



THE NATIONAL  
WWII MUSEUM  
NEW ORLEANS

**A Day of ~~World History~~ Infamy**  
Analyzing FDR's Pearl Harbor Address

A Lesson from  
the Education Department

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[www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education](http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education)

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A Day of ~~World History~~ Infamy  
Analyzing FDR's Pearl Harbor Address  
A Primary Source Lesson Plan

The attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, shocked the nation and led to a declaration of war by the United States against Japan the following day. In asking for this declaration, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave a monumental address to Congress and the American people. He knew that this speech would be one of the most important in American history. It is widely known as the “Day of Infamy” speech and is replayed numerous times every year on the anniversary of the attack. However, the word “infamy” was not in the original draft of Roosevelt’s speech. He inserted it in place of the words “world history.” The change in tone that resulted has helped this speech remain one of the most famous in American history.

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will determine the meaning of words selected by FDR as he edited the draft of his December 8, 1941 address to Congress following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor

**GRADE LEVEL:** 6-12

**ELA COMMON CORE STANDARDS:**

This Lesson meets the “Craft and Structure” component of the Common Core Standards under Literacy in History/Social Studies at each grade level

RH.6-8.4-6  
RH.9-10.4-6  
RH.11-12.4-6

**HISTORY STANDARDS:**

History Thinking Standards 2 and 3—the student comprehends a variety of historical sources and engages in historical analysis and interpretation.

Content Era 8 (1929-1945)—the student understands the causes and course of WWII, the character of the war at home and abroad, and its reshaping of the U.S. role in world affairs.

**TIME REQUIREMENT:** 1 day in-class lesson

**DIRECTIONS:**

1. Play the abbreviated version of FDR's “Day of Infamy” speech available at <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/day-of-infamy/images/infamy-radio-address.wav>
2. Distribute or display the attached draft of FDR's “Proposed Message to The Congress.”
3. Have students note the handwritten changes on the document.
4. Explain that this is an instance of editing for meaning, tone, and clarity. Review/introduce these terms.

5. Students will be asked to evaluate the changes made to the original draft of the document and how they affect the meaning, tone, and clarity of the document.
6. Using the first example of substituting the word “infamy” for “world history” discuss with your students the impact of the change. Is one word choice better than the other? Why or why not?
7. Distribute and have students complete the Artifact Reading Guide appropriate for your grade level (included)
8. Play the full version of the “Day of Infamy” speech while students have their draft copies with them [http://research.archives.gov/accesswebapp/faces/showDetail?file=Item\\_1436350.xml&loc=261](http://research.archives.gov/accesswebapp/faces/showDetail?file=Item_1436350.xml&loc=261) (Speech begins at the 1:54 mark, or let it play through to assist with the setting)

**ASSESSMENT:**

Assessment will include the artifact reading guide that demonstrates their understanding of meaning, tone, and clarity.

**ENRICHMENT:**

The National WWII Museum has launched **My Town Remembers WWII: An Interactive Photo Contest**. Pearl Harbor marked the beginning of U.S. military involvement in World War II. For the next four years, Americans would be involved in the armed forces, in production jobs, and conservation on the Home Front. The war touched every community, and every community has some way of memorializing these efforts. The National WWII Museum wants to know how WWII is honored in your town. It could be a landmark named after a WWII hero, a plaque on a factory that made material essential for the war, or a museum or historical society that contains artifacts from WWII. Find out how your students can participate and view an Interactive Map showcasing submissions at:

<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/my-town-remembers-wwii>

December 7, 1941.

PROPOSED MESSAGE TO THE CONGRESS

Yesterday, December 7, 1941, a date which will live in ~~world history~~ <sup>infamy</sup>  
 the United States of America was ~~suddenly~~ <sup>suddenly</sup> and deliberately attacked  
 by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan. ~~with the intention of~~

The United States was at the moment at peace with that nation and was  
~~still in~~ <sup>still in</sup> ~~conducting~~ the conversations with its Government and its Emperor looking  
 toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after  
 Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in ~~Hawaii and the Philippines~~ <sup>Oahu</sup>

the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered  
 to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a ~~former~~ <sup>recent American</sup> message, ~~from the~~

~~secretary.~~ <sup>While</sup> ~~This reply contained a statement that diplomatic negotiations~~ <sup>started</sup> ~~must be considered at an end, but~~ <sup>it</sup> contained no threat ~~and~~ <sup>or</sup> hint of ~~an~~ <sup>war or</sup>  
 armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance ~~of Hawaii, and especially of~~  
 Hawaii, from Japan make <sup>it</sup> obvious that the ~~attack~~ <sup>idea</sup> ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> deliberately  
 planned many days <sup>or 7000 weeks</sup> ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Govern-  
 ment has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false  
 statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

*at the deliberation of Japan*  
*to maintain its system*

The attacks yesterday on ~~Manila and on the Island of Oahu~~ *the Hawaiian Islands* has

caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition American ~~ships~~ ships have been torpedoed on the high seas between San Francisco and Honolulu.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya.

*Last night Japanese forces attacked Saipan. Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending <sup>to the Philippines</sup> throughout the Pacific area.*

The facts of yesterday speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications ~~of these attacks~~ *of these attacks* <sup>to</sup> ~~on~~ the safety of our nation.

As Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy I have, ~~of course,~~ directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

Long will we remember the character of the onslaught against us.

*(A) No matter how long it may take us to overcome this perverted invasion the American people will in their righteous might win through to absolute victory.*

I speak the will of the Congress and of the people ~~of this~~  
~~country~~ when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to  
 the uttermost but will see to it that this form of treachery shall  
 never endanger us again. Hostilities exist. There is no mincing  
 the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in  
 grave danger.

I, therefore, ask that the Congress declare that since the  
 unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December  
 seventh, a state of war <sup>has</sup> <sup>ex</sup> <sup>ist</sup> between the United States and the  
 Japanese Empire.

\*\*\*\*\*

~~Our people in  
 full confidence in our might~~

## Day of Infamy Artifact Reading Guide—High School

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt prepared to give a monumental address to Congress and the American people on December 8, 1941 describing the attack on Pearl Harbor and asking Congress for a declaration of war against Japan. He knew that this speech would be one of the most important in American history. Therefore, his word choice was of great importance. Using the draft copy of FDR's "Day of Infamy" address, evaluate his edits and word choice for meaning, tone, and clarity. From this document, choose any 3 of FDR's edits.

FDR's edit on the draft of the document.  Example: Changed "world history" to "infamy."	Was this change for meaning, tone, clarity, or a combination of the 3?	Using the meanings of the words/phrases, support your choice from column two.	Did the change strengthen or weaken the speech? Why or how?

## Day of Infamy Artifact Reading Guide—Middle School

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt prepared to give a monumental address to Congress and the American people on December 8, 1941 describing the attack on Pearl Harbor and asking Congress for a declaration of war against Japan. He knew that this speech would be one of the most important in American history. Therefore, the meanings and tone of his words were of great importance. Using the draft copy of FDR's "Day of Infamy" address, identify the changes in meaning and tone with his edits.

### Meaning

#### 1. "Simultaneously" to "suddenly"

Definition of simultaneously

Definition of suddenly

Why did he make the change?

### Tone

#### 2. "Diplomatic negotiations must be considered at an end" to "Seemed useless to continue the existing negotiations"

Tone of "must be considered at an end."

Tone of "Seemed useless to continue."

Why did he make the change?

### Clarity

#### 3. Adding "at the solicitation of Japan" to the first line of the second paragraph

Meaning of solicitation

Why did he make the change?