Ships Stay Home

How a trade ban affected American safety and industry

8.C.6.3.C "implement the Embargo Act to defend the nation's industries from British threats and stimulate manufacturing."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the British threats that led to the embargo, circle what the law required, and number two effects on American manufacturing or trade. These marks will help you trace how one decision affected different parts of the economy.

The Embargo Act of 1807

1 In 1807, a merchant in Boston might wait for a ship that never sailed. Britain and France were at war, and British warships stopped American vessels trading overseas. British sailors also forced some American sailors into the British navy, a practice called impressment. After a British warship attacked the American ship Chesapeake, anger grew. President Thomas Jefferson wanted to protect the United States without fighting Britain. He asked Congress to use trade restrictions as a peaceful defense against threats to American ships and commerce.

2 Congress passed the Embargo Act in December 1807. It barred American ships from sailing to foreign ports, cutting off most American exports. Jefferson hoped that losing American goods would pressure Britain to respect U.S. ships and sailors. Keeping ships at home could also keep them out of danger on the ocean. But American merchants lost overseas customers, and farmers struggled to sell crops abroad. The law did not stop Britain from interfering with American shipping, and many Americans criticized its cost.

3 The embargo also changed what Americans could buy. With overseas trade sharply reduced, imported goods became harder to obtain. Some Americans opened or expanded workshops and mills to make products at home, including cloth once bought from abroad. This growth suggested that manufacturing could reduce dependence on foreign suppliers. Yet new factories did not replace all the income lost by merchants and farmers. Congress repealed the Embargo Act in 1809 and passed a narrower trade law. The embargo shows how one policy could encourage industry while hurting other parts of the economy.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which British actions led Jefferson to seek a way to protect American ships and commerce without war?

2. How was keeping American ships from foreign ports supposed to protect them and pressure Britain?

3. How could the embargo lead Americans to make more cloth at home?

4. Why might a mill owner and a farmer have viewed the embargo differently?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you make cloth in an American mill in 1808. Write four sentences to Congress recommending whether to keep or change the embargo. Include a British threat, a reason clothmaking might grow, and a cost of the law.

ANSWER KEY # Ships Stay Home

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the British threats that led to the embargo, circle what the law required, and number two effects on American manufacturing or trade. These marks will help you trace how one decision affected different parts of the economy. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which British actions led Jefferson to seek a way to protect American ships and commerce without war?	**British warships stopped American vessels, British sailors forced Americans into their navy, and a British warship attacked the Chesapeake.**
2	How was keeping American ships from foreign ports supposed to protect them and pressure Britain?	**Ships kept at home would avoid some danger at sea. Britain might change its actions if it could no longer receive American goods.**
3	How could the embargo lead Americans to make more cloth at home?	**Reduced overseas trade made imported cloth harder to obtain, so Americans opened or expanded workshops and mills to make it.**
4	Why might a mill owner and a farmer have viewed the embargo differently?	**A mill owner could gain customers for American-made goods, while a farmer could lose the chance to sell crops abroad.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I make cloth in a small American mill, and more neighbors buy from us because imported cloth is harder to find. British warships still threaten American sailors, so keeping our ships in port may protect some of them. Yet farmers nearby cannot sell as many crops abroad, and their families have less money to spend. Congress should change the embargo to allow some trade while still trying to protect American sailors.

Accept answers that connect British threats to the embargo and explain its different effects on manufacturing and other trade. For Part 3, either recommendation is valid if all three required details support it.