

1812: Congress's First Declaration of War Under the Constitution

Worksheet 3: Document Study—President James Madison's Third Annual Message to Congress

Instructions: Answer the following questions about President James Madison's Third Annual Message to Congress. Select a spokesperson to report your discussion to the class.

1. Identifying key evidence in the text:
 - a. On what occasion was the President writing to Congress?

 - b. What facts related to foreign affairs did he convey?

 - c. What was the President asking Congress to do?

2. Determining the central ideas:
 - a. To what long-term historical situation was the President referring?

 - b. Why would the President say that Congress was most the appropriate body to address this issue?

3. Identifying the logic of the argument:
 - a. According to the President, why was the present moment more urgently calling for action than prior moments?

 - b. What consequences of inaction did the President imply?

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4. Taking stock of the vocabulary used in the document: Define the following words and phrases:
 - belligerent powers

 - neutral commerce

 - rigorous execution

 - edicts

 - ominous

 - depredations

 - scrupulous justice

 - protracted moderation

 - legislative guardians

5. Understand how a text presents information:
 - a. Approximately how much of the information presented in the message was factual and how much was intended to persuade readers to act?

 - b. Provide examples of each.

6. Identify point of view:
 - a. According to the President's message, how dangerous was the national situation?

 - b. How strongly did the President feel about the issue? Provide two examples of language the President used to convey his point of view.