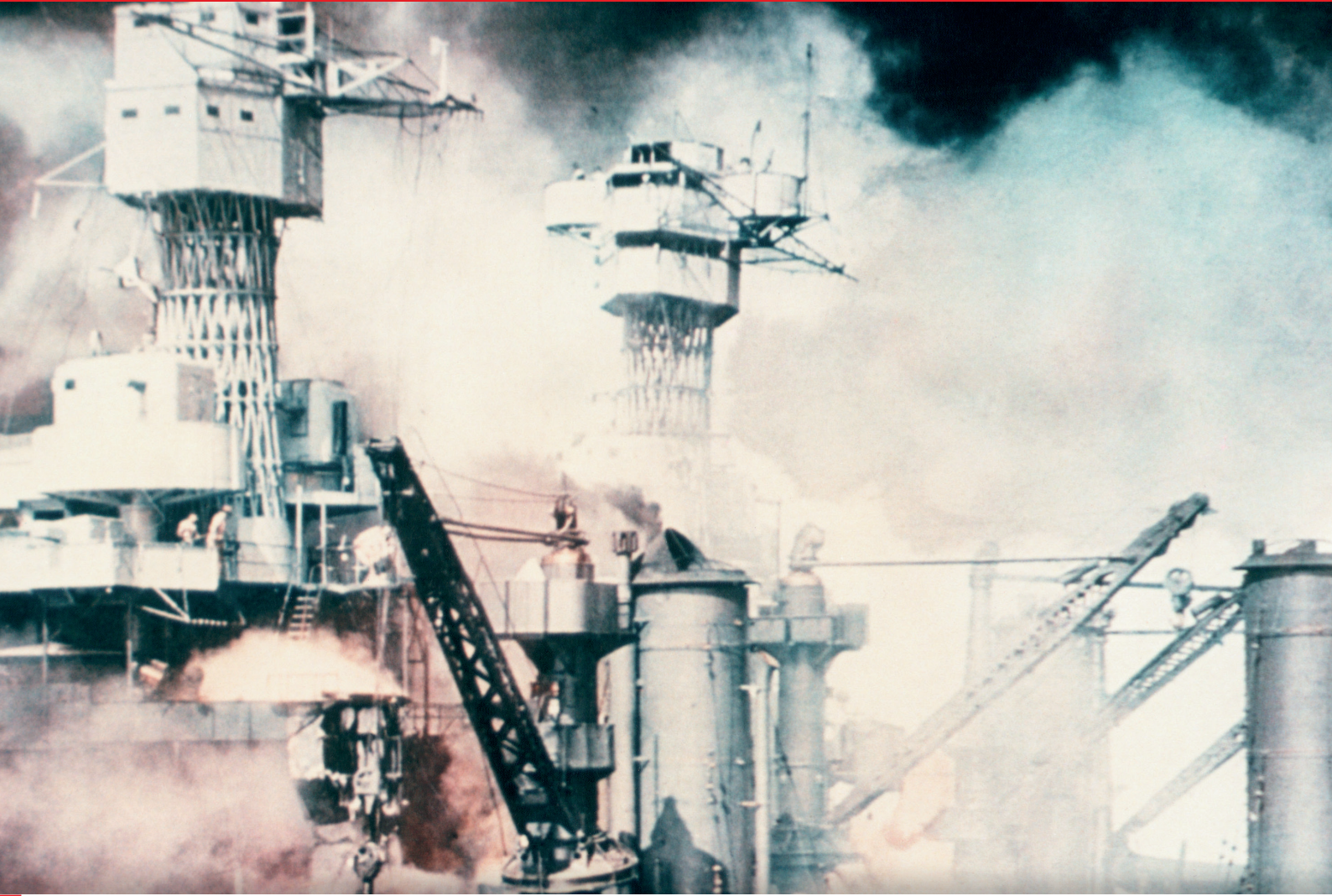




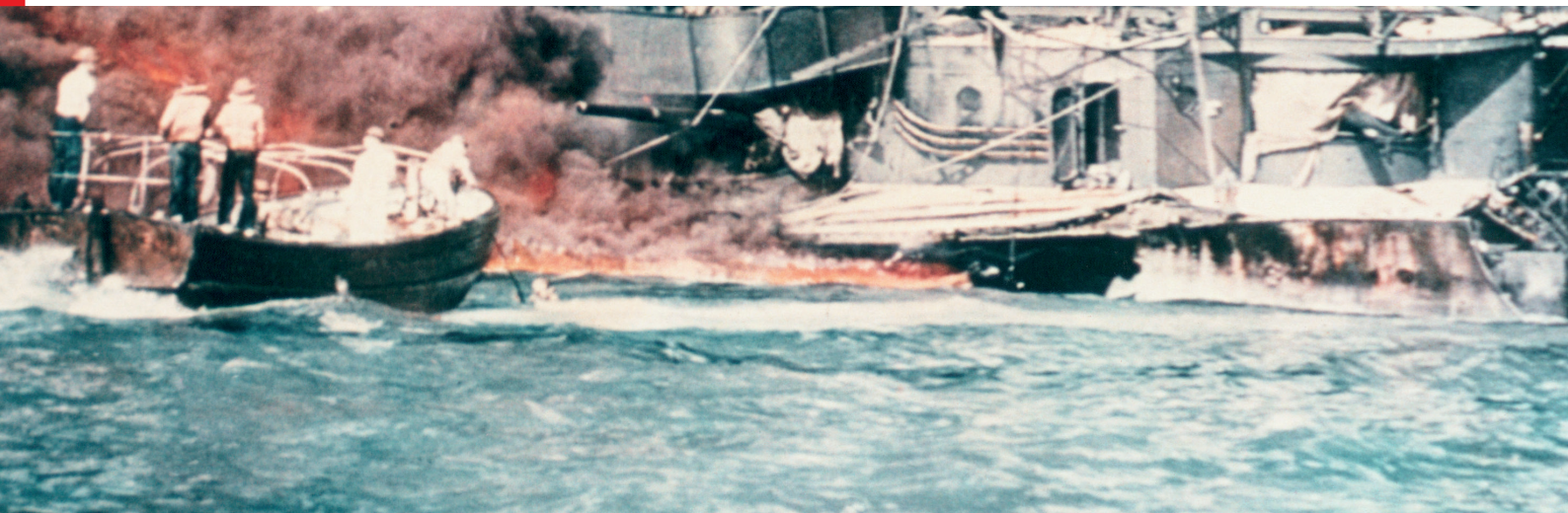
THIS DAY IN HISTORY

STUDY GUIDE



DEC. 7, 1941: ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR

Biographies, discussion questions, suggested activities and more



PEARL HARBOR

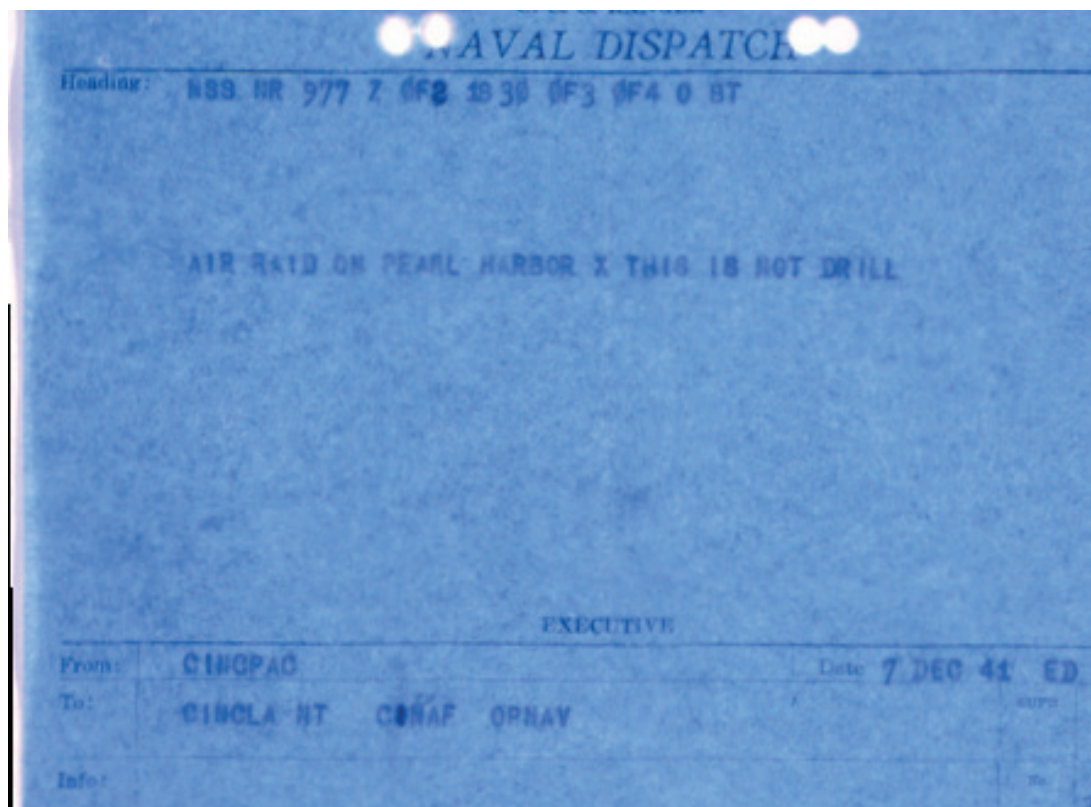
Setting the Stage

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941, World War II had already been raging for more than two years. The United States, however, had remained on the sidelines. Although the attack came as a surprise, the relationship between the United States and Japan had been deteriorating for decades. The United States was wary of Japan's aggressive behavior toward its neighbor China, and had responded with a series of sanctions and embargoes designed to curb Japan's expansionist policies. The government of Japan, a small island nation, believed that it needed to expand in order to grow its economy, and refused to back down.

The daring attack on Pearl Harbor had one major goal--the Japanese believed that if they could destroy the U.S. Pacific fleet, there would be nothing the United States could do to prevent their expansion in the South Pacific. Although the United States knew a Japanese attack was possible, they did not expect the target to be Pearl Harbor, a naval base in Honolulu, Hawaii--nearly 4,000 miles away from Japan. As a result, although Pearl Harbor was the headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Pacific fleet, it was left relatively undefended. This made it a tempting target for the Japanese.

Cover photo: U.S. Navy sailors in a motor launch rescue a survivor from the water alongside the sunken battleship USS West Virginia (BB-48) during or shortly after the Japanese air raid on Pearl Harbor, 7 December 1941.

DEC. 7, 1941 ATTACK ON PEARL HARBOR



Naval Disptach From The Commander In Chief Pacific

At 7:55 a.m. Hawaii time, a Japanese dive bomber bearing the red symbol of the Rising Sun of Japan on its wings appears out of the clouds above the island of Oahu. A swarm of 360 Japanese warplanes followed, descending on the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in a ferocious assault. The surprise attack struck a critical blow against the U.S. Pacific fleet and drew the United States irrevocably into World War II.

With diplomatic negotiations with Japan breaking down, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisers knew that an imminent Japanese attack was probable, but nothing had been done to increase security at the important naval base at Pearl Harbor. It was Sunday morning, and many military personnel had been given passes to attend religious

services off base. At 7:02 a.m., two radar operators spotted large groups of aircraft in flight toward the island from the north, but, with a flight of B-17s expected from the United States at the time, they were told to sound no alarm. Thus, the Japanese air assault came as a devastating surprise to the naval base.

Much of the Pacific fleet was rendered useless: Five of eight battleships, three destroyers, and seven other ships were sunk or severely damaged, and more than 200 aircraft were destroyed. A total of 2,400 Americans were killed and 1,200 were wounded, many while valiantly attempting to repulse the attack. Japan's losses were some 30 planes, five mid-gut submarines and fewer than 100 men. Fortunately for the

United States, all three Pacific fleet carriers were out at sea on training maneuvers. These giant aircraft carriers would have their revenge against Japan six months later at the Battle of Midway, reversing the tide against the previously invincible Japanese navy in a spectacular victory.

The day after Pearl Harbor was bombed, President Roosevelt appeared before a joint session of Congress and declared, "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." After a brief and forceful speech, he asked Congress to approve a resolution recognizing the state of war between the United States and Japan. The Senate voted for war against Japan by 82 to 0, and the House of Representatives approved the resolution by a vote of 388 to 1. The sole

dissenter was Representative Jeannette Rankin of Montana, a devout pacifist who had also cast a dissenting vote against the U.S. entrance into World War I. Three days later, Germany and Italy declared war against the United States, and the U.S. government responded in kind.

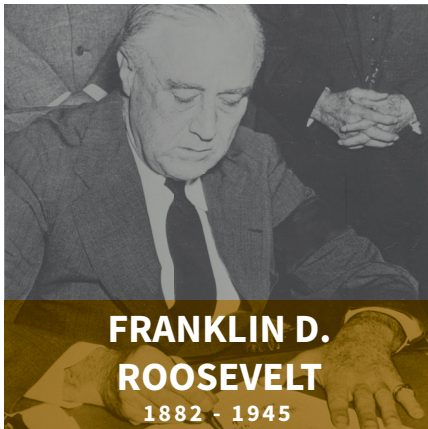
The American contribution to the successful Allied war effort spanned four long years and cost more than 400,000 American lives. □

DID YOU KNOW?

Twenty-three sets of brothers died on the USS Arizona in the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Of the 37 pairs or trios of brothers serving on the ship at the time, only one full set survived.

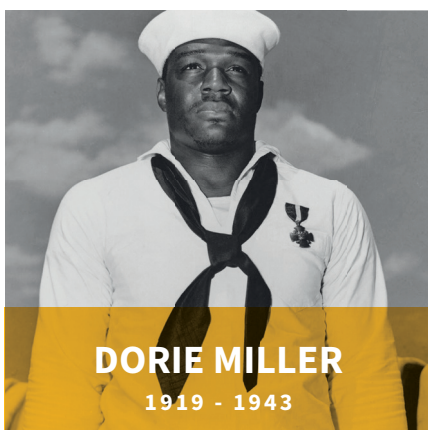
PEOPLE TO KNOW



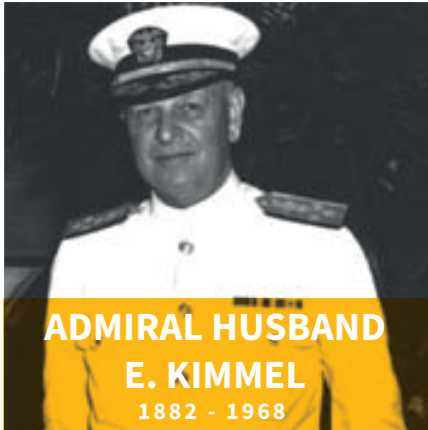
U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, or FDR, was one year into his second term in office at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor. He was first elected in 1932, during the depths of the Great Depression. Roosevelt took sweeping action to try to spur the American economy to life with financial reforms and a series of new government spending programs known as the New Deal. He famously worked to repair the country's confidence by broadcasting a series of "Fireside Chats" that were listened to by millions of Americans on the radio. Prior to Pearl Harbor, America officially held a policy of neutrality in World War II, though FDR had supported and provided American supplies and arms to the Allied war effort.



A career naval officer, Yamamoto was promoted to commander in chief of Japan's Combined Fleet in August 1941. A gifted strategist, Yamamoto initially was against going to war with the United States. However, once the government led by Prime Minister Tojo Hideki decided on war, Yamamoto conceived of the plan to bomb Pearl Harbor, believing that crippling America's Pacific fleet was the only route to Japanese victory. He spent months planning every detail of the attack. Yamamoto was killed when his plane was shot down by U.S. forces in 1943.



Dorie Miller enlisted in the U.S. Navy in September 1943 when African Americans were not allowed to hold combat roles or receive weapons training. Miller enlisted as a mess attendant, but had been promoted to Cook, Third Class and was serving on the USS West Virginia by December 1941. At the time of the attack, Miller was collecting laundry. When the alarm sounded, he reported to his battle station only to discover that it had been destroyed. Initially assigned to help carry wounded sailors, Miller stepped in to operate a Browning anti-aircraft machine gun, which he had figured out how to operate by watching white sailors. In May 1942, Miller became the first African American to be awarded the Navy Cross for extraordinary courage in battle; Miller perished in November 1944, when the ship he was serving on was sunk by a Japanese submarine.



Rear Admiral Husband E. Kimmel was the commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, stationed at Pearl Harbor, in December 1941. He was relieved of command just 10 days after the attack, and requested early retirement, likely avoiding a court-martial into whether his actions--or inaction--allowed for the attack to occur. By December 1941, Kimmel had served in the Navy for more than 25 years; he had been promoted to command the Pacific fleet about 11 months before the attack. Although he, like others in the military, believed the Japanese might attack the U.S., he did not think Pearl Harbor the likely target and did nothing to bolster the base's defenses. In his autobiography, Kimmel asserted that he had been unfairly blamed for the attack.



In 1941, Emperor Hirohito, or the Showa emperor, had been the emperor of Japan for nearly two decades. Although the emperor was considered to be "divine," or a "living god," in practice he had little real power over the day-to-day running of the country. Most historians today believe that, although he did little to prevent it, he was hesitant to join the Axis powers in World War II and believed Japan could not win a war with the United States. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Hirohito publicly urged surrender. After the American occupation of Japan, Hirohito continued to serve as emperor, but with little real power, and he renounced the idea of his divinity. Hirohito died in 1989 after more than 60 years as emperor.

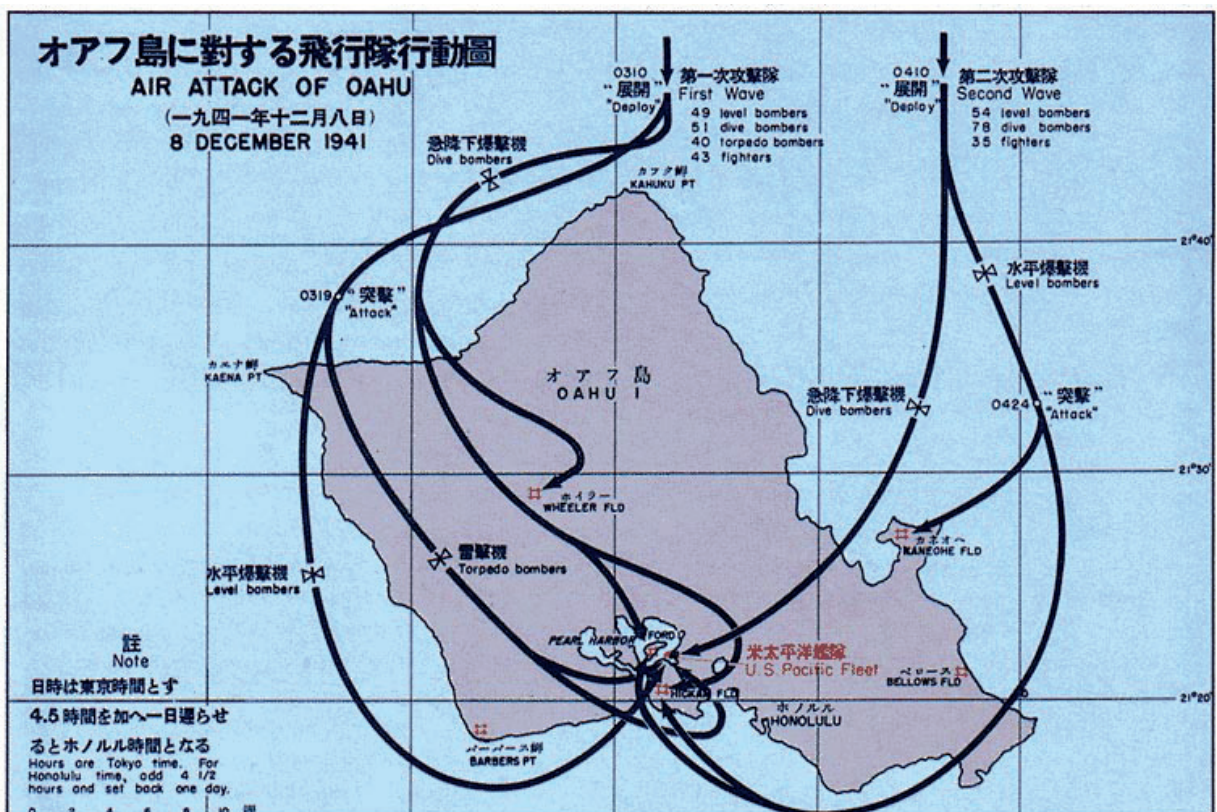
SEE IT



The USS Shaw on fire after the attack



The USS Arizona burning



Japanese map of Oahu attack

CONCURRENT EVENTS



OPERATION BARBAROSSA

The war in Europe dominated the headlines in 1941. In June, German dictator Adolf Hitler opened a second front in the war by launching a massive invasion of the Soviet Union. "Operation Barbarossa" involved more than 3 million troops and 3,000 tanks over a front that was 2,000 miles wide. Although Germany's army was the best trained and equipped fighting force in human history, Hitler had failed to take into account the harsh Russian winter and sheer numbers of Soviet troops. The decision to invade the Soviet Union ended up playing a crucial role in the defeat of Germany and of the Axis powers.



LEND-LEASE ACT

The Lend-Lease program was introduced by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt as a way to support the Allied war effort while keeping the United States out of the war. Lend-Lease allowed for the United States to provide military aid to any country whose defense was vital to American security. Over the course of the war, the United States provided more than \$50 billion in military aid to Great Britain, the Soviet Union and other nations.



ATLANTIC CHARTER

In August 1941, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill held a series of meetings aboard naval ships in Placentia Bay, Newfoundland, off the coast of Canada. During these meetings, the two men discussed their vision for what they hoped the world would look like when the war ended. Their ideas were laid out in a joint declaration, which became known as the Atlantic Charter. The charter described eight common principles, including that neither nation would seek territorial gains as a result of the war; that they would support the restoration of self-government to those nations who lost it during the war; and that people should have the right to choose their own form of government.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



Propaganda poster

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- 1** Prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor, why do you think the United States was reluctant to enter World War II?
 - 2** Why do you think the attack on Pearl Harbor took the United States by surprise?
 - 3** How did Pearl Harbor change Americans' minds about entering World War II?
-

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES



USS Arizona Memorial

A DATE WHICH WILL LIVE IN INFAMY

Have students read FDR's "infamy" speech in its entirety. Ask them to imagine they were voting on whether or not to go to war, and prepare a written response defending their vote. Would they have voted to go to war? Why or why not?

FROM THE FRONT LINES

Have students watch videos from the series *Pearl Harbor: The Last Word*. Then, ask them to put themselves in the survivors' shoes and write a letter home describing their experience on December 7, 1941.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 9066

In February 1942, FDR signed an order forcing the relocation of Japanese Americans into internment camps. In small groups, ask students to research and prepare presentations about life in the camps; the 442nd regimental combat team; or the aftermath of internment.

RESOURCES

Text of FDR's "infamy" speech

<http://time.com/4593483/pearl-harbor-franklin-roosevelt-infamy-speech-attack/>

Audio: Franklin D. Roosevelt's "infamy" speech

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history/videos/pearl-harbor-attack>

Video: Biography of Franklin D. Roosevelt

<http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/franklin-d-roosevelt/videos>

Video: Pearl Harbor: The Last Word. Pearl Harbor veterans recount their experiences at Pearl Harbor.

<http://www.history.com/shows/pearl-harbor-the-last-word>

Letters Home from Pearl Harbor (National WWII Museum)

<http://www.nww2m.com/2011/12/letters-home-pearl-harbor/>

Video: Japanese Internment in America

<http://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history/videos/japanese-internment-in-america>