

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT—2009-2012
The Power of Words:
America's Entry into WWII
From Dan Martin

Grade: 11th

Length of Class: 48 minutes

Inquiry (Essential Questions):

- How did the events at Pearl Harbor change America's outlook towards the war over in Europe?
- Why were some Americans hesitant to allow the federal government to advocate for war?

Objectives (Content & Skills):

- Students will:
 - Analyze primary source documents
 - Explain the use of symbolic language
 - Compare and contrast the differing opinions over America's declaration of war.

Materials (Included below):

- President Roosevelt's "A Date Which Will Live in Infamy"
- Charles Lindbergh "What Do We Mean by Democracy and Freedom?"
- President Roosevelt's "Fireside Chat 19"

Activities:

- Students are expected to work in pairs deciphering & analyzing the primary source documents to identify the differing opinions over whether to get involved in World War II
- Each pair is responsible for completing the questions together
- A class discussion will follow using the documents as the basis for the conversation

Assessment:

- Student questions will be collected and graded at the end of the class period
- Informal observation of student responses during group discussion

Connecticut Grade Level Expectations:

- Standard 1.1
 - 7. Analyze the influence of nationalism on American society
- Standard 1.3
 - 25. Evaluate the role and impact of the significant individual on historical events
- Standard 2.1
 - 1. Find relevant and accurate information from a variety of sources to answer a history/social studies question
- Standard 2.2
 - 3. Cite evidence from a source to determine an author's purpose and intended audience
- Standard 2.4
 - 10. Prepare formal oral arguments using relevant evidence to defend a point of view.

- Standard 3.1
 - 1. Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event
- Standard 3.2
 - 5. Develop criteria for judging the actions or policies of an individual or group in the past

Background:

Early in the afternoon of December 7, 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his chief foreign policy aide, Harry Hopkins, were interrupted by a telephone call from Secretary of War Henry Stimson and told that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. At about 5:00 p.m., following meetings with his military advisers, the President calmly and decisively dictated to his secretary, Grace Tully, a request to Congress for a declaration of war. He had composed the speech in his head after deciding on a brief, uncomplicated appeal to the people of the United States rather than a thorough recitation of Japanese perfidies, as Secretary of State Cordell Hull had urged.

President Roosevelt then revised the typed draft—marking it up, updating military information, and selecting alternative wordings that strengthened the tone of the speech. He made the most significant change in the critical first line, which originally read, "a date which will live in world history." Grace Tully then prepared the final reading copy, which Roosevelt subsequently altered in three more places.

On December 8, at 12:30 p.m., Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and the Nation via radio. The Senate responded with a unanimous vote in support of war; only Montana pacifist Jeanette Rankin dissented in the House. At 4:00 p.m. that same afternoon, President Roosevelt signed the declaration of war.

Pearl Harbor Speech:

Yesterday, Dec. 7, 1941 -- a date which will live in infamy -- the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval and air forces of the Empire of Japan.

The United States was at peace with that nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with the government and its emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in Oahu, the Japanese ambassador to the United States and his colleagues delivered to the Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. While this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time, the Japanese government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. Very many American lives have been lost. In addition, American ships have been reported 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 Hong Kong.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked Guam.

Last night, Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands.

Last night, the Japanese attacked Wake Island.

This morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending 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 to the very life and safety of our nation.

As commander in chief of the Army and Navy, I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

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

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory.

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 will make very certain that this form of treachery shall never endanger us again.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces -- with the unbending determination of our people -- we will gain the inevitable triumph -- so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, Dec. 7, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese empire.

Be prepared to answer the following focus questions:

1. To whom was this speech addressed?
2. Why did FDR include emotionally charged words, repetition & motivational phrases?
3. What promises does FDR guarantee to the American people?

Background:

America First Committee, founded in September 1940, was the most powerful isolationist group in America before the United States entered World War II. It had over 800,000 members, who wanted to keep America neutral. It tried to influence public opinion through publications and speeches.

What Do We Mean by Democracy and Freedom? Speech was scheduled for an AFC rally in Boston on December 12, 1941. Due to Pearl Harbor, it was never delivered.

What Do We Mean by Democracy and Freedom? Charles Lindbergh

In the slogans and propaganda that have been hurled back and forth during these months of war, there has been much discussion of those qualities of American life call Democracy and Freedom. Committees have been found to defend and to befriend democracy, and to fight for freedom. Our President says we must make this nation an “arsenal for Democracy,” and that it is our mission to spread, by force if necessary, various forms of freedom throughout the world.

I believe it is time to define exactly what we mean by democracy and freedom. These are qualities too sacred to our country, to our traditions, and to our hopes, to be left to the irresponsible use of slogans and propaganda. It is meaningless to talk about fighting for freedom or defending Democracy unless we have first established, deep in our minds and hearts, what freedom and democracy really mean.

I believe in freedom and I believe in democracy, but I do not believe in the form of freedom and democracy toward which our President is leading us today. I say that democracy is gone from a nation when its people are no longer informed of the fundamental policies and intentions of its government. I say that the word freedom is a travesty among men who have been forced into war by a President they elected because he promised peace.

If democracy means anything at all, it means that the citizens of a democratic state have the right to be informed about, and to vote upon, the major policies of their government. If freedom means anything at all, it means that free citizens have the right to decide whether or not they send their men to die in foreign wars.

A democratic people must be an informed people, a trusted people. If we do not know what our government is doing or what it intends to do; if we have no right to vote upon the issue of foreign war; if our news is to be censored and mixed with propaganda, as in the totalitarian states; if our citizens are to be drafted, and our national economy upset, by a President who ran for his first term on promises of economy, and for his third term on promises of peace; then ours is no longer a free and democratic nation.

Men and women of Massachusetts: Freedom and Democracy cannot long exist without a third quality, a quality called Integrity. It is a quality whose absence is alarming in our government today. Without integrity, freedom and democracy will become only politicians' nicknames for an American totalitarian state.

What we need today is not a “Committee to Defend Democracy” by “steps short of war”, but a “Committee to Defend Integrity” by steps that are not short of anything at all. We do not need a “Committee to Fight for Freedom” abroad, as much as we need a committee to fight for the freedom of American citizens to decide their own destiny at home. I think we need a “New Deal”, but we need one that holds its cards about the table.

There is one word that describes better than all others our danger in America. It is not invasion; it is not intervention; it is not Germany or Russia or Japan; that word is subterfuge – subterfuge in our Government;

subterfuge in our political campaigns. Subterfuge marked every step we made “short of war”, and it now marks every step we are making “short of” a dictatorial system in America.

Our nation has been led to war with promises of peace. It is now being led toward dictatorship with promises of democracy. The battle cry of freedom is being used to regiment our people. It is time to strip the masque from the leadership we have been following. It is time to find out what ideas and what beliefs march behind the words waving on its banners. Many of us are tired of listening to promises that are made “again, and again, and again”, and then turn out to be nothing more than the “oratory” of a political campaign.

The record of the Roosevelt Administration has been a record of subterfuge masquerading as a crusade for freedom. “Cash and Carry”, “Steps Short of War”, “Aid to the Democracies”, “Neutrality Patrols”, “Lend and Lease”; every one of these slogans was used to deceive the American people; every one of them was a disgrace to the names of democracy and freedom.

The United States is on the verge of war today. Our navy has already become involved in fighting. We are on the verge of war in Asia, in Europe, and in Africa; war on the Atlantic, war on the Pacific, on the Mediterranean Sea, on the Indian Ocean; war with Germany, with Italy, with Japan; war, possibly, against France and Spain and some of the smaller countries of Europe as well. And what is our objective? Are we to die by the millions to make the world safe for ideals of freedom and democracy that are denied to us in our own country? Are we to spend unlimited American lives, throw American business into bankruptcy, and harness our children and our grandchildren with debt, in a crusade to make democracy safe among foreign nations who don't desire it?

Men and women of Massachusetts: It is time for a new movement in this country, a movement with its roots in American traditions, and with its branches in American ideals, a movement which is not tied to political parties, and which says what it means, and which means what it says, a movement which carries on its banners the words – Freedom, Democracy, Integrity.

Be prepared to answer the following focus questions:

1. What indication does Lindbergh provide that Democracy and Freedom have been compromised? How can the nation go about ensuring these principles hold true to their initial intent?
2. What does the author mean when he says the following and how is it relevant to what is taking place in Europe?

“Subterfuge in our Government; subterfuge in our political campaigns. Subterfuge marked every step we made “short of war”, and it now marks every step we are making “short of” a dictatorial system in America”
3. According to Charles Lindbergh in what ways did President Roosevelt mislead the American people?
4. As stated in the background, this speech was never delivered to the American people. What does this tell you about the political environment developing around the United States after Pearl Harbor?

Background:

In this address just two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt prepares the nation for the war ahead. He urges the nation to steel itself for casualties and setbacks and prepare to make the sacrifices necessary in the coming fight. The President also emphasizes that Italy and Germany remain grave threats to the United States but stops short of declaring war on the two nations.

Fireside Chat 19: On the War with Japan (December 9, 1941) Franklin Delano Roosevelt

My fellow Americans:

The sudden criminal attacks perpetrated by the Japanese in the Pacific provide the climax of a decade of international immorality. Powerful and resourceful gangsters have banded together to make war upon the whole human race. Their challenge has now been flung at the United States of America. The Japanese have treacherously violated the longstanding peace between us. Many American soldiers and sailors have been killed by enemy action. American ships have been sunk; American airplanes have been destroyed.

The Congress and the people of the United States have accepted that challenge. Together with other free peoples, we are now fighting to maintain our right to live among our world neighbors in freedom, in common decency, without fear of assault.

I can say with utmost confidence that no Americans today or a thousand years hence, need feel anything but pride in our patience and in our efforts through all the years toward achieving a peace in the Pacific which would be fair and honorable to every nation, large or small. And no honest person, today or a thousand years hence, will be able to suppress a sense of indignation and horror at the treachery committed by the military dictators of Japan, under the very shadow of the flag of peace borne by their special envoys in our midst.

The course that Japan has followed for the past ten years in Asia has paralleled the course of Hitler and Mussolini in Europe and in Africa. Today, it has become far more than a parallel. It is actual collaboration so well calculated that all the continents of the world, and all the oceans, are now considered by the Axis strategists as one gigantic battlefield.

In 1931, ten years ago, Japan invaded Manchukuo -- without warning.

In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia -- without warning.

In 1938, Hitler occupied Austria -- without warning.

In 1939, Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia -- without warning.

Later in '39, Hitler invaded Poland -- without warning.

In 1940, Hitler invaded Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg -- without warning.

In 1940, Italy attacked France and later Greece -- without warning.

In 1941, also, Hitler invaded Russia -- without warning.

And now Japan has attacked Malaya and Thailand -- and the United States -- without warning.

It is all of one pattern. We are now in this war. We are all in it -- all the way. Every single man, woman and child is a

partner in the most tremendous undertaking of our American history. We must share together the bad news and the good news, the defeats and the victories -- the changing fortunes of war.

It must be remembered by each and every one of us that our free and rapid communication these days must be greatly restricted in wartime. It is not possible to receive full and speedy and accurate reports from distant areas of combat. This is particularly true where naval operations are concerned. For in these days of the marvels of the radio it is often impossible for the Commanders of various units to report their activities by radio at all, for the very simple reason that this information would become available to the enemy and would disclose their position and their plan of defense or attack. Of necessity there will be delays in officially confirming or denying reports of operations, but we will not hide facts from the country if we know the facts and if the enemy will not be aided by their disclosure.

To all newspapers and radio stations -- all those who reach the eyes and ears of the American people -- I say this: You have a most grave responsibility to the nation now and for the duration of this war. If you feel that your Government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so. But in the absence of all the facts, as revealed by official sources, you have no right in the ethics of patriotism to deal out unconfirmed reports in such a way as to make people believe that they are gospel truth. Every citizen, in every walk of life, shares this same responsibility. The lives of our soldiers and sailors -- the whole future of this nation -- depend upon the manner in which each and every one of us fulfills his obligation to our country.

Now a word about the recent past and the future. A year and a half has elapsed since the fall of France, when the whole world first realized the mechanized might which the Axis nations had been building up for so many years. America has used that year and a half to great advantage. Knowing that the attack might reach us in all too short a time, we immediately began greatly to increase our industrial strength and our capacity to meet the demands of modern warfare.

Precious months were gained by sending vast quantities of our war material to the nations of the world still able to resist Axis aggression. Our policy rested on the fundamental truth that the defense of any country resisting Hitler or Japan was in the long run the defense of our own country. That policy has been justified. It has given us time, invaluable time, to build our American assembly lines of production. Assembly lines are now in operation. Others are being rushed to completion. A steady stream of tanks and planes, of guns and ships and shells and equipment -- that is what these eighteen months have given us.

But it is all only a beginning of what still has to be done. We must be set to face a long war against crafty and powerful bandits. The attack at Pearl Harbor can be repeated at any one of many points, points in both oceans and along both our coast lines and against all the rest of the Hemisphere.

It will not only be a long war, it will be a hard war. That is the basis on which we now lay all our plans. That is the yardstick by which we measure what we shall need and demand; money, materials, doubled and quadrupled production -- ever-increasing. The production must be not only for our own Army and Navy and air forces. It must reinforce the other armies and navies and air forces fighting the Nazis and the war lords of Japan throughout the Americas and throughout the world.

I have been working today on the subject of production. Your Government has decided on two broad policies. The first is to speed up all existing production by working on a seven day week basis in every war industry, including the production of essential raw materials. The second policy, now being put into form, is to rush additions to the capacity of production by building more new plants, by adding to old plants, and by using the many smaller plants for war needs.

On the road ahead there lies hard work -- grueling work -- day and night, every hour and every minute. And I am sure that the people in every part of the nation are prepared in their individual living to win this war. I am sure that they will cheerfully help to pay a large part of its financial cost while it goes on. I am sure they will cheerfully give up

those material things that they are asked to give up.

Be prepared to answer the following focus questions:

1. How does President Roosevelt connect the events that took place at Pearl Harbor with the problems occurring in Europe?
2. What underlining message does President Roosevelt provide when he discusses the responsibility the newspapers and radio stations have for the country? Why is it important?
3. What expectation does President Roosevelt have of American industries to prepare for why?