Cast Your Vote

Americans and the Decision to go to War in 1812

# Lesson overview

COURSE/GRADE: Social Studies, Grade 8

TIME NEEDED: Two 45-minute class periods

The War of 1812 had many supporters as well as those opposed to going to war. Given the different economic, political and geographic priorities in the United States, should America have gone to war in 1812?

## OUTCOMES

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to explain the arguments for and against going to war in 1812 and evaluate America’s best option.

Focus Question on for the Lesson: Should the United States have gone to war in 1812?

## Historical Thinking Skill Targeted

* Historical Comprehension:
* Reconstruct the literal meaning of a historical passage.
* Evidence historical perspectives.
* Historical Analysis and Interpretation:
* Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.
* Consider multiple perspectives.
* Historical Research Capabilities:
* Interrogate historical data.
* Historical Issue Analysis and Decision Making:
* Evaluate alternative courses of action.
* Formulate a position or course of action on an issue.

## Curriculum Connections

**Maryland State Curriculum Content Objectives**

* 5.C.2 Analyze the emerging foreign policy of the United States.
* 5.C.2.a. Explain why the United States adopted a policy of neutrality prior to the War of 1812
* 5.C.2. b. Explain how the continuing conflict between Great Britain and France influenced the domestic and foreign policy of the United States

**Maryland State Curriculum Skills and Processes Objectives**

* 6.A.2.a Set a purpose for reading
* 6.A.2.e Make connections to the text using prior knowledge and experiences
* 6.A.3.c Use a graphic organizer or another note-taking technique to record important ideas or information
* 6.A.4.i. Draw conclusions and make generalizations based on the text, multiple texts, and/or prior knowledge.
* 6.A.3. Use formal writing, such as multi -paragraph essays, historical investigations, editorials and letters to persuade.
* 6.A.3.b. State a clear opinion or position
* 6.F.3. Synthesize information from a variety of sources.
* 6.F.3.b Reconstruct the arguments of issues or events.

**Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies (Grades 6-8)**

* RH.6-8.1. Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
* RH.6-8.2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
* RH.6-8.4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
* RH.6-8.8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
* RH.6-8.10. By the end of grade 8, read and comprehend history/social studies texts in the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

## materials

1. Class set of Primary Source Analysis worksheet

2. Class set of War in 1812 Decision-making worksheet

3. Copies of the primary sources for each group.

4. Class set of War of 1812 Memo to the President writing prompt.

5: Copies of the Perspectives pages for each student.

### Primary Sources

* Address of the Minority to their Constituents. [1812]. Annals of Congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1812), II, 2219-2221. Library of Congress.
* Clay, Henry. [February 22, 1810]. Annals of Congress, 11th Congress, 1st Session (1810), 580.
* Grundy, Felix. [December 9, 1811]. Annals of congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 424.
* Grundy, Felix. [December 9, 1811]. Annals of congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 426.
* Madison, James. Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1811-1813. Monday June 1, 1812.
* Randolph, John. [December 9, 1811]. Annals of Congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 446.
* Randolph, John. [December 9, 1811]. Annals of Congress, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 533.

### SECONDARY SOURCES

Feder, Bernard. Viewpoints: USA. (1972). Philippines: Lion Educational Publishing, 1972.

## SELECTED VOCABULARY

* **Maritime:** of, relating to, or bordering on the sea. a maritime province. 2. : of or relating to navigation or commerce on the sea.
* **Interposition:** the action of interposing someone or something; interference or intervention
* **Impressment:** forcible seizure of American seamen by the British Royal Navy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries
* **Commerce:** the exchange or buying and selling of commodities on a large scale involving transportation from place to place
* **Embargo:** an order of a government prohibiting the departure of commercial ships from its ports; a legal prohibition on commerce
* **Agrarian:** of or relating to fields or lands or their tenure; of, relating to, or characteristic of farmers or their way of life; organized or designed to promote agricultural interests

# Procedure

## 1) Motivation (Think-Pair-Share)

* Ask students to respond in writing to the following warm-up question:
* Think about any of the wars or military conflicts in which the United States has been involved in the past (from the students’ own experience or from history.) What were some of the reasons people use to justify going to war?
* After students have responded in writing, ask them to share with a neighbor or partner.
* Call on students using equitable response techniques (calling cards, random number generator, numbered heads, etc.) or volunteers.
* List these reasons on the Interactive White Board (IWB), overhead, board, or chart paper.
* Some answers might include: direct threat from other country, retaliation, national security, economic gain, promote democratic ideals, recover land lost, acquire territories, establish colonies, etc.
* Now ask students what are/were some reasons people might be opposed to their country going to war?

## 2) Guided Practice (Primary Source Analysis)

* Transition: Tell students that many of the reasons they gave for and against going to war were true for the War of 1812.
* Background Knowledge: Ask: Not everyone was in favor of going to war with Britain for a second time. Why not? (Use this question to see what the students may already know about the War of 1812 and to lay the foundation for the purpose of the lesson)
* Teachers may want to have already assigned a secondary text reading on the causes of the war of 1812 prior to this lesson.
* Tell students that today they will play the role of foreign policy advisor to the president and give him advice on whether or not we should go to war against Britain.
* First students must analyze the different arguments.
* Introduce or review with students the vocabulary they may come across in their documents.
* These words include: Maritime, Interposition, Impressment, Commerce, Embargo, Agrarian.
  + Define these words as necessary with students or have them create pictures to help remember what they mean. You may want to preview the sources as well to locate other vocabulary your students may need to review ahead of time.
* Model for students how to complete the Primary Source Analysis worksheet with one of the primary sources.
* Model for the students a “Think-out-loud” strategy for reading the primary source. Point out key words and phrases that show the point of view of the source as well as convincing arguments for or against war.
* Decide how much direct instruction students need with this skill and either go through the entire source and document or highlight the different steps they will go through with their group. (Differentiation)
* Divide students into 5-8 groups, depending on how many primary sources you choose to use.
* (Differentiation: Sources B and E are more straightforward in their rhetoric for war and may be slightly easier for students to interpret.)
* Assign each group one of the primary sources.

## 3) Independent Practice

* Give students time in groups to work on their primary source and complete the primary source analysis worksheet.
* Circulate to check on students’ progress.
* Documents A, B, C, and F should show pro-war arguments. Documents D, E, and G should have anti -war sentiments.
* Encourage students to work collaboratively with one another to interpret their document.
* Re-number the students in groups and have them share their arguments from their original document with their new groups. OR have each group share their document with the whole class as everyone else takes notes on their own charts. (Determine the best option for the class given the class size and ability levels, etc.) (Differentiation)

## 4a) Assessment

* Students draft a memo to President Madison advising him on whether we should go to war.
* This writing prompt is scaffolded to allow students to develop a thesis statement and list their supporting evidence before writing the brief memo to the president.

## 4b) Performance Assessment Option

* Choose one President and have the rest of the class form groups of pro- and anti -war supporters.
* After students have individually drafted their memos, have them collaborate in their groups to decide on the three (or more) best arguments for their position.
* Have each team choose three or more “advisors” and stage a Presidential Briefing.
* Another option is to have several groups of students (3, 5, 7, etc) conduct mini-role-plays allowing every student to actively defend or render a decision on whether to go to war. (Differentiation)

## 5) Closure (Discussion)

* Bring closure to the lesson by conducting a final poll on whether the United States should go to war.
* Conduct a class discussion on the strongest/weakest arguments.
* Next, have students read a secondary source about the actual war and its outcome.
* Once students learn about the outcome, Discuss:
  + Have students go back to the arguments they analyzed. Ask what they think the true motivation for war was?
  + What would the Federalists say about the result of the war?
  + Knowing what they know now, would they still be in favor or against going to war in 1812?
  + Imagine we had never gone to war in 1812. What might America be like today?

# SUGGESTIONS FOR ACCOMMODATIONS:

* For students with IEPs and 504s –See differentiation notes throughout lessons.
* Also for smaller or lower-skilled classes, choose two documents, one on each side of the argument and analyze them together as whole class. You can model the first one, then begin the second one, allow some independent practice as students work in pairs, then review the arguments again as a whole class. Next have the students form groups to decide which arguments are the strongest for and against war.

# LESSON EXTENSIONS: Cast Your Vote Perspectives

Using the 8 perspectives essays, ask students to consider, based on what they’ve learned, whether they would vote for or against the decision to go to war.

* African American sailor
* Francis Scott Key
* Frontier woman
* Henry Clay
* James Madison
* John Randolph
* New England merchant
* New Orleans woman

Students may vote with their feet/hands or cast paper ballots.

Ask students to explain the reason for the position and how these perspectives influenced their decision.

cast your vote lesson Materials

# Primary Sources

**A. Henry Clay- Kentucky. Feb. 22, 1810**

“It is said … that no object is attainable by war with Great Britain. In its fortunes, we are to estimate not only benefit to be derived to ourselves, but the injury to be done the enemy. The Conquest of Canada is in your power. I trust I shall not be deemed presumptuous when I state that I verily believe that the militia of Kentucky is alone competent to place Montreal an Upper Canada at your feet. Is it nothing to the British nation; is it nothing to the pride of her Monarch, to have the last of the immense North American possessions held by him in the commencement of his reign wrested from dominion? Is it nothing to us to extinguish the torch that lights up savage warfare? Is it nothing to acquire the entire fur trade connected with that country and to destroy the temptation and the opportunity of violating your revenue and other laws?”

*Annals of congress,* 11th congress, 1st Session (1810). 58*0*

**B. Congressman Felix Grundy –Tennessee. Dec. 9, 1811**

“The true question in controversy… involves the interest of the whole nation. It is the right of exporting the production of our own soil and industry to foreign markets. Sir, our vessels are now captured… and condemned by the British courts of admiralty, without even the pretext of having on board contraband of war……The United States are already the second commercial nation in the world. The rapid growth of our commercial importance has not on awakened the jealousy of the commercial interest of Great Britain, but her statesmen, no doubt, anticipate with deep concern (our) maritime greatness…What, Mr. speaker, are we now called on to decide? It is whether we will resist by force the attempt… to subject our maritime rights to the arbitrary and capricious rule of her will. For my part I am not prepared to say this country shall submit to have the commerce interdicted or regulated, by any foreign nation. Sir, I prefer war to submission. Over and above these unjust pretensions of the British Government, for many years past they have been in the practice of impressing our seamen, from merchant vessels; this unjust and lawless invasion of personal liberty, calls loudly for the interposition of this government.”

*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 424

**C. Congressman Felix Grundy –Tennessee. Dec. 9, 1811**

“…It cannot be believed by any man who will reflect, that the savage tribes, uninfluenced by other Powers, would think of making war on the United States… They have already felt the weight of our arms; they know they hold the very soil on which they live as tenants… How, then, sir, are we to account for their late conduct? In one way only; some powerful nation must have intrigued with them, and turned their peaceful disposition towards us into hostilities. Great Britain alone has intercourse with those Northern tribes… British gold… baubles and trinkets, and the promise of support and a place of refuge if necessary, have had their

effect…This war, if carried on successfully, will have its advantages. We shall drive the British from our Continent- they will no longer have an opportunity of intriguing with our Indian neighbors, and se􀆫 ng on the ruthless savage to tomahawk our women and children…”

*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 426

**D. Congressman John Randolph -Virginia Dec. 9, 1811**

“An insinuation had fallen from the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. Grundy) that the late massacre of our brethren on the Wabash had been instigated by the British Government. Has the President given any such information? Has the gentleman received any such, even informal, from any officer of this Government? Is it so believed by the Administration?... this insinuation was of the grossest kind… he was ready to march to Canada…Advantage had been taken of the spirit of the Indians, broken by the war which ended in the Treaty of Greenville… It was our own thirst for territory, our own want of moderation, that had driven these sons of nature to desperation, of which we felt the effects…”

*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 446.

**E. Congressman John Randolph -Virginia Dec. 9, 1811**

“Sir, if you go to war it will not be for the protection of, or defense of your maritime rights. Gentlemen from the North have been taken up to some high mountain and shown all the kingdoms of the earth; and Canada seems tempting in their sight. That rich vein of Genesee land, which is said to be even better on the other side of the lake than on this. Agrarian cupidity [greed], not maritime right, urges the war. Ever since the report of the Committee on Foreign Relations came into the House, we have heard but one work- like the whip-poor-will, but one eternal monotonous tone- Canada! Candida! Canada! Not a syllable about Halifax, which unquestionably should be our great object in a war for maritime security. It is to acquire a preponderating Northern influence that you are to launch into war. For purposes of maritime safety, the barren rocks of Bermuda were worth more to us than all the deserts [of Canada]…”

*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1811), I, 533.

**F. Excerpt from President James Madison’s Message to Congress June 1, 1812**

“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 persona sailing under it…The practice… is so far from affecting British subjects alone that, under the pretext of searching for these, thousands of American citizens, under the safeguard of public law and of their national flag, have been torn from their country and from everything dear to the; have been dragged on board ships of war of a foreign nation and exposed, under the severities of their discipline, to be exiled to the most distant and deadly climes, to risk their lives in the battles of their oppressors, and to be the melancholy instruments of taking away those of their own brethren.

British cruisers have been in the practice also violating the rights and the peace of our coasts. They hover over and harass our entering and departing commerce… Under pretended blockades… our commerce has been plundered in every sea, the great staples of our country have been cut off from their legitimate markets, and a destructive blow aimed at our agricultural and maritime interests…In reviewing the conduct of Great Britain toward the United States, our attention is necessarily drawn to the warfare just renewed by the savages on one of our extensive frontiers- a warfare which is known to spare neither age nor sex… It is difficult to account for the activity and combinations which have for some time been developing themselves among tribes in constant intercourse with British traders and garrisons, without connecting their hostility with that influence, and without recollecting the authenticated examples of such interposition [meddling] heretofore furnished by the officers and agents of that government… We behold on the side of Great Britain a state of war against the United States, and on the side of the United States a state of peace toward Great Britain.”

Madison, James.

*Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, 1811-1813. Monday, June 1,* 1812.

**G. Excerpt from a Statement Signed by 34 Federalist Congressmen.**

“…How will war upon the land protect commerce upon the ocean? What balm has Canada for wounded honor? How are our mariners benefited by a war which exposes those who are free, without promising release to those who are impressed? But it is said that war is demanded by honor… If honor demands a war with England, what opiate lulls that honor to sleep over the wrongs done us by France? On land, robberies, seizures, imprisonments, by French authority; at sea, pillage, sinkings, burning, under French orders. These are notorious. Are they unfelt

because they are French?... With full knowledge of the wrongs inflicted by the French, ought the government of this country to aid the French cause by engaging in war against the enemy of France?...The undersigned cannot refrain from asking, what are the United States to gain by this war? Will the gratification of some privateersmen compensate the nation for that seep of our legitimate commerce by the extended marine of our enemy which this desperate act invites? Will Canada compensate the Middle states for New York; or the Western states for New Orleans?...”

Signed by thirty-four congressmen.

*Annals of Congress*, 12th Congress, 1st Session (1812), II, 2219-2221

# Cast Your Vote Perspectives

## African American Sailor George Roberts (FOR)

My name is George Roberts. My family and I are from Baltimore. I am a sailor. Being a sailor is one of the few jobs open to a free man of color. I love the freedom of sailing out on rolling ocean. But that freedom is disappearing - the British are stopping our ships to search for their sailors who have deserted. They also search our vessels for goods they think might help the French in their war against Great Britain. The problem is that they have also seized American citizens – they call this impressment, and claim it as their right. Tyrants and bullies claim such rights!

It makes me angry that we have continued to endure this as a nation. Thousands of sailors and hundreds of ships have been seized by the British – how long will we let it continue? I worry that one day the British will stop a ship I am on and kidnap me – because that’s what impressment really means – the kidnapping of Americans for service in the Royal Navy!

Is impressment not slavery by another name? Just as wicked slave catchers kidnap freemen and sell them into bondage, the British steal sailors from American ships. Torn from their country and families, these poor men suffer unspeakable abuses at the hands of British officers. Like the cruel plantation master, British captains deny us liberty and lash our backs if we refuse to work.

Can the United States be truly free and independent if it cannot protect its ships and sailors from foreign powers? If our nation will stand up now and fight for free trade and sailors’ rights, maybe one day it will stand up again for freedom and rights for all people living in the United States.

## Francis Scott Key (AGAINST)

My name is Francis Scott Key. I have a large estate in Maryland and a home and law practice in Georgetown, just outside of Washington DC. I am a Democratic-Republican like my friend John Randolph of Virginia. Our President and our party support a declaration of war, but I oppose it.

I oppose war with Great Britain on the religious principle that human life is sacred. Sometimes war may be necessary – I agree that we had to fight to win our independence years ago during the Revolution. But most wars have been the scourge of mankind throughout history – they bring nothing but death, suffering, and destruction. I love my country, and I despise what the British are doing in seizing our ships and sailors. Many of my friends are ready to enlist and fight. There is talk of invading and conquering the British colonies of Canada. This is wrong. I shall not fight the poor, unoffending Canadians. Although a British colony, they are not responsible for the wrongdoings of the British government. To declare war to conquer Canada at this time is an unjust cause.

I worry that party politics are too involved in this ramp-up to war, and that if we could just step back, calmer heads might find a way to peacefully resolve our differences. Both political parties – the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans are too busy fighting each other, dividing America for their own political gain. We need to unify ourselves as a people first. Fighting a war against the British over trade and ‘honor’ seems like madness to me – is not life itself more valuable than money and honor?

I have a strange feeling of dread that a declaration of war will bring disaster on the United States. What will become of our lands, our homes, and our freedom if exposed to the havoc and desolation of war?

## Frontier Woman

My name is Margaret Elliott and I live with my family in Ohio.

Although I was born and married in New Jersey, I have been living on the frontier for years. Five years ago my brother in law convinced my husband to move out west for cheaper land and we settled in Kentucky. Two years and two children later we left. I guess you could say we got in too late on Kentucky as most of the good land was already bought up. We were also surprised at how many Kentuckians owned slaves. We moved to Ohio for cheaper and better land and to get away from slaveholders. We find slavery an odious practice and oppose it.

Living in Ohio – or any western state, brings one uncomfortably close to Indians. There is a lot of mistrust, fear and anger on both sides. My husband and I were in Piqua, a town in western Ohio last year when John Johnston the Indian Agent held a council for peace with the Shawnee and Wyandot Indians. He said they told him that their intention was to remain at peace and to maintain a friendship with the United States. However, since that time there have been killings on both sides and a battle along Tippecanoe Creek. I fear that Indian leaders like Techumseh and his brother known as “The Prophet” are trying to promote war between the Indians and us settlers. I also believe that some of our own territorial governors like William Henry Harrison are to blame. Harrison is ruthless. He has pressured Indian leaders to give up their lands at a penny or two an acre and sparked the battle along Tippecanoe Creek.

Many settlers, including my husband view Indians as merciless savages. They say the British are encouraging them to kill Americans and are actively providing them with food, guns and ammunition. Many frontiers people like William Hull, the governor of the Michigan Territory, say that a war with Great Britain and an attack on Canada would help frontier settlers and the nation, however I disagree.

As a settler, a mother and an Ohioan, I believe the U.S. Army should protect settlers along the frontier. If there is to be war, it should be a limited one against the Indians to protect the borders of our states and territories. Declaring war against Great Britain would give the Indians a powerful ally. In such a war I doubt if the army will be able to protect outlying villages and small towns and families like ours will be forced to move east or to forts for protection. As a militiaman, I could lose my husband, or if war comes to our own doorstep, we could lose our whole family. We live a lot closer to danger than those on the East Coast. Those that publish newspapers promoting war won’t be asked to fight. I am against war with Great Britain and hope that cooler heads will prevail.

## Henry Clay (FOR)

My name is Henry Clay. I am from Kentucky, and the youngest speaker of the House of Representatives ever to be elected. People like me represent the youth and vigor that is making our country a great nation. Our country may be young and future is bright – but only if we have the courage to face it. The British are trying to keep our country down and we must fight them. I have assembled a bloc of fellow representatives who are in favor of war with Great Britain, and I am doing everything I can to encourage Congress to strengthen the military in preparation for war.

The most valuable treasure the United States’ has is its honor. Without honor, what do you have? Nothing! How can we live with ourselves if we allow Great Britain to steal our sailors, take our ships and encourage the Indians to shoot our settlers? The British don’t respect our flag, it means nothing to them. I say we stand up for that flag and make them respect it! What kind of nation allows its citizens to be kidnapped and forced into a foreign navy? What is the point of fighting a war for independence only to roll over and submit to the whims of bullies and tyrants?

Those that oppose the war argue over what could possibly be gained by declaring war. They think the odds are against us – that the might of Great Britain’s military would crush us. How would that be possible? The British military could take every major city along the coast and still not conquer this country! How could a foreign army conquer the Allegheny Mountains? Didn’t we beat the British before during the Revolution? The militia of Kentucky alone could invade the British colonies of Canada and take them! We could raise a million men to fight, if only Congress would agree to do so now.

I say the question is not what we would lose by going to war, but what we would lose by NOT declaring it. We would lose our honor and self-respect, and that would only encourage Great Britain and others to continue doing whatever they feel like. We have no choice. It would be better to go down swinging than to meekly submit and hand over what our great fathers like George Washington fought so hard to attain.

## James Madison (FOR)

My name is James Madison. I am President of this young republic, these 18 United States. In my opinion war with Great Britain is unavoidable. For over ten years the British have disrespected the American flag on the high seas by stopping American vessels in order to search them for suspected deserters from the Royal Navy. Under this pretext, thousands of American citizens, our own people, under the safeguard of public law, and of their national flag, have been torn from their country and forced to serve the British nation. We have repeatedly told the British government that this must stop, that it was unlawful and that we would take action to defend the honor of American citizenship. The British ignored us.

British warships hover off our coasts. They harass American merchant ships that sail in and out of our seaports. In some cases, they have taken ships laden with cargoes without compensating our merchants. Why does Great Britain do this? Simply, they want a monopoly on seagoing trade. They see us as an economic threat. We tried to avoid war. My predecessor, Thomas Jefferson, imposed an embargo – where we avoided trading with both Great Britain and France, however the British continued to seize our sailors and violate our neutrality. Further, the British have threatened us on land as well.

Great Britain actively supports many Native American tribes and urges them to fight American settlers. We regard these tribes as savages and the bloody warfare on the frontier involves not only men, but women and children as well. British soldiers and traders are actively encouraging the Indians to kill Americans. This must stop.

We must stand up for our national rights. As a people we cannot passively allow the British to take advantage of us. We won our independence 36 years ago and now we must defend it. We must defend our sovereignty, our flag and our honor. I urge you to vote for this war this “Second War for Independence.”

## John Randolph (AGAINST)

My name is John Randolph. I am the master of a large tobacco plantation in Roanoke Virginia, and am very wealthy, owning more than 500 slaves. Currently I am serving as a U.S. Representative. I have been following the events between Great Britain, France and the United States for years. We are faced with a major question – “Is it to be Peace or War?” I am a Democratic-Republican, the same political party as James Madison, our President, and many of my colleagues. They advocate war with the British but I oppose it.

I do not know any gentleman calling themselves republican can support such a war. Who will profit by it? I will tell you! – Speculators, contractors and those who supply the military! Who will suffer from the war? – The people. It is their blood, their taxes that must flow to support it. Those who want war say that Great Britain has violated our neutrality by taking ships and cargoes of goods but the French have done so too! The French have taken numerous American ships and impounded them in French ports yet my fellow republicans do not say they want a war with France. Declaring war against the British would be indirectly supporting the empire of France, currently led by that tyrant Napoleon Bonaparte. Why then do some want this war?

I can only infer that these “War Hawks” these individuals who strongly urge us to declare war on the British do so to have a pretext to invade the British colonies of Canada and annex them to these United States. This is wrong. The government of the United States was not calculated to wage offensive foreign war, a war of conquest. Invading Canada will not address the trade issues or improve our situation with Great Britain. Rather, with our army in Canada, the ports of Boston, New York and Baltimore open to British attack! The British may even encourage slaves in the south to rise up against their masters.

Finally, waging war with the British would be like fighting a brother. We share a common culture, a common language, and a common religion. This war will do nothing but bring ruin to this country and must be avoided.

## New England Merchant (AGAINST)

My name is John Bradford, and I am 36 years old – the same age as the United States. I own a shipping business in Salem, Massachusetts and have vessels in Boston and New Bedford. For the past ten years Congressmen from the south and west have been calling for war with Great Britain. Many people in New England like me have prospered by trading with the British, and our businesses depend upon this commerce to continue.

Our farmers’ grain, carried across the Atlantic in ships like the ones I own, feed Britain’s army in Europe. Great Britain and France are the two most powerful countries in the world and are at war with one another. Between the two, I favor the British. The British are our greatest trading partner and under Napoleon, the French cannot be trusted. Napoleon’s armies have invaded and brought ruin over much of Europe. Great Britain and Russia are the only countries standing in Napoleon’s way. To declare war against the British would indirectly help the French. We do not want to be caught up in the European war.

I admit, the British seizure of our sailors and ships is unfortunate – but they only take our ships bound for France and those ship owners should know better and avoid trading with Napoleon. They say the British impress or “steal” our sailors, but this is nothing compared to how many men would be killed if we declared war. When the war in Europe is over the British will no longer see the need to impress our sailors – so why fight a useless war now?

A war with Great Britain would also mean economic ruin and depression for New England and maybe the whole country! We are not ready for war – our navy and our army are only a fraction of the size of the British. We cannot possibly combat the might of the British army. If there is war, how can we stop the British from invading? And where will they invade? Kentucky? I think not! They will attack Boston and New York - the seacoast cities will lose everything!

Some congressmen call for an invasion of British Canada. Why invade Canada if our issues with the British are at sea? I would like to know how a land invasion of Canada would secure American rights to trade freely and protect our seamen from impressment.

I think too that President Madison and the Democratic - Republican Party are trying to declare war for political reasons – to keep themselves in power. Most of them live in the south and west and do not care what happens to New England. They say that those who do not support going to war are pro-British and traitors. That’s not true! My father fought the British at Bunker Hill under George Washington back during the Revolution. There was a reason to fight the British then. This is not the case today.

## New Orleans Woman (FOR)

Good day. My name is Josette Dugas and I live in New Orleans. Louisiana is the newest state in the union – just admitted on April 30, 1812! Of course it took three weeks for us to find out – news travels so slowly! Although our Senators and Representatives have not yet been elected, many of us have definite opinions about going to war with Great Britain.

The British are ruining our trade by their restrictive acts. I remember years ago when the Spanish restricted trade from New Orleans, then the French took control, finally the United States. Being of French heritage, I was nervous when the United States acquired Louisiana, but as farmers in Ohio, Tennessee and Kentucky started shipping their goods down the Mississippi River our city prospered. My husband who runs a shipping business said those were good years.

Now, the British are restricting our trade with their decrees and orders in council. These decrees prevent us from trading with the West Indies and the continent of Europe. We could hardly ship any of our cotton or sugar to sell, and the laws against the slave trade meant that the price of slaves has become very high. Smuggling is rampant. This nation has tried negotiation and trade restrictions against the British but they have ignored us. If the United States is to take its place among the great nations of the world, then it must declare war against the British. We are a unique people here in New Orleans – made up of people with French, Spanish, German, Irish and other backgrounds as well as black and white – including many free people of color. We don’t like anyone telling us what to do or how to do it and we truly resent the British restricting our trade. As a member of this new state, I am hoping this young nation will take decisive action and declare war against Great Britain.

# Primary Source Analysis

**My Document\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Source**

Date:

Format:

Author:

Purpose:

Viewpoint on going to war:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Supported** | **Opposed** |
| **Evidence**  **from text** |  |  |
| **Summary of main arguments for or against war** |  | |

# War of 1812 Decision‐Making

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Source** | **Pro‐war Arguments** | **Anti‐War arguments** | **My opinion: Best arguments for/against war:** |
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# War of 1812 Memo to the President

**MSDE Indicator**: Analyze the emerging foreign policy of the United States.

Read the question below and **write** a clear thesis statement to answer the question.

*Using the arguments you and your classmates analyzed from the primary sources of the time, should the United States go to war with Britain?*

**List** *the evidence you would use to support your thesis statement.*

*Now, in a well-constructed paragraph,* **write** *a memo to President Madison as one of his advisors giving your opinion as to whether the United States should go to war with Britain in 1812.*