

Name: _____

Date: _____

Global Studies

AIM: How did World War II unfold in the Pacific?

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese Navy attacked the American Pacific Fleet stationed at Pearl Harbor. The attack caught the Americans by surprise, and the Pacific Fleet was nearly destroyed. Early in the morning, with no prior warning, Japanese airplanes attacked the base, destroying or damaging 19 naval warships, hundreds of aircraft, and killing more than 2,400 troops and civilians. The next day, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt told the nation that December 7th was 'a date which will live in infamy.' He asked Congress to declare war on Japan and the US officially entered World War II.

Aided by their success at Pearl Harbor, Japan began capturing many US and European islands and territories in the Pacific Ocean. They achieved victories in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Burma, and Malaya. By the beginning of 1942, the Japanese empire stretched from Southeast Asia to the Western Pacific Ocean. The Axis Powers had reached the high point of their success.

Soon, however, the tide in the Pacific war began to turn. In May and June of 1942, US warships and airplanes severely damaged Japanese fleets during the Battle of the Coral Sea and the Battle of Midway. These victories greatly weakened the Japanese naval power and stopped their advances. The Allies began to take the offensive with an 'island-hopping' campaign. The goal of this military campaign was to recapture some of the islands held by the Japanese while going around others. The recaptured islands would serve as stepping stones to the next military objective. It allowed the Allies to slowly move toward Japan itself.

With Japan blockaded by US warships and its cities and industries bombed by US warplanes, the Japanese government rejected any suggestions of surrender. With the war in Europe over, the Allies poured resources into defeating Japan. By mid-1945, most of the Japanese navy and air force had been destroyed. Yet, the Japanese still had an army of 2,000,000 men. The road to victory, it appeared, would be long and costly.

DOCUMENT #1: The Nanjing Massacre, December 17, 1937

The Japanese occupation of Nanjing, the capital of the Republic of China, led to one of the greatest horrors of the century. This eyewitness report was filed by a New York Times reporter.

The killing of civilians was widespread. Foreigners who travelled widely through the city Wednesday found civilians dead on every street corner. Some of the victims were aged men, women, and children.

Nanjing's streets were littered with dead. Sometimes, bodies had to be moved before automobiles could pass.

Any person who ran because of fear or excitement was likely to be killed on the spot as was anyone caught by roving patrols in streets or alleyways after dark. Many slayings were witnessed by foreigners.

The Japanese looting amounted almost to plundering of the entire city. Nearly every building was entered by Japanese soldiers, often under the eyes of their officers, and the men took whatever they wanted.

The capture of Nanjing was the most overwhelming defeat suffered by the Chinese and one of the most tragic military debacles (disasters) in the history of modern warfare. In attempting to defend Nanjing, the Chinese allowed themselves to be surrounded and systematically slaughtered...

A favorite method of execution was to herd groups of a dozen men at entrances of dugouts and shoot them so the bodies toppled inside. Dirt was then shoveled in and the men buried.

1. Why was the capture of Nanjing by the Japanese the most overwhelming defeat suffered by the Chinese?

2. How is the Japanese treatment of the Chinese similar to the German treatment of the Jewish people?

DOCUMENT #2: Japanese perspective on World War II

By 1931, Japan took over Manchuria in northeastern China. Six years later, Japan looked toward the rich European colonies of Southeast Asia, including the US-controlled Philippine Islands and Guam.

Teruko Major has a different perspective of World War II than most Shenandoah, Virginia residents. A native of Japan, Major was in the 4th grade when her homeland attacked the United States by bombing Pearl Harbor. "I didn't know where the United States was located," Major said. "I had never seen an American. I didn't know why we would want to fight them."

Major said the Japanese government told its people they would go to war with China to get the natural resources it needed, instead of just expanding trade. The war against China started in 1937. "Japan is a very small country, smaller than California. The population is 100 million for that small a place. We don't have raw materials, so that's the reason we started to fight China. We needed to have the materials to survive.

3. According to Major's story, why did the Japanese go to war with China? _____

4. Why would Japan need raw materials and resources? _____

5. Why would Japan go to war with the United States? _____

DOCUMENT #3: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Infamy Speech, December 8, 1941

The US was involved in an undeclared war with Hitler (US attacked German ships, loaned weapons to Britain)...but the attack that actually drew the US into the war did not come from Germany...it came from Japan.

Yesterday, December 7, 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 attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. 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. This morning, the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

...I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

6. How many countries did the Japanese attack in the few days after Pearl Harbor? Name them.

7. Why does President Roosevelt refer to Japan as an empire ('the Japanese Empire')?
