THOMAS JEFFERSON

A P R E S I D E N T ’ S V I S I O N

PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

THOMAS JEFFERSON’S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS ON THE EMBARGO, MARCH 17, 1808. (SEN 10A-E3) 10th Congress, Records of the United States Senate, Record Group 43, National Archives.

I have heretofore communicated to Congress the decree of the government of France of November 21, 1807, and of Spain of Febry. 1808, with the orders of the British government of January 8, November 1807. I now transmit a decree of the Emperor of France of Dec. 17, 1807 and a similar decree of the 5th of January last by his Catholic Majesty.

The decree of France has not been received by official communication, yet the different channels of promulgation, among which the public are professed of it, with the formal testimony furnished by the government of Spain in their decree, leave us without a doubt that such an one has been issued. These decrees and orders taken together, want little of amounting to a declaration that every neutral vessel found on the high seas, whatsoever be her cargo, of whatever foreign port be that of her departure or destination, shall be deemed lawful prize; and they prove more than the same

- deey of retaining our enmity, our seamen’s property within our own harbors until the dangers in which they are exposed can be re-

moved or lessened.

March 17, 1808

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QUESTIONS
Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.
1. To whom did Jefferson send this message, and why?
2. Which European countries are mentioned in this message?
3. What actions are the Europeans taking?
4. What response does Jefferson propose?
5. Is Jefferson asking Congress to take action?
6. After reading this letter, which branch of government would you assume should take the lead in responding to this situation?