

Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?



Reading war news aboard streetcar. San Francisco, California, Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division Washington, DC 20540 <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

Supporting Questions

1. What did people say about American involvement in the war?
2. How did Americans reconcile their misgivings about going to war?
3. What did African- Americans say about US involvement in the war?

9-12 Grade Teaching with Primary Sources Hub Pearl Harbor Inquiry by C3 Teachers Development

Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?

Inquiry Standard	D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.
Staging the Compelling Question	To open the activity, teachers might guide students to understand why this question is important and what historians have argued about the topic.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What did people say about American involvement in the war?	How did Americans reconcile their misgivings about going to war?	What did African- Americans say about US involvement in the war?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Create a list of reactions that the everyday Americans interviewed in the sources had to the attack on Pearl Harbor.	Make a series of claims describing how people justified American involvement in the war, despite their misgivings including relevant evidence to those claims.	Make additional claims with relevant evidence that explains the different ways that African Americans thought about the war.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: “Man-on-the-Street”, New York, New York, December 8, 1941 Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, New York, New York, January or February 1942 Source C: “Man-on-the-Street”, Austin, Texas, December 9, 1941	Source A: “Dear Mr. President”, Granbury, Austin, Hood County, and Fletcher County, Texas, January or February 1942 Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, Minneapolis, Minnesota, January or February 1942	Source A: “Man-on-the-Street”, Nashville, Tennessee, December 1941 Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, New York, New York, January or February 1942

Summative Performance Task	<p>ARGUMENT In this task, students will write an essay (or produce an alternative product) answering the compelling question – Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?</p> <p>EXTENSION A possible extension is for students to complete is their own “Dear Mr. President” letter explaining what their opinion about American involvement in the war might have been—both before and after Pearl Harbor.</p>
Taking Informed Action	<p>UNDERSTAND Identify a current issue where people may have perspectives that are being overlooked right now.</p> <p>ASSESS After identifying the current issues, determine the extent to which those people whose perspective is being overlooked might be contacted for an interview.</p> <p>ACTION Interview individuals who were identified in the assess stage and publish these interviews.</p>

Inquiry Description

The compelling question for this inquiry calls on students to conduct an inquiry in the tradition of social history, where students are examining the activities of people who are sometimes overlooked in social studies. The question of how people responded to Pearl Harbor is not as simple as it may seem at first. Students will quickly find that the men and women “on the street” were practically unanimous in support of a declaration of war. But other questions linger. How long did people expect the war to take? Why did people think Japan took such a risk in attacking the United States? Who was to blame for what was sure to be a bloody conflict? What was the larger meaning of the war? This lesson focuses on the supporting questions listed at the introductory table, but students may be encouraged to pose their own questions as they approach these fascinating interviews.

Teachers should also help students understand how the reactions of Americans to Pearl Harbor shaped the political events that followed, recognizing that such events (including Roosevelt’s December 8th speech and Congress’ declaration of war) did not occur in a vacuum. In terms of understanding what experts have said about the question, teachers might introduce students to the arguments of Adam J. Berinsky, who suggested in his book *In Time of War: Understanding American Public Opinion from World War II to Iraq* that public opinion did not drastically shift with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He called the notion that the Japanese attack awoke a sleeping giant a myth and argued that public support for an intervention had been building in 1940 and 1941. Berinsky’s work is an example of how experts have both valued the question of American’s reaction and an example of how one historian has responded to the question.

Structure

This inquiry integrates skills from the Common Core History/Social Studies 9-12 reading and writing standards and the C3 Framework. It draws upon historical sources from the Library of Congress and culminates in an argumentative essay. The instructional ideas in this module follow the Literacy Design Collaborative task-based approach. By completing this inquiry, students will build their social studies content knowledge as well as their reading, writing, and inquiry skills.

This document includes information to support teachers as they implement the instruction on reactions to Pearl Harbor. The full instructional module should take 120-150 minutes. The guidance within this document is general in form, but includes compelling and supporting questions to initiate and sustain inquiry, background information, specific information from historical sources, tools to support document analysis, approaches to assessment, and relevant Common Core standards and C3 Framework indicators. The instructional sequence in this module includes three parts.

- Compelling Question / Background
- Three supporting Questions and Formative Performance Tasks
- Summative Performance Task

The sources for this lesson are from the Library of Congress American Memory collection After the Day of Infamy - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afcphtml/afcphtml.html>.

Staging the Compelling Question

Compelling
Question

Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?

Staging the compelling question

The C3 Framework calls on students to examine compelling questions in just such a way (D1.1 and D1.2). When examining why the question is important, students might discuss how political action in a democracy is connected to public opinion. Teachers might even engage students in revisiting the question or even lead students to construct a question similar to this one.

Supporting Question 1

Supporting Question	What did people say about American involvement in the war?
Formative Performance Task	Create a list of reactions that the everyday Americans interviewed in the sources had to the attack on Pearl Harbor.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: “Man-on-the-Street”, New York, New York, December 8, 1941● Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, New York, New York, January or February 1942● Source C: “Man-on-the-Street”, Austin, Texas, December 9, 1941

“A day that will live in Infamy” – Franklin D. Roosevelt, December 8, 1941

“I am afraid we have awakened a sleeping giant” – attributed to Japanese Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto

“Nothing is over until we decide it is! Was it over when the Germans bombed Pearl Harbor? Hell, no” – John Belushi

The reactions of people to big events are an important part of history. But, as the quotes above illustrate, the line between history and culture is thin. When students study Pearl Harbor they’ll likely read the words of leaders such as Roosevelt. When they watch movies they’ll hear Yamamoto and Bluto’s dramatize (and fictionalize) our memory of Pearl Harbor. The net effect is that students see the past as a place occupied just by famous people. With this supporting question, students are given an opportunity to hear from everyday people about the dramatic and tragic events of December 7.

Formative Performance Task

This supporting question is focused on the students trying to understand how everyday Americans tried to make sense out of the events at Pearl Harbor. The formative performance task is for students to begin examining reactions that everyday Americans had to the attacks on Pearl Harbor by generating a list of those reactions. The idea here is for students to remain open-minded and just begin the process of reading interview transcripts (or listening to the audio). The seven interviews connected to the first supporting question are all quite brief. They will give students glimpses of the emotions people were feelings in the hours and days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Students’ analytical work should be at the summary level. The Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis tool provides appropriate support for students to summarize the opinions and reactions they are reading. Once all of the sources are summarized, teachers might want to have students look for themes across the summaries.

Teachers will note that it is common for interviewees to attribute the attack to plans or pressure on Japan by Adolph Hitler (e.g. Question 1, Source C). This is not accurate, for Japan was acting quite independently of Germany in planning the Pearl Harbor attack. Rather, Japanese military planners were convinced—likely erroneously—that their anticipated invasions of British holdings in the Pacific would draw the United States into the war; they therefore thought it necessary to cripple US naval strength before it could damage them. This is a good opportunity for teachers to discuss with students one of the common misconceptions of primary source material, namely, that primary sources present necessarily more factual information than secondary sources, simply because they are closer to the event. If students are to explore this collection independently, they should be armed with a critical eye toward factual content.

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source A

"Man-on-the-Street", New York, New York, December 8, 1941

Excerpt

-Cut B1-

Frank Tatrey: My name is Frank Tatrey and I do clerical work. I listened to President Roosevelt's speech and I am behind him a hundred percent. I felt it was a very good speech and a few chosen words that hit the mark. I am a hundred percent for President Roosevelt. Can I keep talking?

Interviewer: Yeah?

Frank Tatrey: I think the time has come when we should all get behind our country. After all, we are all Americans and we should all be united against these dictator countries who are trying to invade our country and spoil our way of living. We are all Americans and I once more say, I am a hundred percent for President Roosevelt's speech.

-Cut B2-

Carl Nimkow: My name is Carl Nimkow. I came to this country three years ago from Germany. Today, when I heard the president's speech and I saw the United States enter this war, I was fully in favor of this declaration and I think that the United States' entry in this war will bring to a sooner close this great tragedy and will have a very beneficial effect to the future state of the world.

-Cut B3-

Albert Hemsing: My name is Albert Hemsing. I'm a student. Well, reactions to the crisis and to the president's speech are varied on our campus. There's been small discussion groups forming all day, people cutting their class to talk over the events. I've hardly had time to think just what everything means. We've been so busy here in the student council planning what our part can be, how we can best use our special skills in the national effort. I think that the most important behavior pattern for us should be to keep calm, to remember what we're fighting for. And while we're fighting Japan to remember that perhaps behind Japan there's Hitler and, since I'm a student of economics, perhaps behind Hitler there is an economic system which after the battles are won will present the real battle.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1941004.sr06> MP3 file can be found at [http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr06/..](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr06/)

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source B

"Dear Mr. President", New York, New York, January or February 1942

Excerpt

-Cut A1-

Man born in Philadelphia: - Yeah. Mr. President, I was born in Philadelphia, outside of Philadelphia. My mother was born in Canadian French. My father was from the yellow tribe, Indian, the American Indian. And I'm glad and happy to say that I am an American amongst our fellow brothers. We all are brothers. Let us remain brothers, don't care what creed are you or what color or who you are or where you come from. We all are American and let's fight for American and our brothers that is outside. Let's die American. If we have to go on the battlefield, let's die American. Our foremothers and fathers died and we must do the same to keep our freedom and liberty and our own brothers must worship any religion that ???. Thank you, Mr. President.

-Cut A2-

Charles Alexander: Mr. President, I'm Charles Alexander of 772 St. Nicholas Avenue, New York City, the colored neighborhoods, Harlem. I just like to express a few points about the present situation. I was born in Jamaica, British West Indies, and served a year and a half in the Canadian forces, but my duties mostly confined to guard duty. I have been employed with the National Electric Type Company in New York City. That is, making printing plates. The war has affected our industry in respect of metals. You see, we'll be short of metals on account of the war, copper especially, lead, tin foil which we use in our business and already quite a few of our men are out of work since, say two weeks before Christmas.

Well, as far as I'm concerned I think I'll be able to do something besides electric typing in case I get laid off. Of course, I wouldn't like to get laid off, but I'm handy with tools and can do pipe fitting all that ???. I'll try to find something else to do. And of course, if the inevitable comes, that is I have to go, although I'm over the age, why I'd be glad to serve the United States of America.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1942003.sr17> MP3 file can be found at <http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr17/..>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source C

"Man-on-the-Street", Austin, Texas, December 9, 1941

Excerpt

John Henry Faulk: Well, Mrs. Whittaker what do you think about the Japanese attack on Hawaii Sunday?

Mrs. Whittaker: Well, it's nothing more than what to be expected. In other words, it's inevitable. And I think they have, that they have made themselves liable for us to be thrown into war. And I'm glad to say that I have one son in the army and that he's patriotic enough, and I have that Christian spirit in me to give our son for the cause and I'm glad I did it, that my husband and I have done it.

John Henry Faulk: Well, do you think Japan was in any way justified in attacking the United States?

Mrs. Whittaker: Well, I think to this extent, I think that they were influenced by Hitler in every way, which it worked out that way in the end. And that is my opinion of it. And they are -- Hitler knew that they wouldn't attack Moscow this winter because they had good [??] over there. Just go over to Japan, you go over and start war with the United States and then they will declare war. And by doing so, by damned then we'll get the whole world involved. And that's what I wanted. And so I have come now at the climax of it all, I've got the whole world involved in war. And that's what he intended in the first and he's now climaxed it all by getting us all mixed up.

John Henry Faulk: I wouldn't be surprised if that's not --

Mrs. Whittaker: Oh, that's true.

John Henry Faulk: Well, what do you think about our chances against Japan?

Mrs. Whittaker: Well, we have our pretty strong navy out there and if we can defend our Pacific Coast and our islands and our sovereigns that we have out, I think that we have right now a pretty good chance to defend ourselves right in the beginning before the great onset should take place, which we should avert right now.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1941004.sr12> MP3 file can be found at

[http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr12/..](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr12/)

Supporting Question 2

Supporting Question	How did Americans reconcile their misgivings about going to war?
Formative Performance Task	Make a series of claims describing how people justified American involvement in the war, despite their misgivings including relevant evidence to those claims.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: “Dear Mr. President”, Granbury, Austin, Hood County, and Fletcher County, Texas, January or February 1942● Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, Minneapolis, Minnesota, January or February 1942

In the months and years lead up to the attack on Pearl Harbor, isolationism was an important feature of U.S. foreign policy. Presidents Coolidge, Harding, and Hoover steered a mostly isolationist path as presidents, and Franklin Roosevelt’s policies were only marginally more internationalist. President Roosevelt’s Lead Lease program was his most outwardly international policy prior to the war, and it incurred stiff opposition in the halls of Congress. The U.S. House of Representatives debate on the Lead Lease Act in February of 1941 was fierce and the vote much closer than Roosevelt would have liked. Charles Lindbergh was an outspoken opponent of Lend Lease and in many ways the public face of U.S. isolationism.

The politics of Lead Lease made for strange company with conservatives often finding themselves on the same side as liberals and even communists. One of the best examples of this strange pairing was the political activism of labor unions and their supporters. Most organized labor interests initially opposed American entry into the war along with Lindbergh’s America First Committee. After the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941, labor opposition began to crumble. One notable exception was representative Jeannette Rankin from Montana, who as a pacifist, cast the only no vote on the declaration of war resolution in the House.

Formative Performance Task

This supporting question is focused on how Americans reconciled their misgivings about going to war. The formative performance task is for students to make some claims with evidence how Americans justified American involvement in the war despite their misgivings. Students may learn about American isolationism from the history textbook, but they might not get a good impression of what fed into it. The *After the Day of Infamy* collection is a great opportunity for students to discover that a particular movement or historical occurrence may be the result of various motivations, some quite different than others. This aligns well with C3 indicator D2.His.4.9-12, “Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras.” In these interviews, students will meet a politician who mistrusted the President’s more aggressive stance toward the Axis powers, a Christian pacifist who carefully explains his continued opposition to the war, and a college student whose stance is still somewhat vague. Students may be encouraged to scour the collection for more voices that speak to the unsettling question of the US involvement in the war.

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source A

“Dear Mr. President”, Granbury, Austin, Hood County, and Fletcher County, Texas, January or February 1942

Excerpt

Texas Senator: Mr. Roosevelt, this is indeed a rare opportunity and one that will be long cherished by me I assure you. For me, a humble servant of the people of Texas, who brings greetings and to address you the chief of these United States.

My people came to Texas, Mr. Roosevelt, while the land was yet a wilderness. We fought the savage Indians to subdue, and subdue him. We fought and bled at the Alamo and we fought back the ??? Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto. We Texans, Mr. Roosevelt, know what it is to fight for our liberties. And we will always, I assure you sir, be willing and more than ready to fight for our liberties.

I have a confession to make Mr. Roosevelt. I, six months ago, was an isolationist. I questioned the wisdom of your policies. I had an idea that you were attempting to lead us into war. I say that with shame [mattling (?)] my brow. For the day Mr. Roosevelt that Pearl Harbor met the treachery of the Nazi and of the Italian, I realized sir that you, you were the man for the job. You realized, I am convinced, how near attack the United States was and the grave danger that faced the citizenry of these great United States. And so Mr. Roosevelt, let me tender you my apologies and assure you sir today that we are behind you and I am behind you one hundred percent in this war effort. We, as Americans and Texans, have all been aroused Mr. Roosevelt in this hour. Whatever the sacrifice may be, call on us. I assure you sir as a lover of liberty as one who knows what it is to fight for his liberty as a red-blooded Texan sir and that we the people of Texas will make that sacrifice.

Oh sir, if you could see the youth affected as they shoulder their guns and go marching away to unknown battlefields with the smile on their lips and defiant [security (?)] in their eyes, it would make your heart beat quicker sir just as it makes my heart beat quicker. And I want you to know today, Mr. Roosevelt that we people of Texas are behind you and we're behind those boys that are out there on the battlefields of Europe and of Asia, and we know we have a battle to win sir and I believe we will win by the help of God and of Americans and Texan soldiers.

I hope that everything goes well sir with you there in Washington. I wish you peace and a long life. Thank you.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1942003.sr33> MP3 file can be found at [http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr33/..](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr33/)

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source B

"Dear Mr. President", Minneapolis, Minnesota, January or February 1942

Excerpt

-Cut A1-

Leland B. Saturn: Dear Mr. President, my name is Leland B. Saturn and my address, 2019 South Seventh Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota. By reason of my personal and religious conviction I am a conscientious objector to any and all forms of war and to all preparations pertaining thereto. This conviction doesn't stem from a starry-eyed idealism, not from the assumption that man is inherently good, not from the so-called over-simplification of the problem of evil, not from motives of appeasement, not from a will to national isolationism, not from thinking which refuses to face facts of evil which are inimical to the best in our American way of life. My conviction is rooted in the knowledge that there is a very practical higher way of living and dealing with men, individually and collectively. It works ultimately whether the other side is willing to adopt the same approach or not. It begins at the revelation of the character of God found in Christ. For me the life and teachings of Jesus supply my only standard for faith and actions and it is my conviction that his way cannot be reconciled with the way of war whether offensive or defensive. One is a negation of the other. I believe that war is the greatest crime which can be committed against humanity. A method of dealing with the problem of international evil in which nothing is gained and all is lost. War settles only the question of military might. The wrongs which it purports to alleviate remain and have grown a thousand fold when the war is over. As a conscientious objector I believe the greatest service I can offer my country is not that of a circumstance-motivated life but a Christ-motivated life. The greatest disservice I can offer my country is the repudiation of this higher way. I know that Christ's way of redeeming love, though practiced ever so faultingly, individually or collectively, is all for good and gain. I am led by him on this way. I cannot walk otherwise.

-Cut A3-

Bruce Butchard: Mr. President, my name is Bruce Butchard and I am a student of electrical engineering at the University of Minnesota. I'm one of those who felt strong non-interventionist sentiments in the days when the conflict was confined to the continent of Europe and was not, it seems to me, an ignorance of the interdependence of nations nor our reliance upon supplies reaching us from the Far East that I felt these sentiments, it was rather that I felt that with the sacrifice that would have to be met anyhow if conflict were entered into by our nation that with this sacrifice, it would be possible for our nation to become somewhat self-sufficient. The reason I felt that our nation could be self-sufficient is that I have an unalterable faith in the ingenuity of our unhampered and free-thinking American scientists to devise means that would suffice at least for the period in which our nation should have to, shall we say, isolate itself from the world conflict. I felt that the ingenuity would suffice during that period to devise means whereby we could become self-sufficient at least for the period of sacrifice, for the period of world conflict, and that the small sacrifices that would be made during this period would be much smaller than those sacrifices which would undoubtedly come about as a result of our entering the European conflict.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1942003.sr61> MP3 file can be found at

[http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr61/.](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr61/)

Supporting Question 3

Supporting Question	What did African- Americans say about US involvement in the war?
Formative Performance Task	Make additional claims with relevant evidence that explains the different ways that African Americans thought about the war.
Featured Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Source A: “Man-on-the-Street”, Nashville, Tennessee, December 1941● Source B: “Dear Mr. President”, New York, New York, January or February 1942

World War II represented a watershed moment for African Americans. Asked to carry their load in a measure equal to whites, many African Americans took the occasion as an opportunity to reflect on the racial inequalities that were a regular part of life in the United States. African American reactions to the war were foreshadowed by reactions to the 1940 Selective Training and Service Act where high profile African Americans responded in very different ways (e.g. Dizzy Gillespie’s blunt negative reaction compared to Joe Lewis’ supportive response). African American press also reflected the complexity of black reactions to Pearl Harbor. The Pittsburgh Courier, Americans most widely read black newspaper, reflected these complexities with their Double V campaign that called for “Democracy, At Home, and Abroad,” Many African American’s picked up this theme declaring their support for the defeat of totalitarianism abroad and inequality at home.

Formative Performance Task

This supporting question is focused on what African Americans said about U.S. involvement in the war. The formative performance task is for students to make a claim with evidence that explains the different ways that African Americans thought about the war. These claims may actually function as counter-claims to the claims students make in formative performance task #2. The interviewers in the After the Day of Infamy project were careful to include a diverse array of voices in the project, including interviews with students at Fisk University in Tennessee. Students should note that while blacks tended to share the patriotic enthusiasm for war against Japan—like other Americans, blacks had their share of diverse opinions. Among these was a consistent concern for civil rights in society and in the armed forces. Interviewees often used democracy as a guide for thinking about what Americans should fight for, and two of the six interviewees described fascism as the enemy. Fascism was described as something embodied abroad by Japan and Germany, and by Jim Crow at home. Teachers should support students as they examine the complexities of African American responses. Student work on this task should help them develop the skill described in C3 indicator D2.His.4.9-12, which calls on students to “analyze complex and interacting factors that influence the perspective of people during different historical eras.”

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source A

"Man-on-the-Street", Nashville, Tennessee, December 1941

Excerpt

-Cut A1-

Interviewer: There is some confusion and some hysteria following the first impact of the war news here. Full realization of what war means has yet to come. Negro opinion has been varied and a great amount of concern has been expressed over the Negroes place in the defense. But now that the country needs all of its citizens and Negroes are anxious to take their place in a democratic effort to defend democracy. We have here some national citizens to express their reactions to the first war news. The first person you will hear is the Reverend W. J. Faulkner, Congregational minister and president of the national branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Reverend W. J. Faulkner: This sudden and unfortunate attack of the Japanese on our country has revealed in stark outline a tragic attitude of unpreparedness and selfish indifference on our part to the real dangers confronting our nation and our democratic way of life. Too long have we been divided at home. For we have been dissipating our vast strength and straining our national unity through labor conflicts and class bickerings. And in practices of stupid and costly racial discriminations, our enemies have conspired to destroy us. I earnestly hope that at last we have become struck wide awake to the real threats to our national safety at home and abroad. And that we will be galvanized into effective action by uniting all of our people and resources on a basis of equality into one invincible army of patriots who will work for the triumph of Christian democracy and brotherhood throughout the world.

-Cut A2-

Interviewer: The next person you will hear speak is Miss Fadie France, native of Denver, Colorado, YWCA secretary in Nashville.

Fadie France: Japan's aggression was an expected act. We must take into consideration, the Japanese ruthless aggression towards China throughout the past four years. One can see the fact that Japan is an aggressive nation. However, this particular act was not entirely of Japanese making. This war situation [disc skips] had to reach a head soon the United States [disc skips] was bound to enter this war. Just what the fuse was [disc skips] supposed to be was the only uncertain factor.

Rather than Japan's aggression I would say, Japan's obedience to instigated commands by the Axis powers. As some of the others who are not active participants or witnesses of the last world war, the actual horror or seriousness of combat has not dawned on me of yet. Just a mild excitement that naturally comes with mass action, the usual response of an individual to group psychology. Because of this follows my reaction to Japan. Being just another of the uninformed masses I have a feeling of resentment toward Japan for her treacherous, sly attack on the United States, words and thoughts put into my mouth by radio news commentators and writers of newspaper articles. Yet an actual hatred for Japan herself does not exist within me. She is the tool of stronger powers. My resentment is definitely directed toward them. I impatiently await the finish of Japan so that the Axis powers, the motivating factors for this recent aggression, can be stopped in their murderous attempts to thwart the cause of democracy and liberty. Their greedy attempts to rule the world only ??? of our country.

My faith and belief in superiority of the United States is childlike in its entirety. Even though the treatment of minority groups has been and is still unfair, my loyalty to my country is unlimited and unbounded.

-Cut B3-

Interviewer: The next expression is that of Roger Camfield, graduate student in the Department of Social Sciences at Fisk University [???].

Roger Camfield: Imagine seventy million people on an island the size of New Jersey which is poor in natural resources to boot. Imagine those people having to expand to live but finding themselves unable to expand

because all available territories controlled by nations who intend to maintain their power and control. War was inevitable under the circumstances and how it came was dramatic, but the fact that it came was expected. No blame in this matter can be, with good conscience, squarely placed.

The present Japanese-American war is the one aspect of the culmination of capitalistic expansion and centralization of control. Which expansion has been characterized by internal strife and war for whatever widening spheres until now in this war it is completely covered the world.

Of course, as all people of the world are doing, I as other Negroes, will fight without knowing the aims they are fighting for or the results that will be obtained.

-Cut B4-

Interviewer: The next person to speak is W. C. Curry, FSA Fellow from Newport News, Virginia.

W. C. Curry: The Japanese attack on the United States and the imminent threat of Italian and German aggression is a direct result of the appeasement policies towards these countries since 1934. The naval defeat Sunday and the unpreparedness of the United States is mainly due to the pro-fascist forces within this country. This is the gravest period in our country's history. One of the gravest dangers at this time is not from abroad, but lies in those fascist- minded forces within. Courage, vigilance, and dogged determination to win should be our slogan.

The Negro as in every other crisis in our country's history will [honorably (?)] distinguish himself in the defense of these United States, his country. And will also equally share in the better world which the ultimate victory will bring.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1941004.sr05> MP3 file can be found at

[http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr05/.](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1941004/sr05/)

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source B

"Dear Mr. President", New York, New York, January or February 1942

Excerpt

-Cut A1-

David Helfeld: Yes, I think I . . . Well speaking from the viewpoint of a City College student it's very obvious how the war has affected us. This term sixty-one percent of the students enrolled as tech men, only thirty-nine percent in the various courses in liberal arts and science college. Obviously, our society is tending toward a technocracy and very obviously those boys who are twenty will either have to give up their studies or hurry them up. It seems to me that the degree is going to be cheapened. And within two and a half years you're going to get the same diploma that took you four years to get in the previous times. And it seems to me that these students in this college are responding very finely to the war effort, the college's war effort and the total war effort of the country. [Interviewer speaks softly in the background] Well, what do you want me to say?

David Helfeld: Dear Mr. President, my name is David Helfeld. I live 3604 31st Avenue, Long Island City. I happen to have the honor to be the president of the student council, College of the City of New York. I'm only nineteen now and I have a year before I graduate. Before I become twenty, I intend to join the army. But there's just one thought I'd like to get across to you. It's a feeling which horrifies all the boys at our college. And that is Negro discrimination in the army and in the navy. It seems to me to be an example, a very horrible example, of fascism within democracy. When we here at the college hear that there are Negro, that there are Negro, purely Negro regiments and that Negroes are only allowed to do slop duty on the battle ships of our navy. It makes us feel very bad. We here realize that there are three wars to be fought. The physical war against the fascist nations -- Germany, Italy, and Japan, and the war from within against anti-Semitism, Jim Crow, and factors of that nature. We feel that as long as we have fascism at home it is rather futile to fight it on the outside if we are not at the same time fighting it from within. I thank you for listening. [long pause] Besides the two wars I've just mentioned I feel that there is a third war, a very important one, namely the war to make a proper peace. Peace which will do away with all wars in the future.

-Cut A2-

Charles Atlas: My dear Mr. President, my name is Charles Atlas and I reside at 930 DeCalve Avenue in Brooklyn. I was born in Canada and I've been a resident of the United States for the past twelve years. The message I wish to convey is one that has been called to my attention by numerous friends of mine who are at present active members of the United States Armed Services. Many of these fellows have obtained furlough only to find that financial difficulties have prevented them from visiting their friends and the people they love. I therefore deem it quite important that all members of the Armed Forces of the United States should be granted free communication and free traveling during furloughs. Furthermore, as an adjunct to this, I believe they should be given free mailing privileges to keep in communications with one's home and friends, will heighten the morale of every member of the Armed Services. Thank you.

Source:

For more information about these sources including the transcript, see <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.afc/afc1942003.sr14> MP3 file can be found at [http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr14/..](http://memory.loc.gov/service/afc/afc1942003/sr14/)

Summative Performance Task

Compelling Question	Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?
Argument	In this task, students will write an essay (or produce an alternative product) answering the compelling question – Did the attack on Pearl Harbor unify America?
Extension	A possible extension is for students to complete is their own “Dear Mr. President” letter explaining what their opinion about American involvement in the war might have been—both before and after Pearl Harbor.

Argument

By this point in the inquiry, students have examined many historical sources. They have responded to three supporting questions, and should have lots of information that can be used as evidence in their essay. The summative performance task requires students to take a stand on the question, but also allows for multiple interpretations.

Students’ arguments likely will vary but could include any of the following:

- Many Americans felt the attack on Pearl Harbor was a galvanizing event that unified Americans in entering the war.
- Some Americans felt the war at home against anti-Semitism and Jim Crow laws were more significant than the war abroad.
- Some Americans wanted to join the war effort long before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Extension

Students will write their own “Dr. Mr. President” letter to explain their opinions on American involvement in the war—both before and after Pearl Harbor. Students will rely on information and sources from the inquiry to write their letters.

Taking Informed Action

Understand	Identify a current issue where people may have perspectives that are being overlooked right now.
Assess	After identifying the current issues, determine the extent to which those people whose perspective is being overlooked might be contacted for an interview.
Action	Interview individuals who were identified in the assess stage and publish these interviews.

Students will publish these interviews in a platform of their choosing. Keep in mind if this is in the form of a local newspaper, the interviewee needs to consent to having his or her perspective published. Interviewing individuals on a current issue (e.g. immigration, war, poverty) where their perspectives are being overlooked will aim to shine a light on an otherwise overlooked perspective.

