On Dec. 7, 1941, at around 1:30 p.m., Navy Secretary Frank Knox told President Franklin D. Roosevelt that Pearl Harbor, a U.S. military base in Hawaii, had been attacked and more than 2,400 Americans were killed. Previous to Pearl Harbor, a war with Japan seemed likely but the attack made it imminent. The next day, a somber Roosevelt delivered this speech to Congress and the nation.

Mr. Vice President, Mr. Speaker, members of the Senate and the House of Representatives: Yesterday, December 7th, 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 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 the American island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States
and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of 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. I regret to tell you that 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.

And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today 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.

But always will our whole nation 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 that 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 it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

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 unbounding 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, December 7th, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.
Quiz

1. Which of the following statements accurately represents a relationship between central ideas?
   (A) The United States was surprised by the attack because they were in talks with Japan, but other countries were surprised too.
   (B) Roosevelt believes the people want the United States to defend itself, so he is asking Congress to declare war.
   (C) Roosevelt has directed the Army and Navy to defend the United States and he is asking Congress to declare war.
   (D) The United States will never forget what happened on Dec. 7, 1941, nor will the other countries that were attacked.

2. Roosevelt believes that the Japanese purposely deceived the United States. Which of these statements from the address BEST supports that idea?
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   (D) The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces.

3. According to the address, each of the following has contributed to Roosevelt’s decision to ask Congress to declare war EXCEPT:
   (A) Japan’s message stated that it is useless to continue talks.
   (B) Japan had been planning these attacks while in peace talks with the United States.
   (C) The other attacked countries have asked the United States for help.
   (D) The American people and Congress have expressed that they want to go to war.
4 Which of the following details LEAST influenced Roosevelt's decision to declare war on Congress?

(A) the surprise nature of the attack
(B) the American people's belief that their safety is at risk
(C) Japanese attacks on Hong Kong and Malaya
(D) damage done to the U.S. Army and Navy
Answer Key

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