

SECTION 4

America Enters the War

Guide to Reading

Main Idea

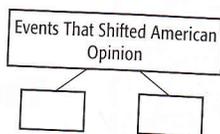
After World War II began, the United States attempted to continue its prewar policy of neutrality.

Key Terms and Names

America First Committee, Lend-Lease Act, hemispheric defense zone, Atlantic Charter, strategic materials

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the efforts of the United States to stay neutral in the war, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by naming two events that shifted American opinion toward helping the Allies.



Reading Objectives

- **Explain** how Roosevelt helped Britain while maintaining official neutrality.
- **Trace** the events that led to increasing tensions, and ultimately war, between the United States and Japan.

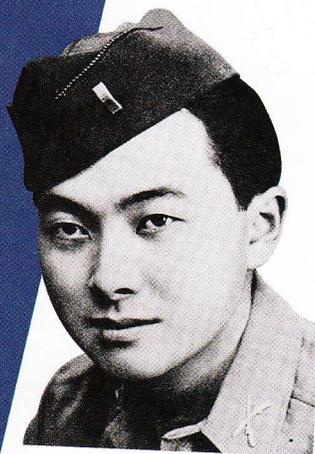
Section Theme

Individual Action Even while the United States was officially neutral, President Roosevelt found ways to help the British fight Germany.

Preview of Events



★ An American Story ★



Daniel Inouye after joining the U.S. Army's 442nd Infantry

December 7, 1941, dawned like any other Sunday in Hawaii, where teenager Daniel Inouye lived with his family. Like other Americans who lived through the experience, Inouye would never forget what he was doing the moment American isolationism ended:

“As soon as I finished brushing my teeth and pulled on my trousers, I automatically clicked on the little radio that stood on the shelf above my bed. I remember that I was buttoning my shirt and looking out the window . . . when the hum of the warming set gave way to a frenzied voice. ‘This is no test,’ the voice cried out. ‘Pearl Harbor is being bombed by the Japanese!’”

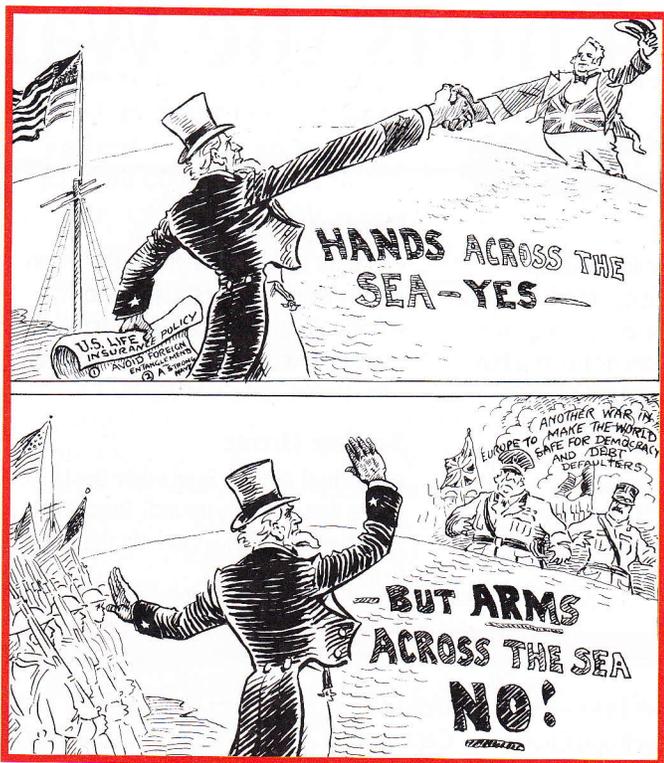
The Inouye family ran outside and gazed toward the naval base at Pearl Harbor:

“And then we saw the planes. They came zooming up out of that sea of gray smoke, flying north toward where we stood and climbing into the bluest part of the sky, and they came in twos and threes, in neat formations, and if it hadn’t been for that red ball on their wings, the rising sun of the Japanese Empire, you could easily believe that they were Americans, flying over in precise military salute.”

—quoted in *Eyewitness to America*

FDR Supports England

The Japanese attack surprised many Americans. Most people had believed that Germany posed the greatest danger. What Americans did not realize was that the causes of the Japanese attack could be traced back more than two years to President Roosevelt’s policies for helping Britain against Germany.



Analyzing Political Cartoons

Peace Above All Many Americans were willing to help European democracies but did not want to sell them arms. **In what ways did the United States assist these nations?**

The Neutrality Act of 1939 President Roosevelt officially proclaimed the United States neutral two days after Britain and France declared war on Germany. Despite this declaration, he was determined to do all he could to help the two countries in their struggle against Hitler. Soon after the war began, Roosevelt called Congress into a special session to revise the neutrality laws. He asked Congress to eliminate the ban on arms sales to nations at war. Public opinion strongly supported the president. Congress passed the new law, but isolationists demanded a price for the revision. Under the Neutrality Act of 1939, warring nations could buy weapons from the United States only if they paid cash and carried the arms on their own ships.

Destroyers-for-Bases Deal In the spring of 1940, the United States faced its first test in remaining neutral. In May British Prime Minister Winston Churchill began asking Roosevelt to transfer old American destroyers to Britain. Britain had lost nearly half its destroyers and needed more to protect its cargo ships from German submarines and to block any German attempt to invade Britain.

Determined to give Churchill the destroyers, Roosevelt used a loophole in the provision of the Neutrality Act that required cash for purchases. In exchange for the right to build American bases on British-controlled Newfoundland, Bermuda, and islands in the Caribbean, Roosevelt sent 50 old American destroyers to Britain. Since the deal did not involve an actual sale, the Neutrality Act did not apply. On September 3, 1940, he announced his action to an astonished press.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** How were the Neutrality Acts revised?

The Isolationist Debate

Widespread public acceptance of the destroyers-for-bases deal demonstrated a marked change in American public opinion. The shift began after the German invasion of France and the rescue of Allied forces at Dunkirk. By July 1940 most Americans favored offering limited aid to the Allies.

The Range of Opinion American opinion was hardly unanimous. In fact, beginning in the spring of 1940, a spirited debate took place between people who wanted greater American involvement in World War II and those who felt that the United States should remain neutral.

At one extreme was the Fight for Freedom Committee, a group which urged the repeal of all neutrality laws and wanted stronger action against Germany. Closer to the center, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, headed by journalist William Allen White, pressed for increased American aid to the Allies but opposed armed intervention.

Roosevelt's destroyers-for-bases deal led to the founding of the **America First Committee**, a staunchly isolationist group that firmly opposed any American intervention or aid to the Allies. The group had many famous members, including aviator Charles Lindbergh, former governor Philip LaFollette, and Senator Gerald Nye.

The Election of 1940 The heated debate over neutrality took place in the midst of the 1940 presidential election campaign. For months Americans had wondered whether President Roosevelt would follow long-standing tradition by retiring at the end of his second term. With the United States in a precarious position, a change of leaders might not be in the country's best interest. Roosevelt decided to run for an unprecedented third term.

During the campaign, FDR steered a careful course between neutrality and intervention. The Republican nominee, Wendell Willkie, did the same, promising that he too would stay out of the war but assist the Allies. The voters re-elected Roosevelt by a wide margin, preferring to stick with a president they knew during this crisis period.

✓ Reading Check Analyzing Why did Roosevelt win an unprecedented third term in office?

Edging Toward War

With the election safely over, Roosevelt expanded the nation's role in the war. Britain was fighting for democracy, he said, and the United States had to help. Speaking to Congress, he listed the "Four Freedoms" for which both the United States and Great Britain stood: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

 (See page 957 for an excerpt from this speech.)

The Lend-Lease Act By December 1940, Great Britain had run out of funds to wage its war against Germany. President Roosevelt came up with a way to remove the cash requirement of the Neutrality Act. With the **Lend-Lease Act**, the United States would be able to lend or lease arms to any country considered "vital to the defense of the United States." This act meant that the United States could send weapons to Britain if Britain promised to return or pay rent for them after the war.

The president warned that if Britain fell, an "unholy alliance" of Germany, Japan, and Italy would keep trying to conquer the world, and then "all of us in all the Americas would be living at the point of a gun." The president argued that the United States should become the "great arsenal of democracy" to keep the British fighting and make it unnecessary for Americans to go to war.

The America First Committee disagreed, but Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act by a wide margin. By the time the program ended, the United States had contributed more than \$40 billion in weapons, vehicles, and other supplies to the Allied war effort.

While shipments of supplies to Britain began at once, lend-lease aid eventually went to the Soviet Union as well. After calling off the invasion of Britain, Hitler returned to his original goal of carving out lebensraum for Germany in eastern Europe. In June 1941, in violation of the Nazi-Soviet pact, Hitler launched a massive invasion of the Soviet Union. Although Churchill detested communism and

considered Stalin a harsh dictator, he vowed that any person or state "who fights against Nazism will have our aid." Roosevelt, too, supported this policy.

The Hemispheric Defense Zone Congressional approval of the Lend-Lease Act did not solve the problem of how to get American arms and supplies to Britain. German submarines patrolling the Atlantic Ocean were sinking hundreds of thousands of tons of shipping each month, and the British navy simply did not have enough ships in the Atlantic to stop them.

Roosevelt could not simply order the U.S. Navy to protect British cargo ships, since the United States was still technically neutral. Instead, he developed the idea of a **hemispheric defense zone**. Roosevelt declared that the entire western half of the Atlantic was part of the Western Hemisphere and therefore neutral. He then ordered the U.S. Navy to patrol the western Atlantic and reveal the location of German submarines to the British.

The Atlantic Charter In August 1941 Roosevelt and Churchill met face-to-face on board American and British warships anchored near Newfoundland. During these meetings, the two men agreed on the text of the **Atlantic Charter**. It committed the two

Picturing History

Neutrality Debate The America First Committee strongly opposed the increasingly weak neutrality of the United States. Here an American soldier confronts an isolationist marching outside the White House. **How did the Lend-Lease Act further weaken the nation's official neutrality?**



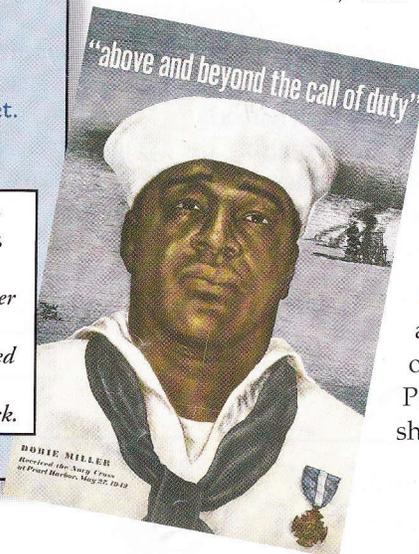
Roosevelt began by putting economic pressure on Japan. Japan depended on the United States for many key materials, including scrap iron, steel, and especially oil. Approximately 80 percent of Japan's oil came from the United States. In July 1940, Congress passed the Export Control Act, giving Roosevelt the power to restrict the sale of **strategic materials** (materials important for fighting a war) to other nations. Roosevelt immediately blocked the sale of airplane fuel and scrap iron to Japan. Furious, the Japanese signed an alliance with Germany and Italy, formally becoming a member of the Axis.

In 1941 Roosevelt began sending lend-lease aid to China. Japan had invaded China in 1937, and by 1941, it controlled much of the Chinese coast. Roosevelt hoped that lend-lease aid would enable the Chinese to tie down the Japanese and prevent them from attacking elsewhere. The strategy failed. By July 1941, the Japanese had sent troops into southern Indochina, posing a direct threat to the British Empire. Japanese aircraft were now in position to



- 1 6:45 A.M.: The destroyer *Ward* sinks a Japanese midget submarine near the entrance to Pearl Harbor.
- 2 7:02 to 7:39 A.M.: Army radar at Opana tracks a cloud of aircraft approaching from the north. An officer at Fort Shafter concludes it is a flight of B-17s due in from California.
- 3 7:49 A.M.: **The first wave of 183 Japanese planes is ordered to attack. The force includes 40 torpedo bombers and 49 high-altitude bombers—each armed with a single projectile—bound for Battleship Row. Other bombers and Zero fighters attack airfields.**
- 4 8:55 A.M.: The second wave of 167 planes renews the attack on airfields and ships. Oil tanks and most ship-repair facilities are ignored, an omission the Japanese later regret.

Americans responded heroically to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor: 16 men received the Medal of Honor, the nation's highest award; 5 were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross; and 69 received the Silver Star. The Navy Cross was awarded to another 51, including Dorie Miller, World War II's first recognized African American hero, who bravely operated an anti-aircraft gun on his ship during the Japanese attack.



strike British shipping in the Strait of Malacca and bomb Hong Kong and Singapore.

Roosevelt responded very quickly to the Japanese threat. He froze all Japanese assets in the United States, reduced the amount of oil being shipped to Japan, and sent General Douglas MacArthur to the Philippines to build up American defenses there.

Roosevelt made it clear that he would lift the oil embargo only if Japan withdrew from Indochina and made peace with China. With the war against China now in jeopardy because of a lack of oil and other resources, the Japanese military began making plans to attack the resource-rich British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. They also decided to seize the Philippines and to attack the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. They could not risk leaving the United States with a navy in the Pacific to oppose their plans. While the Japanese prepared for war, negotiations with the United States continued, but neither side would back down. On November 26, 1941, six Japanese aircraft carriers, two battleships, and several other warships set sail for Hawaii.

Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor The Japanese government appeared to be continuing negotiations with the United States in good faith. American intelligence, however, had decoded Japanese communications that made it clear that Japan was preparing to go to war against the United States.

On November 27, American commanders at the Pearl Harbor naval base received a war warning from Washington, but Hawaii was not mentioned as a possible target. It was a great distance from Japan to Hawaii, and Washington officials doubted

Japan would try to launch such a long-range attack.

The failure to collect sufficient information and the failure of the branches of the U.S. military to share the information available left Pearl Harbor an open target. The result was devastating. Japan's surprise attack on December 7, 1941, sank or damaged 21 ships of the U.S. Pacific Fleet, including 8 battleships, 3 cruisers, 4 destroyers, and



Student Web Activity Visit the *American Republic Since 1877* Web site at tarvol2.glencoe.com and click on **Student Web Activities—Chapter 19** for an activity on Pearl Harbor.

World Geography Connection



Geography and War

Throughout history, geography has played a key role in wars. In 1941, for example, Japan attacked Malaya and Indonesia to gain access to oil and rubber. It also wanted control of the Strait of Malacca, an important waterway linking the Indian Ocean with the South China Sea. Geography can also influence a war's outcome, as it did in the Vietnam War.

There, miles of dense jungle allowed guerrillas to wage war first against French troops and then against American forces. **Why do you think the Strait of Malacca was so important?**



6 other vessels. The attack also destroyed 188 airplanes and killed 2,403 Americans. Another 1,178 were injured.

On the night of the attack, a gray-faced Roosevelt met with his cabinet to tell them the country now faced the most serious crisis since the outbreak of the Civil War. The next day, the president asked Congress to declare war:

“Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was

suddenly and deliberately attacked by the naval and air forces of Japan. . . . 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 we will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again. . . . No matter how long it may take us . . . the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.”

—quoted in *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous with Destiny*

Following the president's speech, the Senate voted 82 to 0 and the House 388 to 1 to declare war on Japan.

Germany Declares War Although Japan was now at war with the United States, Hitler did not have to declare war on the Americans. The terms of the alliance with Japan specified that Germany only had to come to Japan's aid if Japan was attacked, not if Japan attacked another country. Hitler, however, had grown frustrated with the American navy's attacks on German submarines, and he believed the time had come to declare war.

Hitler greatly underestimated the strength of the United States, and he expected the Japanese to easily defeat the Americans in the Pacific. He hoped that by helping Japan now, he could count on Japanese support against the Soviet Union once the Americans had been beaten. On December 11, Germany and Italy both declared war on the United States.

Reading Check Examining What finally caused the United States to become involved in World War II?

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

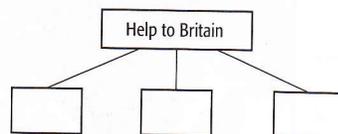
- Define:** hemispheric defense zone, strategic materials.
- Identify:** America First Committee, Lend-Lease Act, Atlantic Charter.

Reviewing Themes

- Individual Action** After Roosevelt made the destroyers-for-bases deal with Britain, some Americans called him a dictator. Do you think Roosevelt was right or wrong in his actions? Explain your answer.

Critical Thinking

- Interpreting** Why was the United States unprepared for Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer to list how Roosevelt helped Britain while maintaining official neutrality.



Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Maps** Study the map on pages 604–605. Based on the geography of Oahu, why was the location of Pearl Harbor perfect for a naval base?

Writing About History

- Persuasive Writing** Take on the role of an American in 1940. Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper explaining why you think the United States should either remain neutral or become involved in World War II.