

Section 4

America Enters the War

Guide to Reading

Big Ideas

Government and Society After World War II began, the United States attempted to continue its prewar policy of neutrality.

Content Vocabulary

- hemispheric defense zone (p. 704)
- strategic materials (p. 706)

Academic Vocabulary

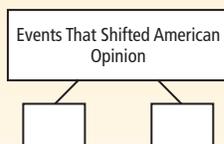
- revise (p. 702)
- purchase (p. 702)
- underestimate (p. 707)

People and Events to Identify

- America First Committee (p. 703)
- Lend-Lease Act (p. 704)
- Atlantic Charter (p. 705)

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about America's efforts to stay neutral, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below by naming events that shifted American opinion toward helping the Allies.



As World War II began, the United States remained officially neutral but aided Great Britain considerably in its fight against Germany. In the Pacific, Japan's territorial expansion led to growing tensions with the United States, which peaked when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor.

FDR Supports England

MAIN Idea Roosevelt favored changes in American neutrality laws, although Americans remained divided about the war and American involvement.

HISTORY AND YOU Have you ever been drawn into an argument when you just wanted to be left alone? Read about the increasing difficulty that the United States faced in trying to stay out of World War II.

President Roosevelt officially proclaimed the United States neutral two days after Britain and France declared war on Germany. Despite this proclamation, however, he was determined to help the two countries as much as possible in their struggle against Hitler.

Destroyers-for-Bases Deal

Soon after the war began, Roosevelt called Congress into a special session to **revise** the neutrality laws. He asked Congress to eliminate the ban on arms sales to nations at war. Public opinion strongly supported the president. Congress passed the new law, but isolationists demanded a price for the revision. Under the Neutrality Act of 1939, warring nations could buy weapons from the United States only on a "cash-and-carry" basis. This law was similar to the 1937 Neutrality Act governing the sale of nonmilitary items to countries that were at war.

In the spring of 1940, the United States faced its first test in remaining neutral. In May, Prime Minister Winston Churchill asked Roosevelt to transfer old American destroyers to Britain, which had lost nearly half its destroyers. To protect its cargo ships from German submarines and to block any German attempt to invade Britain, the nation needed more destroyers.

Determined to give Churchill the destroyers, Roosevelt used a loophole in the neutrality act that required cash for **purchases**. In exchange for the right to build American bases on British-controlled Newfoundland, Bermuda, and islands in the Caribbean, Roosevelt sent 50 old American destroyers to Britain. Because the deal did not involve an actual sale, the neutrality act did not apply.

Should America Stay Neutral in World War II?



▲ This 1939 cartoon shows Uncle Sam standing guard over democracy, whose only refuge is America.



▲ Nazi bullets whiz past Uncle Sam and his isolationist policies.

Analyzing VISUALS

DBQ

- Analyzing Visuals** According to the cartoon at left, what message is Europe sending to Uncle Sam?
- Analyzing Visuals** What do you observe about Uncle Sam's perch in the cartoon above?

The Isolationist Debate

Widespread acceptance of the destroyers-for-bases deal reflected a change in public opinion. By July 1940, most Americans favored offering limited aid to the Allies. That spirit was hardly unanimous, however. In fact, people who wanted greater American involvement in the war and those who felt that the United States should remain neutral began debating the issue in the spring of 1940.

At one extreme was the Fight for Freedom Committee, a group that urged the repeal of all neutrality laws and stronger action against Germany. At the other extreme was the **America First Committee**. It was a staunchly isolationist group opposed to any American intervention or aid to the Allies. The committee's members included aviator Charles Lindbergh and Senator Gerald Nye.

Closer to the center, the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, which journalist William Allen White headed, pressed

for increased American aid to the Allies but opposed armed intervention.

The heated neutrality debate took place during the 1940 presidential election campaign. For months, Americans had wondered whether President Roosevelt would follow the tradition George Washington had set and retire after a second term. With the United States in a precarious position, however, many believed a change of leaders might not be in the country's best interest. Roosevelt decided to run for an unprecedented third term.

During the campaign, FDR steered a careful course between neutrality and intervention. The Republican nominee, Wendell Willkie, did the same, promising he too would assist the Allies but stay out of the war. The voters reelected Roosevelt by a wide margin, preferring to keep a president they knew during this crisis period.

✓ Reading Check **Identifying** Identify different groups and their positions on U.S. neutrality in the late 1930s.

Edging Toward War

MAIN Idea In 1940 and 1941, the United States took more steps to provide aid to Great Britain.

HISTORY AND YOU What kinds of aid does America provide other countries today? Why? Read why FDR thought it was important to “lend” Britain some help.

Read
“The Four
Freedoms” on page
R53 in **Documents
in American History.**

With the election over, Roosevelt expanded the nation’s role in the war. Britain was fighting for democracy, he said, and the United States had to help. Speaking to Congress, he listed the “Four Freedoms” for which both the United States and Britain stood: freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear.

The Lend-Lease Act

By December 1940, Great Britain had run out of funds to wage its war against Germany. Roosevelt came up with a way to remove the cash requirement of the most recent neutrality act. He proposed the **Lend-Lease Act**, which allowed the United States to lend or lease arms to any country considered “vital to the defense of the United States.” The act allowed Roosevelt to send weapons to Britain if the British government promised to return or pay rent for them after the war.

Roosevelt warned that, if Britain fell, an “unholy alliance” of Germany, Japan, and Italy would keep trying to conquer the world. The president argued that the United States should become the “great arsenal of democracy” to keep the British fighting and make it unnecessary for Americans to go to war.

The America First Committee disagreed, but Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act by a wide margin. By the time the program ended, the United States had “lent” more than \$40 billion in weapons, vehicles, and other supplies to the Allied war effort.

While shipments of supplies to Britain began at once, lend-lease aid eventually went to the Soviet Union, as well. In June 1941, violating the Nazi-Soviet pact, Hitler invaded the Soviet Union. Although Churchill detested communism and considered Stalin a harsh dictator, he vowed that any person or state “who fights against Nazism will have our aid.” Roosevelt, too, supported this policy.

A Hemispheric Defense Zone

Congressional approval of the Lend-Lease Act did not solve the problem of getting American arms and supplies to Britain. German submarines patrolling the Atlantic Ocean were sinking hundreds of thousands of tons of shipments each month; the British Navy did not have enough ships to stop them.

Because the United States was still technically neutral, Roosevelt could not order the U.S. Navy to protect British cargo ships. Instead, he developed the idea of a **hemispheric defense zone**. Roosevelt declared that the entire western half of the Atlantic was part of the Western Hemisphere and, therefore, neutral. He then ordered the U.S. Navy to patrol the western Atlantic and reveal the location of German submarines to the British.

The Atlantic Charter

In August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill met on board American and British warships anchored near Newfoundland. During these meetings, the two men agreed on the text of

PRIMARY SOURCE

Aiding Britain, 1939–1941



The Four Freedoms

“In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world.

The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world.

The third is freedom from want—which . . . will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world.

The fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a world-wide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of physical aggression against any neighbor—anywhere in the world.”

—Address to Congress, January 6, 1941

the **Atlantic Charter**. This agreement committed both nations to a postwar world of democracy, nonaggression, free trade, economic advancement, and freedom of the seas. By late September, an additional 15 anti-Axis nations had signed the charter. Churchill later said that FDR pledged to “force an ‘incident’ . . . which would justify him in opening hostilities” with Germany.

An incident quickly presented itself. In early September, a German submarine, or U-boat, fired on an American destroyer that had been radioing the U-boat’s position to the British. Roosevelt promptly responded by ordering American ships to follow a “shoot-on-sight” policy toward German submarines.

The Germans escalated hostilities the following month, targeting two American destroyers. One of them, the *Reuben James*, sank after being torpedoed, killing 115 sailors. As the end of 1941 drew near, Germany and the United States continued a tense standoff.

Reading Check **Evaluating** How did the Lend-Lease Act help the Allied war effort?

Japan Attacks

MAIN Idea The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor led the United States to declare war on Japan.

HISTORY AND YOU Do you remember how the United States acquired territory in the Pacific? Read about the threats to American interests as Japan expanded its empire.

Despite the growing tensions in the Atlantic, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor finally brought the United States into World War II. Ironically, Roosevelt’s efforts to help Britain fight Germany resulted in Japan’s decision to attack the United States.

America Embargoes Japan

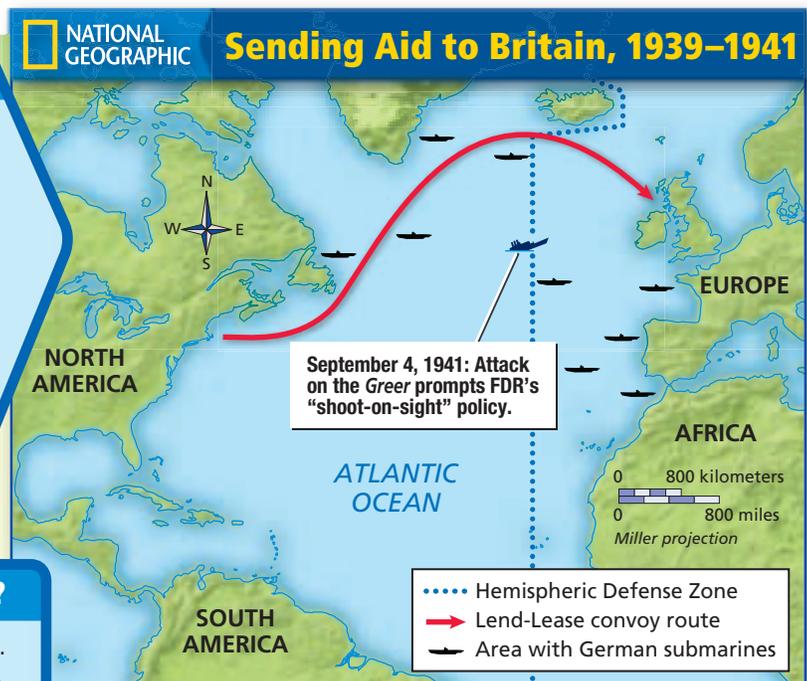
Roosevelt knew that Britain needed much of its navy in Asia to protect its territories there from Japanese attack. As German submarines sank British ships in the Atlantic, however, the British began moving warships from Southeast Asia, leaving India and other colonial possessions vulnerable.

How Did FDR Help Britain While the U.S. Remained Neutral?

- Neutrality Act of 1939 allowed warring nations to buy weapons from the United States if they paid cash and transported arms on their own ships
- Destroyers-for-bases provided old American destroyers in exchange for the right to build U.S. defense bases in British-controlled Bermuda, Caribbean Islands, and Newfoundland
- Lend-Lease Act permitted U.S. to lend or lease arms to any country “vital to the defense of the United States”
- Hemispheric defense zone established the entire western half of the Atlantic as part of the Western Hemisphere and, therefore, neutral

What Did the Atlantic Charter Declare?

1. The U.S. and Britain do not seek to expand their territories.
2. Neither seeks territorial changes against the wishes of the people involved.
3. Both respect people’s right to select their own government.
4. All nations should have access to trade and raw materials.
5. Improved labor standards and economic advances are vital.
6. Both nations hope people will be free from want and fear.
7. Everyone should be able to freely travel the high seas.
8. All nations must abandon the use of force; disarmament is necessary after the war.



DBQ Document-Based Questions

1. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think it was important to begin the Atlantic Charter with the first three points?
2. **Analyzing Primary Sources** How does the Atlantic Charter echo FDR’s Four Freedoms speech?

Turning Point

Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor

Pearl Harbor was an important turning point because it not only brought the United States into the war but also decisively marked an end to U.S. isolationism. After the war ended, the nation did not withdraw from its role in international affairs, as it had done following World War I. Involvement in the war signaled the beginning of a global role for the United States that has continued to the present day. With the decision to support the United Nations and efforts to rebuild Europe, the nation became actively involved in international events.

HYPOTHESIZING Do you believe the United States would have entered the war regardless of the attack on Pearl Harbor? Support your ideas with reasons.



▲ Rescue boats approach the burning USS West Virginia and USS Tennessee, which were hit by enemy fire on December 7, 1941. In the photo to the right, President Roosevelt addresses Congress the following day.



◀ Although ideas to create a memorial of Pearl Harbor were put forth as early as 1946, not until 1958 did President Eisenhower sign the bill that authorized this memorial, a bridge built over the sunken USS Arizona. The completed memorial was dedicated in 1962.

History ONLINE
Student Web Activity Visit glencoe.com and complete the activity on Pearl Harbor.

History ONLINE
Student Skill Activity To learn how to create multimedia presentations, visit glencoe.com and complete the skill activity.

To hinder Japanese aggression, Roosevelt began applying economic pressure. Japan depended on the United States for many key materials, including scrap iron, steel, and especially oil. At that time, the United States supplied roughly 80 percent of Japan's oil. In July 1940 Congress gave the president the power to restrict the sale of **strategic materials** (materials important for fighting a war). Roosevelt immediately blocked the sale of airplane fuel and scrap iron to Japan. Furious, the Japanese signed an alliance with Germany and Italy, becoming a member of the Axis.

In 1941 Roosevelt began sending lend-lease aid to China. Japan, which had invaded China in 1937, controlled much of the Chinese coast by 1941. Roosevelt hoped that lend-lease aid would enable the Chinese to tie down the Japanese and prevent them from attacking elsewhere. The strategy failed. By July 1941,

Japan had sent military forces into southern Indochina, posing a direct threat to the British Empire.

Roosevelt responded. He froze all Japanese assets in the United States, reduced the amount of oil being shipped to Japan, and sent General Douglas MacArthur to the Philippines to build up American defenses there.

Roosevelt made it clear that the oil embargo would end only if Japan withdrew from Indochina and made peace with China. With its war against China in jeopardy because of a lack of oil and other resources, the Japanese military planned to attack the resource-rich British and Dutch colonies in Southeast Asia. They also decided to seize the Philippines and to attack the American fleet at Pearl Harbor. While the Japanese prepared for war, negotiations with the Americans continued, but neither side would back down. In late November

1941, six Japanese aircraft carriers, two battleships, and several other warships set out for Hawaii.

Japan Attacks Pearl Harbor

The Japanese government appeared to be continuing negotiations with the United States in good faith. American intelligence, however, had decoded Japanese communications that made it clear that Japan was preparing to go to war against the United States.

On November 27, American commanders at the Pearl Harbor naval base received a war warning from Washington, but it did not mention Hawaii as a possible target. Because of the great distance from Japan to Hawaii, officials doubted that Japan would attempt such a long-range attack.

The U.S. military's inability to correctly interpret the information they were receiving left Pearl Harbor an open target. The result was devastating. Japan's surprise attack on December 7, 1941, sank or damaged eight battleships, three cruisers, four destroyers, and six other vessels. The attack also destroyed 188 airplanes and killed 2,403 Americans. Another 1,178 were injured.

That night, a gray-faced Roosevelt met with his cabinet, telling them the country faced the most serious crisis since the Civil War. The next day, he asked Congress to declare war:

PRIMARY SOURCE

"Yesterday, December 7, 1941—a date which will live in infamy—the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the naval and air forces of Japan . . . No matter how long it may take us . . . the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory."

—quoted in *Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous with Destiny*

The Senate voted 82 to 0 and the House 388 to 1 to declare war on Japan.

Germany Declares War

Although Japan and Germany were allies, Hitler was not bound to declare war against the United States. The terms of the alliance specified that Germany had to come to Japan's aid only if Japan was attacked, not if it attacked another country. Hitler had grown frustrated with the American navy's attacks on German submarines, however, and he believed the time had come to declare war.

Hitler greatly **underestimated** the strength of the United States. He expected the Japanese to easily defeat the Americans in the Pacific. By helping Japan, he hoped for Japanese support against the Soviet Union after they had defeated the Americans. On December 11, Germany and Italy both declared war on the United States.

Reading Check **Examining** Why did military officials not expect an attack on Pearl Harbor?

Section 4 REVIEW

Vocabulary

1. Explaining the significance of: America First Committee, Lend-Lease Act, hemispheric defense zone, Atlantic Charter, strategic materials.

Main Ideas

2. Analyzing What early efforts did Roosevelt make to help the British?

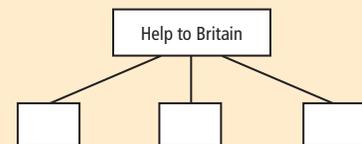
3. Explaining What was the hemispheric defense zone? Why was it developed?

4. Summarizing Why was the United States unprepared for Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor?

Critical Thinking

5. Big Ideas After Roosevelt's efforts to help Britain, some people accused him of being a dictator. Do you agree or disagree with this label? Explain your answer.

6. Organizing Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to show how Roosevelt helped Britain while remaining officially neutral.



7. Analyzing Visuals Study the images on page 703. Then create a multimedia presentation that traces the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Writing About History

8. Expository Writing Write a letter to the editor of your newspaper explaining why you think the United States should either remain neutral or become involved in World War II.



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