Why War Came

Read and trace the causes of the War of 1812

8.C.7.1.A "Summarize the causes of the war, including British trade restrictions and impression."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two British actions that pushed the United States toward war. Circle one effect of each action to show why Americans objected.

The Road to War in 1812

1. In the early 1800s, the United States tried to trade with both Britain and France while those countries fought a war. American merchants wanted to sell goods overseas, and sailors depended on those voyages for wages. Britain tried to weaken France by restricting ships that traded with French-controlled ports. British warships stopped and sometimes seized American merchant ships bound for those ports. To many Americans, these restrictions threatened trade and challenged their country's right to sail as a neutral nation. Each stopped ship could mean lost goods, lost pay, and growing anger.

2. The danger did not end when a ship was stopped. Britain needed sailors for its navy, and British officers sometimes took men from American ships and forced them to serve. This practice was called impressment. Britain claimed it was reclaiming British sailors who had left its navy, but some people taken were American citizens. A sailor could be separated from his ship and family without agreeing to join the British navy. Americans saw impressment as an attack on their sailors' freedom and on the nation's ability to protect its people.

3. President James Madison asked Congress to act as these disputes continued. Some members of Congress, often called War Hawks, argued that Britain had repeatedly violated American rights. They also worried about fighting on the western frontier, where British officials supported Native American resistance to U.S. expansion. Native nations fought to defend their own lands, not simply to serve Britain. Other Americans feared a war would damage trade even more. In June 1812, Congress declared war on Britain. Trade restrictions and impressment were central complaints that helped push the United States toward that decision.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Britain's trade restrictions help push the United States toward war?

2. Why did impressment make Americans angry enough to consider war?

3. What did trade restrictions and impressment have in common as causes of the war?

4. How did events on the western frontier add to the pressure for war?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label explaining why the United States went to war with Britain in 1812. Include trade restrictions and impressment, explain how each affected Americans, and mention one other concern from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Why War Came

GRADE 8 · 8.C.7.1.A

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two British actions that pushed the United States toward war. Circle one effect of each action to show why Americans objected. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Britain's trade restrictions help push the United States toward war?	**British warships stopped and sometimes seized American ships trading with French-controlled ports. Americans objected to lost trade and what they saw as a violation of their neutral rights.**
2	Why did impressment make Americans angry enough to consider war?	**British officers forced men from American ships into naval service, including some American citizens. Americans saw this as an attack on sailors' freedom.**
3	What did trade restrictions and impressment have in common as causes of the war?	**Both were British actions against American ships that Americans believed violated their rights.**
4	How did events on the western frontier add to the pressure for war?	**Some members of Congress worried about fighting there because British officials supported Native American resistance to U.S. expansion.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Britain restricted American trade with French-controlled ports, and seized ships could cost merchants goods and sailors wages. British officers also impressed men from American ships, forcing some American citizens into naval service. These actions made Americans believe Britain was violating their rights as a neutral nation and the freedom of their sailors. British support for Native American resistance on the western frontier added to the pressure before Congress declared war in 1812.

Accept summaries that connect British trade restrictions and impressment to their effects on Americans. For the frontier concern, look for British support of Native American resistance without suggesting that Native nations fought only for Britain.