

World War Two - Pearl Harbor

by ReadWorks



Pearl Harbor shortly after attack began, photo from Japanese plane

The United States stayed out of World War II until 1941. Early in the morning, on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor. The attack was a complete surprise. Japanese planes torpedoed and bombed United States ships and military stations. By late morning the attack was over. Japan's planes left 2,403 Americans dead (including 68 civilians) and 1,178 military members and civilians wounded. There were 188 planes destroyed, 159 aircraft damaged, and 21 damaged or destroyed ships*.

When President Roosevelt found out about the attack, he asked Congress to declare war. The United States was behind him. Before the attack, the people of the U.S. had been divided over whether to help France and Great Britain fight Germany. Many people wanted to stay out of the war. People did not yet know about the horrors of Nazi concentration camps. But Japan's act of war changed the course of history. As a Japanese official said, "I am afraid that we have awakened a sleeping giant." Once moved to act, the U.S. was a giant. The U.S. came to Britain's aid and changed the outcome of the war.

President Roosevelt called the day of the attack "a day that will live in infamy." Below is the S.O.S. dispatch sent by the Commander in Chief of the Pacific Army, who was stationed at Pearl Harbor. He sent only:

"AIR RAID ON PEARL HARBOR X THIS IS NOT A DRILL."

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. All of the following are true except:
 - A. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor was a surprise.
 - B. President Roosevelt wasn't sure what to do after the U.S. was attacked.
 - C. The U.S. joined forces with Britain.
 - D. The attack occurred on December 7, 1941.

2. Before the attack,
 - A. President Roosevelt had attacked the Japanese.
 - B. the United States was fighting with Germany.
 - C. the U.S. population had been divided over whether to join the war.
 - D. the U.S. population had wanted to be part of the war.

3. What kind of damage did the Japanese do to Pearl Harbor?
 - A. The attack damaged or destroyed 21 ships and killed 2,403 Americans.
 - B. The attack destroyed 188 Japanese planes.
 - C. The attack resulted in only a few casualties and slight damage.
 - D. The attack resulted in only a few casualties and slight damage.

4. What caused the United States to enter World War II?
 - A. They were tired of Britain and France losing.
 - B. The United States wanted to assist Germany.
 - C. The United States was asked by the USSR to enter the war.
 - D. The Japanese attacked the United States without any warning.

5. The passage is mostly about
 - A. concentration camps during World War II.
 - B. why harbors are important in war.
 - C. the Japanese alliance with Germany.
 - D. an attack on a U.S. military base and its consequences.

6. What did the Japanese official mean when he said, "I am afraid that we have awakened a sleeping giant"?

7. What did President Roosevelt do once he heard about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

The United States entered World War II _____ it was attacked by Japan.

- A. although
- B. first
- C. second
- D. after

9. **Vocabulary Word:** infamy: being famous for something bad or evil.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence:

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The "sleeping giant" refers to the United States. The official meant that by attacking Pearl Harbor, the Japanese ensured that the United States, with all its strength and power, would "wake up" and enter the war.

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