

“Day of Infamy” Speech (full text)

Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu. Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our nation. As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Always will we remember the character of the onslaught against us. No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

I believe I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces - with the unbounded determination of our people - we will gain the inevitable triumph - so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December seventh, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

Discussion Questions

Directions: After students have listened to President Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech and read the Pearl Harbor Fact Sheet, answer the following questions.

1. We heard President Roosevelt describe the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor as "a day that will live in infamy...." Infamy means disgrace, dishonor, or great evil. What do you think were the different emotions of Americans in the first hours and days after they heard the news of the attack? Why do you think they felt that way?

2. How do you think young Americans your age reacted to the news of Pearl Harbor? In what way did the coming of WWII to the United States affect students your age? Family life, personal life, school, etc....

3. Most Americans who experienced the Pearl Harbor attack remember to this day where they were when they heard the news. To them it is a shared generational moment. The same can be said of people who experienced President John Kennedy or Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassinations. What thoughts would go through your mind if you were alive back in 1941 as a 7th grade student? Why?

4. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, life in America changed in many ways. Food and clothing were rationed, some travel was restricted, more men were drafted into the military, and more volunteered for military service. Even entertainment—movies, music, comic books—changed, reflecting wartime moods and subjects. For a student of your age how do you think they would have responded to the war? They may be too young to fight but what types of actions could a 7th grader take to help in the war effort?

5. Discuss the tone (how he is saying his speech) of FDR's speech and how it reflects the importance of the situation facing the United States. Why do you think it is important for FDR to speak the way he is?

6. What do you think were the biggest concerns of Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor? How do you think people would act?

7. Why does FDR say the United States will protect itself and make sure something like this doesn't happen again? Why is it important?

8. According to FDR, what was the significance of the date December 7, 1941?

- A) It marked the end of World War II
- B) It was the date of Japan's formal declaration of war
- C) It was the date of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor
- D) It was the anniversary of the signing of a peace treaty

9. What action does FDR request from Congress in his speech?

- A) He asks Congress to declare war on Japan
- B) He requests financial aid for the military
- C) He asks for diplomatic negotiations with Japan
- D) He requests Congress to draft a peace treaty with Japan