

Summit Middle School

December 7th, 1941, A Date Which Will Live In Infamy

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Before December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor wasn't like it is today. The bombing of Pearl Harbor was a huge tragedy for the United States. The Attack on Pearl Harbor is one of the most devastating attacks in U.S History and one of the most devastating defeats in U.S History.

Not only did Japan get triumph from the attack, it would come back to bite them with huge casualties and two of their own bombing tragedy's at the end of the war. The event soured relations with Japan and forced us to do something we normally wouldn't do that often, use violence to get peace. The attack changed history forever by forcing the U.S into fighting in WW2, it helped shape the modern world to how it is today, and made a lot of nations feel the guilt, reflection, and self-questioning that followed the Second World War. Now today, it has been replaced by resurgent nationalism on both sides of the globe.

Before the attack, a war had been going on in Asia and Europe since 1937. Also political events were leading up to the attack. Japan had not always been a threat to other countries. At one time, Japan had mostly closed itself off from the rest of the world. In the 1630s, Japanese Military leaders called shoguns barred almost all foreigners from entering the country. The shoguns were wary of Christian missionaries from Europe. People in Japan mainly practiced the Buddhist and Shinto religions. The Christian missionaries wanted to convert the Japanese to Christianity, and the shoguns feared the missionaries might clear the way for a European conquest of Japan. Despite Japan's policy, European and U.S warships went to Japan in the 1840's, the Europeans and Americans wanted to open up Japan for trade. In July 1853, U.S commodore Matthew C. Perry led a fleet of warships into a Japanese port called Uraga. Perry demanded trade and the use of Japanese ports, or the United States would go to war with Japan. Within a year, Japan agreed to U.S terms in the Treaty of Kanagawa. Soon, other nations began making treaties with Japan, the sudden presence of these foreigners weakened the power of the shoguns. One of the shogun's reasons for holding power was that they kept foreigners out of Japan but with these events, they could no longer make this claim. Eventually, armies opposed to the shoguns occupied the imperial palace in the city of Kyoto. On January 3, 1868, these forces announced that the emperor now led the government. At this time, the emperor was a 15-year-old boy named Mutsuhito. With the collapse of the shoguns, the emperor and his

supporters now governed Japan. The new government was committed to changing Japan into a modern nation in order to compete with the West. The nation began building telegraph lines and railroads, by 1872, Japan's first railroad line connected the cities of Yokohama and Tokyo. During the next few years, thousands of miles of railroad were built in Japan.

Politics, as well as technology were undergoing rapid change in Japan. Many people were now demanding a constitution to Japan, many wanted this because they were influenced by western ideas that a constitution makes a country stronger. Many people also demanded an elected assembly in Japan, on February 11, 1889, the government announced that it was giving a constitution to the Japanese people. The constitution created an assembly called the Diet to pass laws. The Diet was made up of two chambers called the House of Representatives, and the House of Peers. But, the constitution provided for little supervision over the military, and only the emperor had authority over Japan's armed forces. Japan had undergone great change in the nineteenth century. The nation was no longer shut off from the rest of the world and it was also in a stronger position to stand up to other countries. In the 1880's and 1890's Japan began to spend more money to strengthen its navy and army and furthermore, Japan began to compete with other powers in the region for influence in eastern Asia. The nation of Korea was of special interest to Japan. Some leaders thought believed that control of this nearby country was important for Japan's Security. Japan competed with China for influence in Korea and this rivalry led to the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. A rebellion in Korea gave Japan an excuse to send thousands of troops to the country. The Japanese government said it wanted to protect Japanese citizens living in Korea but, fighting broke out between Japanese and Chinese forces. Japan inflicted heavy losses on Chinese forces and the Treaty of Shimonoseki ended the war in April 1895. Under the treaty, Japan gained many concessions from China including Taiwan, and the Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria. In addition, Japan acquired the right to build railroads in southern Manchuria. After the United States gained territories in the Pacific Ocean after the Spanish-American War, Japan secured it's position in Asia. The main threat to the Japanese in Korea and Manchuria was Russia. A treaty made in 1902 obligated Russia to remove its troops from Manchuria. Japan asked Russia to abide to this agreement but Russia refused. So Japan thought enough of this unfairness and went to war with Russia with a surprise attack on Russia ships at Port Arthur on the Manchurian coast on February 8, 1904, and that set off the Russo-Japanese War. Japan stunned everyone by actually winning and for the first time in modern history, an Asian nation defeated a European nation and for that, Japan received respect from European countries. In WW1, Japan fought on the side of the allies and took German islands and colonies allowed them to expand even more. Japan was becoming a force

to be reckoned with until the Great Depression hit. The problem with Japan's economy is that it relied heavily on its import industry and with the current economic crisis, no one was buying. So because of this crisis, Japan decided that the best defense against economic ruin is to have a good offense. So in 1931, Japan launched an invasion into the Chinese region of Manchuria for its resources like iron, soybeans, and land, lots and lots of unclaimed land. The U.S was a long standing Chinese ally and watch uneasily from the sidelines as the two nations clashed but, America wanted nothing to do with a war so it just denounced Japan's aggression.

Tensions rose even further in 1937 when Japan invaded the Chinese city of Nanjing and while doing it, they attacked an American gunboat killing 3 and wounded dozens and with images of war in China further swayed American opinion against Japan. At this time U.S President Franklin Roosevelt promised to use peaceful ways for dealing with Japan. Instead of using force, the U.S tried restricting trade with Japan with economic sanctions and an oil embargo. Oil was critical to the Japanese Army, and a not getting it would mean an complete halt in army expansion. Publicly, Japan and the U.S still expressed hope of avoiding open warfare, they even held talks to negotiate a peace treaty but, Japan's military leaders were hatching a different plan. Their Prime Minister, General Hideki Tojo worked with other military generals to plan out the Pearl Harbor Attack. Their Head of State, Emperor Hirohito had his doubts about the plans but, Tojo and his top admirals had already made up their minds. Japan began secret preparations for the Pearl Harbor Attack, their pilots and sailors didn't even know what they were training for but, at dawn on a tranquil Sunday, their mission was made clear.

Japan planned their attack in two separate phases at different times about an hour apart from each other. On December 7th, 1941, The Japanese launched a surprise attack on the U.S Naval Base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. In less than two hours, Pearl Harbor was in ruins with 2,400 Americans dead.

Over 400 Japanese Planes including Nakajima B5N Kate bombers, Aichi D3A Val dive bombers, Mitsubishi A6M "Zero" fighters steamed towards the Hawaiian Base, just as American Servicemen were starting their early morning routines. The Japanese fleet also consisted of 6 aircraft carriers, 9 destroyers, 5 midget submarines, 23 fleet submarines, 8 tankers, 2 battleships, 2 heavy cruisers, and 1 light cruiser. The Japanese lost only 29 to 60 aircraft, 5 midget submarines, only one Japanese soldier was taken prisoner, and 129 Japanese Soldiers died. The first known American casualties were that six were dead and 21 were injured but later we found out that, the Japanese hit all 8 of our battleships, sunk or damaged 21 ships, and destroyed 188 aircraft.

The Japanese took America almost completely by surprise. The U.S Military got a radar signal of their presence but thought it was there B-17 Bombers returning, or Soviet Planes but they were wrong. The Japanese severely weakened our Naval Forces in the Pacific and because of that, it took a whole year before U.S Marines could take back a single island from Japan. The attack seemed like a big Japanese victory but, they didn't hit any of the naval repair yards, fuel storage and oil tanks, ammunition sites, aircraft carriers, and the submarine base meaning the pacific fleet would be up and running again pretty soon.

There were some amazing feats of bravery that day. For example, two off duty pilots which i couldn't catch the names but they made it to their planes before the Japanese bombers and shot down 6 Japanese Planes. Another hero named Doris "Dorie" Miller came to his shipmates aid on the USS West Virginia like helping move the wounded to safety, he even manned an anti-aircraft gun until it ran out of ammunition. He was ordered to abandon ship and his actions made him the first African American to earn the Navy Cross. During the attack, Samuel Fuqua a serviceman during Pearl Harbor lead dozens of USS Arizona Crewmen to safety before it sank and pulled bodies out of the water while bombs were still dropping. One sailor John H. McGoran said that during battle, the sailors did whatever they could to save fellow shipmates, whether they wanted to or not.

On December 8th, President Franklin D. Roosevelt gave a speech about declaring war on Japan and remembering the attack calling it, "A Date Which Will Live In Infamy". After the attack, we would go on to have millions of people die in the Pacific, America dropping their Atomic Bombs Little Boy and Fat Man on Japan with Japan's surrender, and the war's end. The cities America bombed would be rebuilt into thriving communities and Pearl Harbor would turn into a national memorial in 1962. Later on, we would develop deep economic and cultural ties with Japan, they are now our closest ally in East Asia and, December 7th 1941 is not so much a date in infamy, more like a date to remember and reflect our mistakes and for those we lost on both sides of the battle.

Annotated Bibliography Secondary Sources

Attack of Pearl Harbor 940.54 TAN

This WW2 book gives a brief overview of the the attack in 5 small but specific chapters right from the launch all the way until the U.S declares war. I thought this source was useful because i needed stuff like the exact size of the Japanese fleet, and if the U.S knew it something was coming.

<https://www.brainpop.com/socialstudies/ushistory/pearlharbor/>

This popular website has WW2 animated movies including one all about Pearl Harbor that explains the attack itself, people who were involved, and what casualties were on both sides. This is where i got a lot of the information i needed for the paper and it also gives references of Pearl Harbor in other movies.

<https://www.history.com/news/why-did-japan-attack-pearl-harbor>

The History Channel website because i needed to know what happened to Japan and U.S relations before the attack. This was really useful because it went really far back even further than WW1 to explain how Japan changed from an agricultural nation to an industrial nation to compete with the west, and how the relations boiled between one thing, oil. It also explained what the Japanese did in terms of damage at Pearl Harbor and what it didn't do. But, it didn't explain the Japanese casualties during the attack, and it also had information i didn't need.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Pearl-Harbor-attack>

Encyclopedia Britannica had the information on what the casualties of the attack were on each side. Including human casualties, planes destroyed, boats lost, submarines destroyed, and how many prisoners each side took. It explained all of that on each side and once i was done with the site, i was pretty much done with the paper.

940.54 DUN

I used this book because i needed to beef up my sources and it had some information that i didn't know about. It mentioned that the Americans knew planes were coming in but they didn't know who they were and their were some more heroes that day that i had never heard of, and it told the exact size of the Japanese fleet.

940.54 PIE

I used this book because i needed to beef up my secondary sources and it was actually really detailed. It explained a lot about the origin of modern Japan, detailed information about the attack but, i still needed primary sources and i left it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gr6Ec7XZLLA>

This youtube video from this show Seconds From Disaster had an episode all about Pearl Harbor from both sides, and real people from both sides where they talk to a real Japanese pilot that took part in the attack, and two American sailors that survived and witnessed the attack. I think this have a lot of information and it actually investigated the attack to why it was a disaster of Japan.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2GrW9g0zoBM>

This documentary also about Pearl Harbor focuses more on talking to actual sailors who survived the attack, reflecting on the attack, and they actually used real footage at the time of the attack but the only thing that keeps it from being a primary source is, the documentary wasn't made in 1941. I found this very interesting because their is a lot more that these sailors witnessed other than death and destruction like people's will to fight, and people's determination to stay alive.

Annotated Bibliography Primary Sources

https://www.newspapers.com/clip/14210754/starbulletin_covers_the_bombings_at/

This website actually has real newspapers that were written right at the time the attack happened. I used this for finding original sources for finding information on the attack that was given to the people in 1941, and how they reported the attack to the people.

<https://www.loc.gov/collections/interviews-following-the-attack-on-pearl-harbor/about-this-collection/>

This website shows real audio recordings on what people thought of the attack after it happened, and it has a real letter from a real sailor Fletcher Collins. I found this useful because this showed America's desire to fight back and get revenge for the attack and wanting to help our allies.

<http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/pearl.htm>

This website shows a sailor's first person account when they went through the attack, what he did during the attack, and his thoughts after the attack. I found this useful because it gave me an in-depth look on people's thoughts on the attack while experiencing it.

<https://blogs.stockton.edu/pearlharbor/first-hand-accounts/>

This website shows more first person accounts from American sailors that were at Pearl Harbor and were attacked. I found this useful because it had some lines that were useful as information, and it gave a more in-depth review of what sailors went through during the attack.