Before and After Pearl Harbor

Trace how U.S. policy changed as World War II began.

SS24.US2.6a "Summarize the United States' foreign policies of isolationism and internationalism as World War II began and explain how the bombing of Pearl Harbor affected this approach."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details showing efforts to avoid war, circle two details showing involvement abroad before Pearl Harbor, and write 1 and 2 beside the declarations of war made after the attack, in date order.

From Staying Out to Fighting

(1) In September 1939, war broke out in Europe, but the United States did not enter the fighting. Many Americans favored isolationism, a policy of avoiding military commitments in conflicts overseas. They remembered the losses of World War I and feared another costly war. Neutrality laws passed in the 1930s restricted arms sales and loans to countries at war. These laws aimed to keep trade and financial ties from pulling the nation into combat. Yet isolationism did not mean Americans stopped watching events abroad. News of German attacks and British resistance made the question of involvement harder to ignore.

(2) As Germany conquered much of Europe, President Franklin D. Roosevelt argued that defending countries threatened by aggression also served American security. In 1939, Congress changed neutrality rules to allow countries at war to buy American weapons if they paid cash and carried them away on their own ships. In March 1941, Congress approved Lend-Lease, letting the United States supply weapons and other materials to countries whose defense was considered vital to American security, especially Britain. This was internationalism in practice: active involvement with other nations' struggles. The United States aided the Allies without yet formally entering the war.

(3) On December 7, 1941, Japanese forces attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, killing more than 2,400 Americans and damaging American warships and aircraft. The next day, Congress declared war on Japan. On December 11, after Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, Congress declared war on both countries. The attack made staying out of the fighting untenable, but it did not create American concern about the wider war from nothing. Earlier aid had already tied U.S. security to the Allies. Now American forces fought alongside them in a worldwide conflict.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did isolationist policies aim to keep the United States out of war, and what concern motivated them?

2. Compare what the 1939 rule and Lend-Lease allowed. What shift in U.S. policy do they show?

3. How did Roosevelt's argument for helping threatened countries differ from the isolationist approach?

4. How did Pearl Harbor change the U.S. approach to the war, and why was the change not a shift from complete noninvolvement?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 95 word museum label dated December 12, 1941, for a visitor who thinks the United States was either fully uninvolved or already fighting before Pearl Harbor. Correct both ideas by explaining isolationism, preattack internationalism, and what changed after the attack.

ANSWER KEY

Before and After Pearl Harbor

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.6a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details showing efforts to avoid war, circle two details showing involvement abroad before Pearl Harbor, and write 1 and 2 beside the declarations of war made after the attack, in date order. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did isolationist policies aim to keep the United States out of war, and what concern motivated them?	**Neutrality laws restricted arms sales and loans to countries at war to reduce ties that might draw the United States into combat. Many Americans feared repeating the losses of World War I.**
2	Compare what the 1939 rule and Lend-Lease allowed. What shift in U.S. policy do they show?	**The 1939 rule allowed countries at war to buy weapons with cash and transport them on their own ships. Lend-Lease allowed the United States to supply materials to countries considered vital to its security, showing greater involvement abroad.**
3	How did Roosevelt's argument for helping threatened countries differ from the isolationist approach?	**Roosevelt argued that helping threatened countries served American security. Isolationists sought to avoid military commitments in overseas conflicts.**
4	How did Pearl Harbor change the U.S. approach to the war, and why was the change not a shift from complete noninvolvement?	**After the attack, the United States declared war on Japan and then on Germany and Italy, and its forces fought alongside the Allies. Before the attack, the United States had already aided the Allies through weapons sales and Lend-Lease.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

December 12, 1941. In 1939, the United States stayed out of Europe's fighting. Isolationists feared another costly war, and neutrality laws restricted weapons sales and loans. Yet the country was not uninvolved. A 1939 rule let countries at war buy U.S. weapons for cash if they carried them home, and Lend-Lease sent supplies to countries whose defense mattered to American security. After Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, Congress declared war on Japan on December 8. After Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, Congress declared war on both on December 11.

Accept responses that distinguish aid from formal entry into the war and explain that Pearl Harbor led to U.S. combat, rather than claiming it began all U.S. involvement. The sample label is 93 words.