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That Terrible Day in December

What were so many planes doing in the air at this time of day? Was it some kind of exercise? Suddenly, it became very clear what the planes were doing. It was an attack!

Dec. 7, 1941, was another sleepy Sunday across America. Families were coming home from morning church services, others were settling down after brunch with the Sunday paper, and others were simply enjoying Sunday listening to music on the radio.

However, far away to the west, a completely different kind of morning was breaking over Hawaii. Out across the sea, low to the horizon, a strange formation had gathered in the morning sky. As it approached,

people watched from a distance. What were so many planes doing in the air at this time of day? Was it some kind of exercise? Suddenly, it became very clear what the planes were doing. It was an attack!

Pearl Harbor (Hawaii) was the home of America's largest naval base in the Pacific region. At 7:55 a.m. Hawaii time, more than 400 Japanese airplanes attacked American ships and people. Japan was officially at war with the United States.

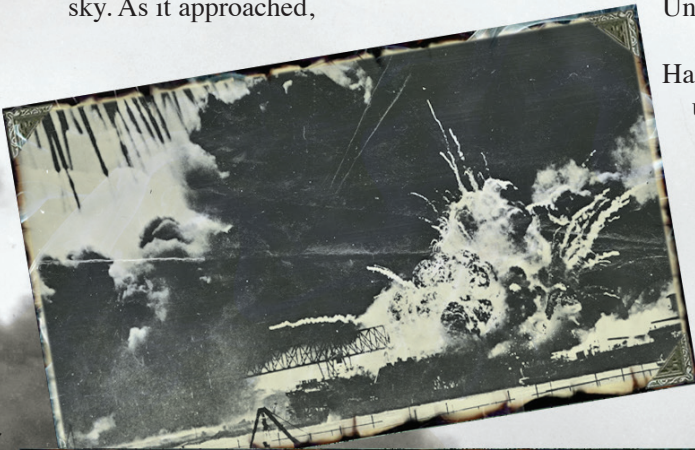
Immediately, the alarms sounded all over Hawaii, and the cry went out, "Pearl Harbor is under attack!"

Japanese fighter planes, torpedo bombers and dive bombers took only one hour and 55 minutes to empty their bombs and bullets. When it was over, five of our eight battleships were sunk, the other three damaged. (Six were later repaired and went to war.) Five other ships were sunk and several damaged. About 325 Navy and Army planes on the ground were destroyed. Among the dead were 2,343 American sailors, soldier and marines; 1,272 were wounded, and

960 were missing. Many of the docks, repair facilities, hangars, and runways were damaged or destroyed.

When word of the attack reached the mainland United States, panic and anger spread from coast to coast, especially along the western coastal cities, where people feared a direct attack from the sea. That Sunday became a dark day of worry across the country. Would the Japanese continue their attack along the Pacific Coast? Would they bomb farther inland? No one knew what to expect.

And just like that, America was at war again. Some historians believe that there never were 20 years of peace between the end of World War I and the start of World War II. It was more like an armed truce. In 1939, Germany again attacked its neighbors and began a costly attempt to take over Europe. America helped its Allies for the first couple of years before jumping in with both feet to end Germany's threats and power in Europe. By 1942, the United States was heavily involved in two war zones in the Pacific against Japan and in Europe against Germany and its allies.



Connections

Internment Camps

After the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066. Because Japan attacked America, some people became openly distrustful of and hostile toward Japanese Americans. People believed without evidence that Japanese immigrants and their families were spies and enemies of the U.S. Thousands of Japanese immigrants and their families had settled along the West coast of the United States. These Japanese Americans, half of whom were children, were jailed for up to four years. Any citizen who

was of Japanese ancestry had to leave their homes and report to prison-like internment camps located in seven states. More than 120,000 Americans were moved to these camps.

Some Japanese Americans died in the camps because they were not given good medical care. They were also very scared, hungry and tired every day. They never knew when they would be set free. Even after the U.S. government freed the Japanese Americans, many people still felt the trauma of the internment camps. It takes time for the body and mind to heal from such experiences.



Tennessee Lesson

The U.S. Joins the Fight

The day after the Pearl Harbor attack, the U.S. declared war on Japan. On Dec. 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. The U.S. then joined the Allies in the fight against the Axis Powers. Let's take a look at some of the major battles and events of WWII. Use your classroom map to pinpoint each location.

Until this point, the U.S. was hesitant to join the war. Americans wanted to avoid repeating the bloodshed of World War I. The government followed a policy of isolationism. This was the idea that the U.S. should avoid any involvement in foreign conflicts. Laws were passed to prevent the U.S. from getting involved in outside conflicts. Even weapons or money couldn't be sent to other countries. With an unexpected attack on American soil in Hawaii, the country was forced into the war.

1. Japanese Forces Sweep Through the Pacific

For six months after Pearl Harbor's attack, the Japanese pushed forward with little resistance. Allied troops already stationed in the Pacific fought bravely, but were no match against the large and efficient Japanese war machine. The Japanese swept over nearly the entire southwestern Pacific and were ready to invade Australia and India.

2. The United States and Its Allies Push Back

One thing the Japanese felt confident about was the remote distance of their homeland. When U.S. Colonel James Doolittle led 16 B-25s to bomb Tokyo, Kobe and Osaka on April 18, 1942, the Japanese were terrified. Suddenly, they realized the war was coming home to them.

Terrible sea battles were waged to hedge in the Japanese. The Battle of Coral Sea forced the main Japanese fleet back toward safer waters. When they tried to take the American-held Midway Island, they were engaged by the Americans in the Battle of Midway. In the end, four Japanese aircraft carriers and many Japanese aircraft and ships were destroyed. It was the turning point of the war. A similar Japanese

attack on the Aleutians near Alaska took place, but the Japanese couldn't hold the islands very long until the United States attacked and got them back.

The fighting at Coral Sea, Midway and the Aleutians signaled the end of Japanese expansion.

3. Stalingrad, Beginning of the End

In the summer of 1942, the German army headed for the important Soviet city of Stalingrad. Hitler believed that capturing the city and its supplies would break the will of the Soviets. Germans dropped 1,000 tons of bombs on the city, and soldiers battled in the streets. Things looked grim for the Soviet Union. However, the battle took a turn as winter approached. Around 500,000 Soviet soldiers surrounded the German army. The Soviets cut off German supply routes, and soldiers starved in the freezing temperatures. In February 1943, the Germans were forced to surrender. The losses on both sides were almost unbelievable. Estimates of military and civilian casualties (wounded, killed or missing) are as high as 2 million people. Many historians point to this battle as the beginning of the end for Hitler's forces. The German army never recovered from the great loss of soldiers.

4. Invasion of Normandy

Allied soldiers were about to begin the invasion of Normandy, a region in northern France, on June 6, 1944. General Dwight D. Eisenhower told them, "The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you."

The invasion of Normandy began with almost 160,000 Allied troops crossing the English Channel from Great Britain to France, which the Germans occupied. The Allies supplied over 5,000 ships and 11,000 planes. The invasion, now known as D-Day, gave the Allies a base for shipping and storing military supplies. By the end of June, over 1 million Allied troops had crossed into France. Hitler's troops were slowly pushed back toward Germany.



Isolationism

This is Jackson. I have to say that I was upset when I learned that the U.S. didn't immediately help when Germany attacked France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Why didn't the president send weapons, troops and money right away?

I did a little research and learned more about the Neutrality Acts. After WWI, the American people were tired of war and wanted to deal with their own issues, rather than try to solve the world's problems. Here's what I learned:

First Neutrality Act

In 1935, Congress proclaimed that the U.S. could not export any weapons, ammunition or "implements of war" to belligerent (warring) nations. Americans were also warned that if they sailed on a belligerent's ship, they did so at their own risk.

Neutrality Act of 1936

This law renewed the First Neutrality Act for another 14 months and said that no loans or credit could be offered to belligerent nations.

Neutrality Act of 1937

This act renewed the previous neutrality acts and made it illegal for any U.S. ships to carry military equipment to belligerent nations. Citizens could no longer sail on belligerents' ships. It also gave the president the power to sell supplies (but not weapons and ammunition) to belligerent nations, as long as they paid for these items at the time of purchase.

Neutrality Act of 1939

By this time, Germany was at war with Great Britain and France. Congress passed a law stating that the U.S. could sell weapons, ammunition and other military supplies to belligerent nations. Again, nations had to pay for supplies at the time of purchase.

Lend-Lease Act of 1941

This law marked the end of U.S. Neutrality Acts. It allowed the U.S. to lend, sell or give war supplies to its allies. President Roosevelt

could now offer our foreign friends more than just a few kind words. He could, and did, send them money, weapons, vehicles and, after Pearl Harbor, U.S. troops.

Reconstruction and Recovery

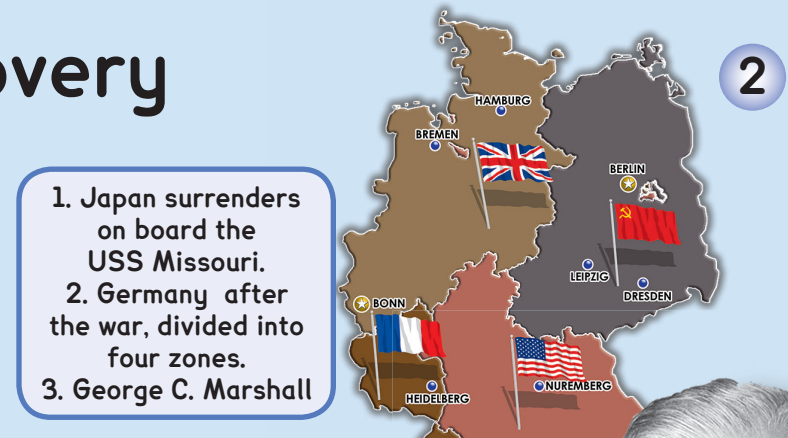
On Sept. 2, 1945, the Japanese formally surrendered to the United States on board the USS Missouri. This formally ended World War II. Years of fighting between the Allied and Axis Powers destroyed much of Europe. Cities lay in ruin. Armies and navies had lost ships, tanks, planes and, many, many soldiers. Millions of civilians also lost their lives due to the fighting.

On top of the ruin was a great fear that there would be another World War. The Allied Powers did what they could to prevent another great war. In the weeks following the surrender of the Japanese, the victors created and signed a number of treaties. The treaties divided Germany into four zones. The United States, France, Great Britain, and Russia each occupied one zone.

The U.S. Army occupied Japan. The United States took away Japan's army. The U.S. Army helped rebuild Japan. It changed Japan's government, taking away most of the emperor's power. It created a parliament, instead.

In 1948, George C. Marshall proposed a plan to help rebuild Europe. The Marshall Plan directed \$13 billion, including food, supplies and equipment to the effort.

The Paris Peace Conference involved treaties with "minor" Axis powers. The United Nations was created on Oct. 24, 1945. The U.S., British, French and Soviets tried Nazi leaders and organizations for war crimes.



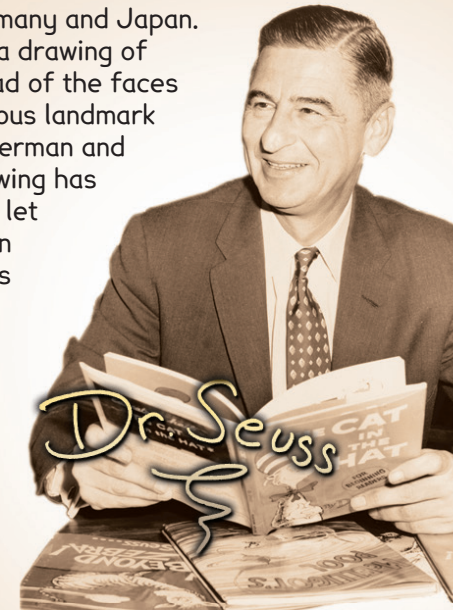
1. Japan surrenders on board the USS Missouri.
2. Germany after the war, divided into four zones.
3. George C. Marshall



Dr. Seuss vs. Isolationism

You are probably familiar with the characters created by Dr. Seuss (real name: Theodor Seuss Geisel). Did you know that in addition to writing children's books, he spent several years drawing political cartoons? Political cartoons are drawings that use characters and words to make a comment about a current event.

Ted, as Dr. Seuss was known in those days, was opposed to isolationism. He believed that the U.S. should help its friends defeat Germany and Japan. One of his cartoons shows a drawing of Mount Rushmore, but instead of the faces of U.S. presidents, the famous landmark displays the faces of the German and Japanese leaders. The drawing has a caption that reads: "Don't let them carve THOSE faces on our mountains." His cartoons leave no question about his stand on the war. Dr. Seuss wanted the U.S. to join the fight against the people trying to conquer the world. If you want to see the cartoons, see what you can find at the library or on the internet (with permission).



The Manhattan Project

World War II was a time of great destruction. It was also a time of dramatic scientific progress. Before the United States entered World War II, scientists worried that Adolf Hitler was building a powerful bomb. With that kind of weapon, people feared that Germany would be unstoppable.

The United States asked famous scientists to make a special bomb. This bomb was called an atom bomb. They used uranium to make it. Albert Einstein, J. Robert Oppenheimer and Enrico Fermi helped. They were part of the Manhattan Project.

In 1945, the scientists tested the first atom bomb in New Mexico. On Aug. 6, the United States dropped an atom bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, the United States dropped another atom bomb on Nagasaki, Japan. This ended the war with Japan.

Research from the Manhattan Project also led to the development of nuclear power, which is used to make electricity.

1. Fat Man was the atomic bomb dropped.
2. Second bomb dropped on Nagasaki at the end of WWII.



Name _____

The Decision to Bomb Hiroshima

On July 29, 1945, Japan refused to surrender following the demand to do so by the Allies at the Potsdam Conference. The next day, President Truman decided to authorize the atom bomb to be dropped on Hiroshima. It was dropped on Aug. 6, 1945.

The bomb blast killed 86 percent of the people within a half-mile of ground zero. It wounded another 10 percent in that circle. Between 1/2 and 1 1/2 miles from ground zero, 27 percent of the people were killed instantly and another 37 percent were wounded. When there is an atomic blast, it

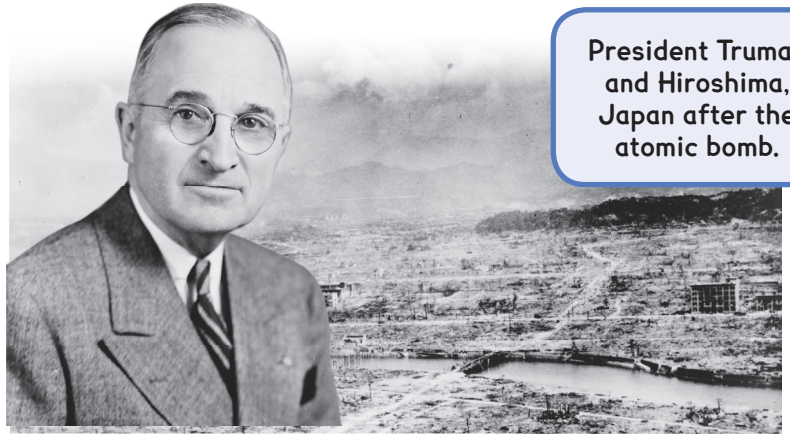
creates radioactive dust called fallout. This fallout comes back down to the ground as radiation-contaminated rain. The fallout from the Hiroshima blast affected an area 12-15 miles from ground zero. Much more was carried by winds around the area. Fallout causes radiation sickness and death. The sickness can last from a few hours to several decades. It killed and sickened many more people. Some people got terrible burns and others got different kinds of cancer.

When the Japanese still did not surrender after that bombing, the president

authorized another bombing on Nagasaki. After that, Japan surrendered.

Was President Truman justified in using the nuclear bomb? Why do you think no

nuclear bombs have ever been used since the two in Japan in 1945? What do you think the president discussed with his advisers before authorizing the use of the bombs?

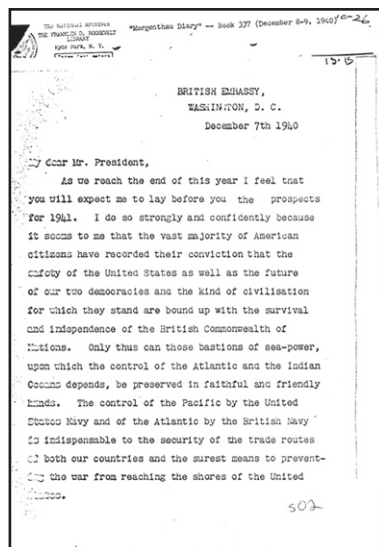


President Truman and Hiroshima, Japan after the atomic bomb.

Activity

Letter from Churchill to Roosevelt: What Does it Mean?

The prime minister of Great Britain, Winston Churchill, and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt sent letters and telegrams back and forth, even before the United States entered WWII. What do you think they talked about? Here is a copy of a letter that Churchill sent to Roosevelt before the U.S. officially entered the war. Read the letter carefully and answer the questions. (You may use a dictionary to look up unfamiliar words, if necessary.) Answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper.



BRITISH EMBASSY,
WASHINGTON, D. C.
December 7th 1940

My dear Mr. President,

As we reach the end of this year I feel that you will expect me to lay before you the prospects for 1941. I do so strongly and confidently because it seems to me that the vast majority of American citizens have recorded their conviction that the safety of the United States as well as the future of our two democracies and the kind of civilization for which they stand are bound up with the survival and independence of the British Commonwealth of Nations. Only thus can those bastions of sea-power, upon which the control of the Atlantic and the Indian Oceans depends, be preserved in faithful and friendly hands. The control of the Pacific by the United States Navy and of the Atlantic by the British Navy is indispensable to the security of the trade routes of both our countries and the surest means to preventing the war from reaching the shores of the United States.

Questions

1. When was this letter written?
2. In the letter, Churchill says he is confident that most Americans believe that the future of the two democracies, the United States and Great Britain, are "bound up with the survival and independence of the British Commonwealth." What do you think he meant by this?
3. What does Churchill believe is the "surest means to preventing the war from reaching the shores of the United States"?
4. What do you think Churchill hoped Roosevelt would do to help Great Britain?



1. List four outcomes resulting in the aftermath of World War II. Rank them, in order, of what you believe to be the most effective sanctions for preventing another World War. Explain why.
2. Explain why Japanese internment camps were created.
3. Predict what might have happened if Japan had not bombed Pearl Harbor.
4. List the major countries involved in World War II. Categorize as either Axis or Allied Power.

Think & Review

Imagine you are President Roosevelt.

Let's Write

The Allies have just won World War II. What do you think the United States and Axis powers should do? What do you do with Germany, Italy and Japan? How can you prevent another World War in the future?