noon with Perry sailing directly into the British. The *Lawrence* was shot to pieces. Perry had to abandon ship and take command of its sister brig, the *Niagara*. Now, however, United States firepower had the advantage. By 3 pm the British were defeated.

Perry became a national hero. He was given a captain’s rank and awarded a Congressional vote of thanks. The public called him “Commodore” Perry. He later served in the Mediterranean Sea.

In 1819, while returning from South America, he caught yellow fever. He died at Port of Spain, Trinidad, on August 23. He was reburied in Newport in 1826. A memorial column on Put-in-Bay, South Bass Island, Ohio, was dedicated in 1913. In 1936 the site became a national monument (see national parks).

**Cite**

While every effort has been made to follow citation style rules, there may be some discrepancies. Please refer to the appropriate style manual or other sources if you have any questions.

"Oliver Hazard Perry." *Britannica School*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 8 Feb. 2020.  
school.eb.com/levels/middle/article/Oliver-Hazard-Perry/276367. Accessed 17 Mar. 2020.

In 3-5 sentences, explain why you think Perry had such military success. (Think about events in his early life that prepared him to be a national hero). Be sure to cite evidence from the text.

