



Name: _____ Class: _____

'Day of Infamy' Speech

By President Franklin D. Roosevelt
From Records Of The United States Senate; Record Group 46 • 1941

On December 7, 1941 the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor, a United States naval base in Hawaii. This attack drew America into World War II. Franklin D. Roosevelt or "FDR" delivered this speech to a Joint Session of Congress on December 8, 1941, a day after the attack. As you read, consider the rhetorical methods FDR employs to convey his message to Congress and the American people.

[1] Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Senate, and of the House of Representatives:

Yesterday, December 7th, 1941 — a date which will live in infamy¹ — 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 solicitation² of Japan, was still in conversation with its government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.



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Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American island of Oahu³, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

[5] 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. I regret to tell you that 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 Malaya⁴.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong.

1. **Infamy (noun):** the state of being well known for some bad quality or act
2. **Solicitation (noun):** a request; the act or process of asking for something
3. One of the Hawaiian islands.
4. A set of states on the Malay Peninsula and the island of Singapore under British control

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam⁵.

[10] Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.⁶

And this morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.⁷

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today 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. But always will our whole nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

[15] 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 that 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 it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

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 unbounding 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 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.

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5. A U.S. island territory in Micronesia, in the Western Pacific

6. A U.S. island territory located in the Western Pacific

7. Also known as "Midway Atoll," a U.S. territory located in the North Pacific Ocean

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. Summarize the central ideas of Roosevelt's speech in one sentence.

2. PART A: Roosevelt begins paragraphs 8-11 with little variation of the words "Last night, Japanese forces..." Why is this structure effective in helping Roosevelt make his argument?

- A. It emphasizes the brazenness of Japan's multiple attacks against the U.S. and its allies.
- B. It allows the reader to determine which of Japan's offenses was most destructive.
- C. It contrasts Japan's behavior with that of the United States.
- D. It presents a clear plan of response to the Japanese attacks.

3. PART B: Which aspect of the speech provides support for the answer to Part A?

- A. the descriptions of the damage done from the attacks (paragraph 6)
- B. the repetition of the word "deliberately" throughout the speech
- C. the reference to the "righteous might" of American people and military (paragraph 15)
- D. the religious appeal to "God" (paragraph 18)

4. PART A: What is Roosevelt's overall purpose in his speech?

- A. to inform Japan that the U.S. will take any means necessary to enact revenge
- B. to notify the American people of the losses suffered in the Japanese attacks
- C. to warn of impending danger in the form of more attacks from Japan and its allies
- D. to reassure the American people that actions are being taken to protect the country

5. PART B: Which paragraph from the speech most directly supports the answer to Part A?
- A. Paragraph 3
 - B. Paragraph 6
 - C. Paragraph 16
 - D. Paragraph 17