

Steps Toward War

Trace how U.S. policy shifted from neutrality to involvement.

SS8H9.a "Describe key events leading up to American involvement in World War II; include the Lend-Lease Act and the bombing of Pearl Harbor."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the clause or sentence about each of these four events: the Neutrality Acts, the Lend-Lease Act, U.S. oil and scrap-metal export restrictions, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Number them 1 through 4 in the order they happened to trace the path toward war.

From Neutrality to War

- ① As war spread through Europe and Asia in the late 1930s, many Americans hoped to avoid another overseas conflict. Congress passed the Neutrality Acts between 1935 and 1937. These laws limited the sale of weapons and loans to nations at war. President Franklin Roosevelt gradually argued that the United States could not ignore aggression by Germany, Italy, and Japan. Still, the country was not yet fighting in the war. Most people favored staying out of combat.
- ② By 1940, Germany had conquered much of Europe, and Britain needed supplies to continue fighting. In March 1941, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act. It allowed the United States to lend or lease weapons, food, and other materials to countries whose defense Roosevelt believed was vital to American security. This policy aided nations fighting the Axis powers without immediately sending U.S. soldiers into battle. It marked a clear shift away from strict neutrality in practice at home.
- ③ Tension with Japan also grew. Japan expanded its military control in Asia, and the United States restricted exports of oil and scrap metal to Japan. On December 7, 1941, Japanese aircraft attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The attack killed more than 2,400 Americans and damaged or destroyed ships and aircraft. Congress declared war on Japan the next day, and the United States entered World War II as a combatant in the conflict.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What did the Neutrality Acts limit, and what does this show about the U.S. goal at the time?

2 How did the Lend-Lease Act move the United States away from strict neutrality?

3 What U.S. action increased tension with Japan before Pearl Harbor?

4 Why was the bombing of Pearl Harbor a turning point for the United States? Include what Congress did next.

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write four sentences in chronological order explaining how the four marked events moved the United States from neutrality toward war. Include the Neutrality Acts, Lend-Lease, export restrictions, and Pearl Harbor.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline the clause or sentence about each of these four events: the Neutrality Acts, the Lend-Lease Act, U.S. oil and scrap-metal export restrictions, and the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Number them 1 through 4 in the order they happened to trace the path toward war. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What did the Neutrality Acts limit, and what does this show about the U.S. goal at the time?	They limited sales of weapons and loans to nations at war. They show that many Americans wanted to avoid involvement in another overseas war.
2	How did the Lend-Lease Act move the United States away from strict neutrality?	It allowed the United States to lend or lease weapons, food, and other materials to countries fighting the Axis powers.
3	What U.S. action increased tension with Japan before Pearl Harbor?	The United States restricted exports of oil and scrap metal to Japan.
4	Why was the bombing of Pearl Harbor a turning point for the United States? Include what Congress did next.	Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, killing more than 2,400 Americans. Congress declared war on Japan the next day, bringing the United States into World War II.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Neutrality Acts reflected the country's effort to avoid becoming involved in foreign wars. Lend-Lease moved the United States toward supporting countries that fought the Axis. Oil and scrap-metal export restrictions increased conflict with Japan. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor led Congress to declare war, bringing the United States into World War II.

Accept equivalent descriptions that correctly place the four specified events in chronological order and explain the shift from avoiding war to entering it. For the written response, students should include all four events and a clear cause-and-effect progression.