

# Primary Source Activity

The logo for 'networks' features the word in a bold, lowercase sans-serif font. A stylized graphic of intersecting lines forms a starburst or network pattern behind the letter 'o'.

## The Jefferson Era

### Lesson 3 *A Time of Conflict*

## The Question of War with England

In the years leading up to 1812, tension grew between the United States and Great Britain. The British were seizing American ships and forcing American sailors into their service. American settlers believed British influence played a role in growing conflict with Native Americans. War Hawks pushed for war. Other Americans opposed going to war. According to the Constitution, Congress has the power to declare war, so on June 1, 1812, President Madison asked Congress for a declaration of war against Britain.

**Directions** Read the following opinions for and against the decision to go to war with Great Britain.

*Reading 1 For Going to War with Great Britain* President James Madison asked Congress for a declaration of war against Great Britain.

[T]he conduct of [Great Britain's] government presents a series of acts hostile to the United States as an independent and neutral nation.

British cruisers have been in the continued practice of violating the American flag on the great highway of nations, and of seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it, ... also of violating the rights and the peace of our coasts. ...

[O]ur attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers. ... It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have ... been developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons without connecting their hostility with that influence ...

Such is the spectacle of injuries and indignities which have been heaped on our country, and such the crisis which its unexampled forbearance and conciliatory efforts have not been able to avert. ... Whether the United States shall continue passive ... , or, opposing force to force in defense of their national rights, shall commit a just cause into the hands of the Almighty Disposer of Events, ... is a solemn question which the Constitution wisely confides to the legislative department of the government.

—President James Madison, June 1, 1812

# Primary Source Activity *Cont.*



## The Jefferson Era

**Directions** Read the following opinions for and against the decision to go to war with Great Britain.

*Reading 2 **Against** Going to War with Great Britain*

*A citizen's committee in Boston wrote this petition against the war.*

[B]elieving, as we do, that an immense majority of the people are invincibly averse from a conflict equally unnecessary, and menacing ruin to themselves and their posterity; convinced, as we are, that the event will overwhelm them with astonishment and dismay; we cannot but trust that a general expression of the voice of the people would satisfy Congress that those of their Representatives who have voted in favor of war, have not truly represented the wishes of their constituents. . . .

[U]nder existing circumstances, the inhabitants of this Town most sincerely deprecate a war with Great Britain, as extremely injurious to the interests and happiness of the people, and peculiarly so, as it necessarily tends to an alliance with France, thereby threatening the subversion of their liberties and independence. That an offensive war against Great Britain alone would be manifestly unjust; and that a war against both the belligerent powers would be an extravagant undertaking, which is not required by the honour or interest of the nation.

### Analyzing Primary Sources

**Directions:** Answer the following questions.

- 1. Listing** List three reasons Madison gives to support war with Britain.

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- 2. Explaining** What two courses could the United States take? Which choice does Madison want Congress to take?

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# Primary Source Activity *Cont.*



## The Jefferson Era

**3. Identifying Point of View** In your own words, state the point of view expressed in the second passage.

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**4. Identifying** Identify three reasons the committee in Boston is opposed to war.

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### Critical Thinking

**5. Making Inferences** How do you think the people who wrote the second passage would respond to the reasons for war that Madison raises?

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