

## Activity 2: Neutral or Belligerent?

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** Read the following documents and answer the questions in the chart that follows.

**Editorial in *The Gazette of the United States* (March 13, 1794):**

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1728>

The conduct of the powers at war is such that an American cannot but feel for the honor and safety of his country. The report of the Secretary of State, as well as other notorious proof, shews that we suffer wrong and encroachment both from the French and the English. The seizure and Condemnation of our vessels in the West Indies by the English, is yet, but imperfectly explained to us, but enough is known to convince us that the aspect of things is very alarming to our peace. To lose our ships and cargoes or to go to war to protect them, is a dreadful alternative. Peace ought to be the aim of our politics as long as it can be maintained. Two things are now proper—To lay aside party disputes; and to indulge no intemperate passions. Parties now owe it to their country to shew their zeal for the common welfare. Something must be done but is it doing any thing worthy of the Crisis, worthy of the firm and considerate character of our nation, worthy of the neutral station we have publicly taken, to celebrate French triumphs. Is peace our object? If it really is—let us keep peace—Let us behave like neutrals and not like parties in the quarrel. If the disasters of the English arms should make them less unjust, or less arrogant, than we think they are, and if in consequence our chance for preserving peace should be the more favorable; every patriot will rejoice in the event. The seizure of our vessels in the West Indies, on the pretence of their being forfeited by the laws of Louis the XVI, if it has really happened, as we have the most alarming grounds to fear it has, is a scandalous breach of the Laws of Justice and of Neutrality, which merits our indignation. Even on that supposition, it is our policy and our interest to take our measures coolly and cautiously. We must not take counsel of our passions—let us shew the impartial world, that we have courted peace in the love of peace—that they are the aggressors and that all men ought to wish to see them humbled. What madness is it therefore, at this critical moment, for the citizens of New York to shew their partizanship in the war. Why should they ring their bells? What does it say to the world but that America is an enemy under a mask, professing neutrality, yet shewing the most ardent partiality. Is this a proper time to give a pretext to the English who seem ready enough even without one to violate our rights? Is it our prudence to put into their mouths charges against our sincerity? They will not fail to say, you are enemies who dare not to declare war and yet suppose yourselves entitled to indulge the passions of enemies—you allow the French to sell their prizes in your ports.—You refuse the like privilege to us—your newspapers, your public meetings, your toasts and even your legislative bodies, avow your hatred of us. The celebration of French triumphs, is done by public order, and at public charge. This is not neutrality—it is hostility, and, therefore, we make reprisals. If we would avoid war, let our prudence refuse any act of meddling with its events or passions. Every individual may freely indulge his feelings—but, a public parade of them, is needless—is rash—is insulting.

***The United States Confronts Great Britain, 1793-1796***

Question	Answer
Does the author advocate following a position of neutrality or belligerency?	
What are the author's arguments for peace or war?	
According to the author, how has the United States failed to follow a path of neutrality?	
What does the author argue are the consequences of following a partisan path?	

**Editorial in *The Gazette of the United States* (1794):**

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1729>

I have read with much pleasure in your Gazette the strictures of Alfred, and join him in thinking that it is of great importance for us rather to convince the excellence of the Republican system by example of its beneficial tendency among ourselves than by any arguments deduced from theory only—but I cannot help observing that he is rather mistaken when he thinks that the misfortunes of France have confirmed existing prejudices against Republics. Every impartial and considerate man will rather attribute the absurdities and instability, the anarchy and \_\_\_\_\_ war of France, to the efforts of expiring monarchy and nobility, combined with foreign despotism than to any natural or genuine effect of Republicanism itself. As well might the days of our tender laws, tarring and feathering of tories, and confiscation of traitor's estates be argued against the free constitution we enjoy, as the present \_\_\_\_\_ of France be placed in the balance with the object she contemplates, and which only a peace can afford her.

This peace, which freeing her from her external danger, and removing the criminal views of those of her citizens who expected by foreign aid to subdue her, would give her leisure to adopt a government suited to her people and her wants, is what her enemies dread the most, for they fear from such a peaceful order of her affairs to see result an unclouded prosperity that might endanger the neighbouring and expansive monarchies, by proving the real value of Republican institutions to mankind. England, in particular, apprehensive of the efforts produced by free governments in extending the wealth and commerce of their subjects, is ambitious to prevent the success of a system which, by elevating her rival, bids fair to humble her own accumulated prospects of advantage—it is no wonder, therefore, we see her make such efforts to prohibit the establishment of another Commonwealth, the more justly formidable from its nearness to her.

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With an eye almost as jealous, she has long surveyed the rising prosperity of America—the excellence of our Federal system—the strict neutrality we observe in the present war—the manufactures we import from her—the riches we bring her—All these have not hid from her that our Ports are extending—that our shipping are increasing—that our country is settling. These are reasons enough in the scale of modern politics, to thin our Western borders, by a gradually desolating Indian war—to cut off our shipping on pretence of French property—and to let loose the Barbary cruisers, in safety on the ocean, to destroy us. It is true, that in all these, British agency is not directly visible—But is there really a sensible man among us who doubts of their ability to prevent these things—if their friendship for us were as cordial—as their apprehension of our growing strength is earnest and sincere.

What is left to be done in the state of things? it is for Congress to decide—they will give indeed, a great proof of the value of Republics, not by railing at the mistakes of others—but by guarding against their own, and from their present aspect—I doubt not every thing will be done that a deserving and meritorious people could expect from a virtuous and enlightened Legislature.

Question	Answer
Does this letter support the French or the British?	
Why does the author feel that the spread of republican government would threaten the British?	
List some of the ways that the author views how this outlook had an impact on the United States?	
According to the author, how should Congress respond?	

**Editorial in the *Columbian Centinel* (January 4, 1794):**

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1731>

It is unworthy of the dignity, as well as equity, of Americans, to become partizans of either of the belligerent nations. We are bound to wish liberty and good government to every people under heaven— Having professed an impartial neutrality, public exultation shewn on one side, and goading the other with scorn, reproach and obloquy, gives the lie to our profession of hostility. We solemnly announce to the world that we shall not inter-meddle. Where then is the propriety of our newspapers, clubs, and some of our public bodies, shewing dispositions the very reverse of our professions?

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It is not the merchant and the sailor only who are interested in the war with the pirates of *Algiers*; the certain effect of it is to sink the value of our grain and provisions of all kinds, which we have carried to *Spain, Portugal* and the Straits in large quantities. The farmers will feel the effects of this war as sensibly as the merchants. They are therefore deeply interested in defending our navigation from captures and insults. This defence can only be procured by a small navy; and a navy cannot be built without money. But our trade is already overburdened with duties; and unless our landholders will consent to a small land tax of a penny or two on each acre of cultivated land, their produce must lie on hand, or be sold at 25, perhaps 50 per cent below its present value.

Question	Answer
Does the author advocate following a position of neutrality or belligerency?	
How will this treatment of U.S. merchants affect other areas of the economy?	
What does the author suggest as a course of action for the U.S.?	

#### **Letter to the Editor of the Boston *Gazette* (1794) (first document on page):**

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1732>

That it is the policy of every nation to prepare for war in a time of peace, is fully exemplified in history, both ancient and modern; and that it has been too long neglected by Americans, must be evident to all who have given the subject a candid consideration. The money foolishly spent in the Indian war, would have defray'd the expence of building and equipping a small navy of ships, and of keeping our forts in repair; (and instead of carrying on that hitherto so unfortunate a war with the original inhabitants, by a proper management, their friendship might have been obtain'd with one quarter part the expence), instead of which they are gone to decay. But Americans, it is better late than never. Arouse. Consider your critical function. Prepare for the impending storm. Let your vessels be equipp'd, your forts rebuilt, and your magazines well stor'd with arms and ammunition. Some perhaps, will say (but only those of the Laco party) that the preceding regulations would be deem'd by the British as an indication of hostilities. Suppose they were—their depredations upon our commerce is but little better than an open declaration of war. Contrary to the laws of neutrality, they seize, condemn and confiscate American property, without the least restrictions, whether it be contraband or not, and we remain idle spectators. Americans, affect your rights; demand restriction; and if that is denied us, take it by force; there is British property enough in America at this present time to compensate for every loss. But I am fearful if the blow is not struck immediately, the bait will disappear, as I doubt not care will be taken to secure it. I say again, strike while the iron is hot, and should war be the issue, you will be able to cope with them, by following at this time the dictates of reason, and prepare for war in a time of peace.

Question	Answer
Does the author advocate following a position of neutrality or war?	
In the opinion of this author how has the U.S. responded "foolishly" to these events?	
Why does the author feel that actions must be taken immediately?	

**Editorial in the Virginia Chronicle (March 29, 1794) (fourth document on page):**

<http://www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library/index.asp?document=1732>

We learn that the merchants of New-York, who have lost property by the depredation of the British privateers, are preparing a memorial, to be laid before congress, requesting indemnification.

They request, if justice cannot be had any other way, that letters of Marque and reprisal may be granted them that they may do justice to themselves.

On the 17th ult. a committee of merchants (who have suffered depredations on their property by subjects of Great Britain and other belligerent powers,) from Boston, Charleston, Salem, Marblehead, Beverly, Newberry-Port, Gloucester, Manchester, Ipswich, and Danvers (Massachusetts,) met for the purpose of consulting and taking uniform measures respecting their losses; at which meeting a memorial was agreed on, to be presented to Congress, setting forth, that these depredations were committed, while pursuing the peaceable objects of commerce, without injuring or attempting to injure the rights of other nations, or violating, in the smallest degree, the known laws of neutrality; that in common with other classes of Citizens, their persons and property were under the protection of our own Government; and that, therefore, to that government they look for complete indemnification, trusting, at the same time, to their wisdom, respecting the Means of effecting so just and equitable an object. A Sub Committee was chosen, for the purpose of presenting the memorial agreed upon, to Congress; who set off on the 5th inst. for Philadelphia.

On Tuesday evening, the 27th inst. will be continued the question, *Whether, according to gospel rules, a man has a right to plurality of wives or not?* Should any audience wish to put a question for debate at a further period, they will please notify it to the President the next evening, that all debates may come in rotation. Entrance 1s6 each.

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Question	Answer
List some of the reasons why this author seems so confused about U.S. neutrality.	

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Activity #2: Neutral or Belligerent?

**Directions:** Fill in the appropriate information for each column.

Reasons for U.S. neutrality	Reasons for war or alliance with either Britain or France

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Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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**Activity #2: Neutral or Belligerent?**

**Directions:** You and a partner have been assigned to debate silently the merits of neutrality. The student who has been selected to defend neutrality proposal should go first, writing in the left-hand column a reason why the U.S. should remain neutral. Then the other student should, in the right-hand column, offer a reason why the U.S. should forge an alliance with either France or Great Britain. The silent debate should continue until one side or the other runs out of arguments.

The U.S. should remain neutral because...	The U.S. should forge an alliance because...