



Curriculum Guide

Franklin D. Roosevelt and WWII

Pearl Harbor

Almost as soon as the attacks occurred, conspiracy theorists began claiming that President Roosevelt had prior knowledge of the assault on Pearl Harbor. Others have claimed he tricked the Japanese into starting a war with the United States as a “back door” way to go to war with Japan’s ally, Nazi Germany. However, after nearly 65 years, no document or credible witness has been discovered that prove either claim. Most scholars view Pearl Harbor as the consequence of missed clues, intelligence errors, and overconfidence.

The causes behind the Japanese attack are complex and date back to the 1930s, when Japan undertook a military/colonial expansion in China—culminating in a full-scale invasion in 1937. America opposed this expansion and used a variety of methods to try to deter Japan.

During the late 1930s, FDR began providing limited support to the Chinese government. In 1940, Roosevelt moved the Pacific fleet to the naval base at Pearl Harbor as a show of American power. He also attempted to address growing tensions with Japan through diplomacy.

When Japan seized southern French Indo-China in July 1941, Roosevelt responded by freezing Japanese assets in the United States and ending sales of oil to Japan. Japan’s military depended upon American oil. Japan then had to decide between settling the crisis through diplomacy or by striking deep into Southeast Asia to acquire alternative sources of oil, an action that was certain to meet American opposition.

Japan chose to continue its diplomatic talks with the United States while at the same time secretly preparing for a coordinated assault throughout the Pacific. Japan’s leaders hoped that a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor would destroy American resolve and cripple the American navy for at least six months, giving Japan time to consolidate its new empire.

Draft of December 8, 1941 War Message to Congress:

President Roosevelt’s handwritten revisions – visible in this December 7 draft of the speech---made the “Day of Infamy” speech one of the most memorable in American History.



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DRAFT No. 1
December 7, 1941.

PROPOSED MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in ~~world history~~ ^{infamy}
the United States of America was ~~unprovokedly~~ ^{suddenly} and deliberately attacked
by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. ~~It is a day which will live in our history.~~

The United States was at the moment at peace with that nation and was
~~still in~~ ^{still in} ~~conducting~~ the conversations 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 ~~Hawaii and the Philippines~~ ^{Oahu},
the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered
to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a ~~former~~ ^{recent American} message, ~~from the~~
~~Secretary.~~ ^{While} ~~This reply contained a statement that diplomatic negotiations~~ ^{stated} ~~must be considered at an end, but~~ ^{it seemed useless} ~~contained no threat and no hint of an~~ ^{to continue to}
armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance ~~of Hawaii~~ ^{of} ~~and especially~~ of
Hawaii from Japan make ^{it} obvious that the ~~attacks~~ ^{was} ~~were~~ deliberately
planned many days ^{or 1000 weeks} ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Govern-
ment has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false
statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.



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DRAFT NO. 1

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The attack ^{the Hawaiian Islands} yesterday on ~~Wanda~~ and on the Island of Oahu ^{has} caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ~~ships~~ ships have been torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

~~A~~ ^{of} Last night Japanese forces attacked ~~Siam~~ ^{The Philippines} Japan has, therefore, undertaken a "surprise offensive" ^{Islands} 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 ~~these attacks~~ ^{of} ~~these attacks~~ ^{to} ~~on~~ ^{very} the safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have, ~~of course,~~ directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Long will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

A No matter how long it may take us to overcome this permitted invasion the American people will in their righteous might win through to absolute victory.



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