



CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

Pearl Harbor: 80 Years Later

Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.



December 7, 1941 was a quiet Sunday morning. Just before 8:00 a.m. (HST) the Japanese military commenced a surprise attack that destroyed 180 U.S. aircraft, ruined or damaged more than a dozen ships, and took the lives of 2,403 Americans at the [Pearl Harbor Naval Base on Oahu, Hawaii](#). On December 8, 1941, before a joint session of Congress, President Franklin Roosevelt [proclaimed December 7 as a day of infamy and asked for a declaration of war](#) against the Empire of Japan, marking America’s entry into World War II.

It is in times of great adversity that America’s grit and resilience is tested, and that the people of this nation come together under the banner, [E Pluribus Unum](#). We are regularly reminded of the importance of the American spirit of unity when we recite the [Pledge of Allegiance](#) or read through our founding documents. In the wake of the attack on Pearl Harbor, this sentiment was no different.

Congress heeded President Roosevelt’s request and [voted nearly unanimously for war](#) with Japan. Every [branch of military service](#), all of which had been struggling for enlistments prior to the attack, saw thousands of individuals [waiting in hours-long lines](#) to enlist. People participated in resource drives, [grew victory gardens](#), purchased [war bonds](#) and willingly [rationed](#) everyday items, like food and gas. [Women stepped into vital jobs](#) left vacant on the home front. Even school children got involved. Through the [school war bonds campaign](#), a total of \$715 million was raised to support the war effort.



Ken Potts & Lou Conter

The only remaining survivors of the U.S.S. Arizona

The sacrifices of this generation of Americans were great. They gave of themselves unselfishly, and because of their devotion to securing victory, helped transform the United States into a global superpower and protector of world order. Dubbed the “greatest generation” for their efforts on the home front and the war front, a debt of gratitude is continued to be owed for all they helped to preserve, protect, and defend.

In a [radio address](#) to the nation on the evening of December 7, 1941 then First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt provided these words of encouragement:

“go about our daily business more determined than ever to do the ordinary things as well as we can and when we find a way to do anything more in our communities to help others, to build morale, to give a feeling of security, we must do it. Whatever is asked of us I am sure we can accomplish it. We are the free and unconquerable people of the United States of America.”

To Think and To Do: As we mark the 80th Anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor and our entry into World War II, let us heed Mrs. Roosevelt’s words and find ways to help others, build morale, and give that feeling of security whenever we can. In so doing, we are reminded of the importance of unity.

Learn More: about the attack on Pearl Harbor and WWII

- *[National Park Service](#)
- *[History Channel](#)
- *[Pearl Harbor Official Website](#)
- *[National WWII Museum](#)
- *[National Archives WWII Photos](#)



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