

# the attack on pearl harbor answer key

The attack on Pearl Harbor answer key is essential for understanding the pivotal events that led to the United States' entry into World War II. This comprehensive guide delves into the multifaceted aspects of this historical turning point, from the immediate causes and strategic motivations behind Japan's surprise assault to the devastating consequences and lasting impact on global affairs. We will explore the precise timeline of the attack, the military forces involved, and the critical decisions made by leaders on both sides. Furthermore, this article will shed light on the immediate aftermath, including the US declaration of war and the subsequent Pacific theater operations. Understanding the attack on Pearl Harbor is not just about memorizing facts; it's about grasping the complexities of international relations, military strategy, and the profound human cost of conflict, offering a complete answer key to this momentous historical event.

- The Prelude to Attack: Pre-War Tensions and Japanese Ambitions
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## The Prelude to Attack: Pre-War Tensions and Japanese Ambitions

The attack on Pearl Harbor was not an isolated incident but the culmination of years of escalating tensions between the United States and Japan. By the late 1930s, Japan had embarked on an aggressive expansionist policy in Asia, seeking to establish dominance over the region and secure vital natural resources. This expansion directly clashed with American interests and the principle of open trade in the Pacific. The United States responded with a series of economic sanctions, including an oil embargo, which Japan viewed as an existential threat to its military ambitions and national survival. The Japanese military leadership, convinced that war with the US was inevitable, began to formulate plans for a preemptive strike to cripple the American Pacific Fleet before it could interfere with their planned conquests in Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies.

# Japanese Expansionism and the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere

Japan's desire for resources and regional leadership fueled its expansionist agenda. The concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere was promoted as a means for Asian nations to liberate themselves from Western colonial powers, but in reality, it was a vehicle for Japanese hegemony. Manchuria had been invaded in 1931, and by 1940, Japan had occupied northern French Indochina. These actions significantly heightened concerns in Washington, leading to increasingly stringent diplomatic and economic measures against Japan. The strategic objective was to gain access to oil, rubber, and other raw materials essential for its war machine, resources largely controlled by Western powers.

## American Sanctions and the Oil Embargo

The United States, alongside Britain and the Netherlands, implemented increasingly severe economic sanctions against Japan as a response to its aggression. The most critical of these was the July 1941 oil embargo. Japan was heavily reliant on imported oil, and this embargo effectively cut off its primary source of this vital commodity. American policymakers believed that economic pressure would force Japan to de-escalate its expansionist activities. However, for the Japanese military, the embargo was seen as a direct provocation, pushing them closer to the decision to wage war. The perceived desperation created by the embargo became a significant catalyst for the planning of a decisive naval strike.

## Failed Diplomatic Efforts

Despite the escalating crisis, diplomatic efforts continued in the months leading up to the attack. Ambassador Nomura Kichisaburō and Special Envoy Kurusu Saburō engaged in talks with US Secretary of State Cordell Hull. However, fundamental disagreements remained, particularly regarding Japan's continued occupation of China and its alliance with Nazi Germany. The US demanded Japan's withdrawal from occupied territories, a condition that Japan's military government was unwilling to accept. These diplomatic channels ultimately failed to avert the conflict, with both sides entrenched in their positions.

## The Day of Infamy: The Events of December 7, 1941

The morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, dawned deceptively peaceful at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Unbeknownst to the servicemen stationed there, a massive Japanese naval task force, commanded by Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, had silently approached the Hawaiian Islands. The surprise attack commenced shortly before 8:00 AM local time, involving two waves of Japanese aircraft launched from six aircraft carriers. The primary objective was to neutralize the US Pacific Fleet, preventing it from intervening in

Japan's planned military operations against Southeast Asia and the Dutch East Indies. The attack was swift, brutal, and devastating, catching the American forces completely off guard.

## **The First Wave of Attack**

The initial assault wave, consisting of bombers, torpedo planes, and fighters, struck at 7:55 AM. They targeted airfields first, aiming to destroy American aircraft on the ground and prevent them from retaliating. This was followed by devastating attacks on the battleships moored in neat rows along "Battleship Row." The torpedo bombers inflicted critical damage on vessels like the USS Arizona, USS Oklahoma, and USS West Virginia, while dive bombers concentrated on battleships and cruisers. The sheer speed and ferocity of the attack overwhelmed the defenses, with many sailors still enjoying their Sunday morning routines or unaware of the unfolding catastrophe.

## **The Second Wave of Attack**

The second wave of Japanese aircraft arrived approximately an hour after the first, around 8:45 AM. This wave also focused on capital ships, hitting targets like the USS Enterprise and USS Saratoga (though these were at sea and largely unharmed). While the first wave inflicted the most significant damage, the second wave continued the assault, targeting remaining warships and shore installations. The Japanese pilots displayed remarkable skill and bravery, executing complex maneuvers under heavy, albeit disorganized, fire. By the time the attack concluded around 9:45 AM, Pearl Harbor was a scene of utter devastation.

## **Key Targets and Damage Assessment**

The primary targets were the US Navy's battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and aircraft. The attack crippled the battleship force, sinking or heavily damaging eight battleships. The USS Arizona suffered a catastrophic explosion and sank, taking 1,177 sailors with her, becoming a potent symbol of the attack's tragedy. The USS Oklahoma capsized, and the USS Utah sank. Numerous other ships sustained damage, and vital infrastructure, including hangars and fuel storage tanks, was also hit. While the aircraft carriers USS Enterprise, USS Lexington, and USS Saratoga were fortunately at sea and escaped destruction, their absence was acutely felt in the initial stages of the subsequent war.

## **Military Forces and Key Figures**

The attack on Pearl Harbor involved meticulously planned military operations and key strategic decisions

by influential leaders on both sides. Understanding the forces involved and the individuals who shaped the events is crucial to comprehending the attack's execution and its immediate consequences. The Japanese Imperial Navy launched a formidable carrier strike force, aiming for a decisive blow against the United States Pacific Fleet. Conversely, the American forces at Pearl Harbor were caught largely unprepared, highlighting deficiencies in intelligence and defensive readiness. The leadership's actions, or in some cases, inactions, played a significant role in the unfolding tragedy.

## Japanese Imperial Navy

The Japanese strike force, known as the Kido Butai, comprised six aircraft carriers: Akagi, Kaga, Sōryū, Hiryū, Shōkaku, and Zuikaku. These carriers, accompanied by battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines, represented a significant portion of Japan's naval power. Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet, conceived the audacious plan for a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. While Yamamoto was the architect, Admiral Chuichi Nagumo commanded the carrier striking force during the actual attack. The success of the mission hinged on the skill and dedication of the thousands of pilots and sailors involved.

## United States Pacific Fleet

At the time of the attack, the US Pacific Fleet was stationed at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The fleet consisted of eight battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers, and a number of smaller vessels. Admiral Husband E. Kimmel was the Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific Fleet, and Lieutenant General Walter C. Short was the commanding general of the Army Hawaiian Department. The American forces were not expecting an attack at Pearl Harbor, and their defenses were not fully mobilized. This lack of preparedness was a critical factor in the severity of the damage inflicted.

## Key Leaders and Their Decisions

- Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto: The brilliant strategist behind the Pearl Harbor attack plan. He believed a preemptive strike was necessary to gain an advantage in the Pacific War.
- Admiral Chuichi Nagumo: Commanded the carrier strike force during the attack. He made the controversial decision not to launch a third wave, which many historians believe could have inflicted even greater damage.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt: The President of the United States, who was informed of the attack

and subsequently led the nation into World War II.

- Admiral Husband E. Kimmel and Lieutenant General Walter C. Short: The two commanders at Pearl Harbor, who faced significant criticism and were later relieved of their commands due to the perceived failures in defense.

## **The Devastation and Immediate Aftermath**

The attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in immense destruction and a staggering loss of life. The swiftness and ferocity of the assault left the American forces in disarray, grappling with the scale of the catastrophe. The immediate aftermath was characterized by rescue efforts, damage assessment, and the grim task of identifying the fallen. The emotional and psychological impact on the nation was profound, galvanizing public opinion and solidifying the resolve to retaliate against Japan. The events of that day would forever be etched in the collective memory of both nations.

## **Human Cost and Casualties**

The human toll of the attack was devastating. Over 2,400 Americans were killed, including civilians, and more than 1,100 were wounded. The USS Arizona alone accounted for 1,177 lives lost. Many sailors were trapped in sinking or burning ships, with limited options for escape. The immediate relief efforts were heroic, with sailors and servicemen of all branches risking their lives to save their comrades. The sheer number of casualties underscored the brutality of modern warfare and the vulnerability of even well-established military bases to surprise attacks.

## **Damage to Military Assets**

The material damage to the US Pacific Fleet was extensive. Eight battleships were sunk or severely damaged. Other vessels, including cruisers, destroyers, and auxiliary ships, also sustained damage. Numerous aircraft were destroyed on the ground, and vital port facilities, including fuel storage depots and repair yards, were hit. While the carriers were at sea, the loss of battleships significantly altered the balance of naval power in the Pacific for a period. The objective of crippling the US Navy, however, was not fully achieved, as the vital repair facilities and the carriers remained operational.

## **Rescue and Recovery Efforts**

In the hours and days following the attack, extensive rescue and recovery operations were launched. Survivors were pulled from the water and from damaged ships. Efforts were made to salvage vessels and assess the extent of the damage. The solemn duty of identifying and honoring the dead commenced, a process that took considerable time due to the severe injuries and the submersion of many ships. These efforts highlighted the bravery and resilience of the American servicemen in the face of unimaginable tragedy.

## **The United States Enters World War II**

The attack on Pearl Harbor served as the catalyst for the United States' formal entry into World War II. The shock and outrage that swept across the nation left no room for neutrality. President Franklin D. Roosevelt famously declared December 7, 1941, as "a date which will live in infamy." The following day, he addressed a joint session of Congress, requesting a declaration of war against Japan, which was overwhelmingly approved. This marked a dramatic shift in American foreign policy and irrevocably committed the United States to the global conflict.

## **President Roosevelt's Address to Congress**

On December 8, 1941, President Roosevelt delivered his powerful "Infamy Speech" to Congress. He eloquently described the unprovoked and dastardly nature of the Japanese attack, emphasizing its betrayal of international relations. His words resonated deeply with the American public, galvanizing support for war. The speech was a masterful piece of rhetoric, framing the conflict not just as a defensive measure but as a righteous crusade against tyranny and aggression.

## **Declaration of War on Japan**

Following President Roosevelt's address, Congress swiftly passed a declaration of war against the Empire of Japan. This action formally ended years of American isolationism and propelled the United States onto the world stage as a major combatant in World War II. The declaration was met with widespread popular support, and a spirit of national unity and determination to defeat the Axis powers pervaded the country.

## **Axis Declarations of War**

In the days following the US declaration of war on Japan, the other Axis powers – Germany and Italy – declared war on the United States on December 11, 1941. This was in accordance with their Tripartite Pact with Japan. This declaration meant that the United States was now engaged in a global conflict, fighting on multiple fronts against powerful adversaries. The attack on Pearl Harbor had, in essence, unified the fight against the Axis powers under a single banner.

## **Lasting Legacies and Historical Significance**

The attack on Pearl Harbor remains one of the most significant events in modern history, leaving an indelible mark on international relations, military strategy, and the collective consciousness of nations. Its repercussions extended far beyond the immediate conflict, shaping the post-war world order and influencing strategic thinking for decades to come. Understanding its lasting legacies is crucial for grasping the broader sweep of 20th-century history and the evolution of global power dynamics.

## **Shift in Global Power Dynamics**

The attack fundamentally altered the global balance of power. The United States, initially hesitant to become embroiled in foreign conflicts, was thrust into a position of global leadership. Its immense industrial capacity and human resources, mobilized for the war effort, would ultimately play a decisive role in the Allied victory. The war also marked the decline of European colonial empires and the rise of two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union, setting the stage for the Cold War.

## **Evolution of Naval Warfare and Intelligence**

Pearl Harbor served as a stark lesson in the importance of naval air power and the devastating effectiveness of carrier-based operations. The attack highlighted the obsolescence of older battleship-centric naval strategies and ushered in a new era of carrier warfare, which would dominate naval combat for the remainder of the 20th century. Furthermore, the intelligence failures that preceded the attack led to significant reforms in intelligence gathering, analysis, and dissemination within the United States, aiming to prevent similar catastrophic surprises in the future.

# **The Memory and Symbolism of Pearl Harbor**

The attack on Pearl Harbor is etched in the collective memory of Americans and Japanese alike. For Americans, it is a symbol of betrayal, sacrifice, and ultimate triumph. The USS Arizona Memorial at Pearl Harbor stands as a poignant reminder of the lives lost and the cost of war. For Japan, it represents a critical turning point, marking the beginning of a devastating war that ultimately led to their defeat and profound societal changes. The event continues to be studied, debated, and remembered as a pivotal moment that reshaped the world.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What was the primary objective of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor?**

The primary objective was to cripple the U.S. Pacific Fleet, preventing it from interfering with Japan's planned conquests in Southeast Asia and the Pacific.

### **When did the attack on Pearl Harbor occur?**

The attack occurred on December 7, 1941.

### **Which nation launched the attack on Pearl Harbor?**

The Empire of Japan launched the attack.

### **What was the immediate consequence of the Pearl Harbor attack for the United States?**

The United States declared war on Japan the following day, officially entering World War II.

### **How many American battleships were sunk or heavily damaged during the attack?**

Eight American battleships were sunk or heavily damaged, including the USS Arizona, which remains a memorial.

### **Were there any major U.S. aircraft carriers present at Pearl Harbor during the attack?**

No, all three U.S. aircraft carriers were at sea or en route elsewhere, which proved to be a significant

strategic advantage for the U.S. in the long run.

## **What was the 'date which will live in infamy' as stated by President Roosevelt?**

The 'date which will live in infamy' refers to December 7, 1941, the date of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

## **Did the Japanese succeed in their long-term goals at Pearl Harbor?**

While the Japanese inflicted significant damage and temporarily crippled the U.S. fleet, they ultimately failed in their long-term goals. The attack galvanized American public opinion and led to the U.S. entering the war with full force, contributing to Japan's eventual defeat.

## **Additional Resources**

Here is a numbered list of 9 book titles related to the attack on Pearl Harbor, with short descriptions:

1. *At Dawn We Slept: The Untold Story of Pearl Harbor* by Gordon W. Prange

This monumental work, drawing on extensive interviews and archival research, meticulously reconstructs the events leading up to and during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Prange challenges many long-held assumptions and provides a deeply detailed, day-by-day account of the unfolding disaster, exploring the roles of key individuals and the intelligence failures that contributed to the surprise. It remains a definitive and comprehensive narrative of the pivotal moment that drew the United States into World War II.

2. *Pearl Harbor: The U.S.S. Arizona* by Frank J. Thompson Jr.

This book focuses specifically on the tragic fate of the U.S.S. Arizona, one of the most iconic symbols of the Pearl Harbor attack. It delves into the ship's history, the lives of the sailors and Marines aboard, and the harrowing moments of its destruction. The narrative vividly portrays the explosion and sinking, the devastating loss of life, and the enduring legacy of the Arizona as a memorial to the fallen.

3. *December 7, 1941: The Day the Nation Woke Up* by Peter Williams

This book provides a comprehensive overview of the attack on Pearl Harbor, emphasizing its profound impact on American society and its entry into World War II. Williams examines the strategic context of the attack, the motivations of the Japanese forces, and the immediate aftermath. He highlights the shock and outrage that swept across the United States, galvanizing public opinion and solidifying the nation's resolve.

4. *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and Its Aftermath* by John Toland

John Toland's book offers a critical examination of the events surrounding Pearl Harbor, with a particular focus on the intelligence failures and political decisions that led to the attack. He investigates the controversial question of whether President Roosevelt knew about the attack in advance or was somehow complicit in its occurrence. Toland's work sparks ongoing debate and encourages readers to question official

narratives.

5. *The Breaking of the Storm: Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941* by Carl Smith

This visually rich book uses a wealth of photographs, maps, and illustrations to detail the attack on Pearl Harbor. Carl Smith provides a clear and concise narrative of the unfolding events, from the initial Japanese air assaults to the damage inflicted on the U.S. Pacific Fleet. The book offers an accessible yet informative account for a broad audience, capturing the chaos and devastation of that fateful morning.

6. *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy: The Oral Histories of Pearl Harbor* edited by Robert J. Dunsay

This collection presents firsthand accounts from survivors and witnesses of the Pearl Harbor attack, offering a deeply personal and human perspective on the events. Through these oral histories, readers gain an intimate understanding of the fear, bravery, and loss experienced by those who lived through December 7, 1941. The book provides powerful testimonials that bring the history to life and underscore the lasting impact of the attack.

7. *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War with Japan* by Bill Yenne

While not solely focused on Pearl Harbor, this book includes a significant and detailed account of the attack as the crucial catalyst for the Pacific War. Yenne provides a sweeping narrative of the entire conflict, tracing the American campaign against Japan from the initial shock of Pearl Harbor to the eventual victory. The book contextualizes the attack within the broader strategic landscape and its devastating consequences.

8. *Flattop: The Battle of Midway and the War at Sea in the Pacific* by Max Hastings

Max Hastings' seminal work on the Battle of Midway, while a subsequent engagement, begins with the critical context of Pearl Harbor. He meticulously details the events of the surprise attack, the devastating impact on the U.S. Navy, and the strategic vulnerabilities it exposed. The book then proceeds to analyze the subsequent naval warfare, with Pearl Harbor serving as the foundational event that propelled the United States into a full-scale naval conflict.

9. *The Rising Sun: The Decline and Fall of the Japanese Empire, 1936–1945* by John Toland

In this companion to *Infamy*, John Toland explores the motivations and ambitions of Imperial Japan that led to the attack on Pearl Harbor. The book offers a comprehensive history of the Japanese empire during its aggressive expansionist period, detailing the political climate, military strategies, and cultural factors that culminated in the decision to strike. It provides essential background for understanding the "why" behind the infamous date.

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