

## Franklin & Winston: And So To War

### I. Introduction

This lesson is intended to compare and contrast the justifications that led to British (1939) and American (1941) involvement in World War II. It can be used as a stand alone lesson or as a supplement to a lesson outlining the origins of World War II, and is designed to fit into an overall unit on the study of World War II. Students will be asked to read two famous speeches and answer questions, discuss the speeches, work collaboratively in groups answering open-ended questions about the justifications of war, and write a response to a prompt.

### II. Guiding Question

How valid were the British and the American justifications for entering World War II particularly as presented by Winston S. Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt in two of their speeches? After ten years in the political wilderness, Winston Churchill was brought back into the government as First Lord of the Admiralty, by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, on the very day he made this speech. Roosevelt had been President of the United States since 1932.

### III. Learning Objectives

The student will understand the gravity of war and the necessity to rationalize the justifications of entering a war.

The student will know the reasons used to justify British and American involvement in World War II, Winston S. Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.

The student will be able to read two famous speeches and answer questions about them, participate in a whole-class discussion about the speeches, work in a mixed-ability groups graffiti activity to answer open-ended questions about war and its justifications, and respond in writing to one of the open-ended graffiti questions.

### Virginia Standards of Learning

#### Era VII: Era of Global Wars, 1914 to 1945

WHII.11 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the worldwide impact of World War II by

- a) explaining economic and political causes, major events, and identifying leaders of the war, with emphasis on Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry Truman, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur, George Marshall, Winston Churchill, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Hideki Tojo, and Hirohito;

#### Conflict: The World at War: 1939 to 1945

VUS.10 The student will demonstrate knowledge of World War II by

- a) identifying the causes and events that led to American involvement in the war, including military assistance to Britain and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor;

### IV. Background Information for the Teacher

Britain and France were forced to declare war after Germany ignored their separate ultimatums, delivered on 3 September 1939, demanding the withdrawal of German troops from Poland. In the mid-1930s, Britain's response to the acceleration of Germany's rearmament and the threat of war was to appease rather than confront Hitler and his generals. By late 1938, Hitler was making speeches that furiously proclaimed Germany's right to annex the Sudetenland, a Czechoslovak territory with a significant German population. Chamberlain flew to Germany to calm the situation, eventually signing the Munich Agreement with Hitler,

giving control of the Sudetenland to Nazi Germany. With the invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, Britain was no longer acquiescent and Chamberlain warned that any further attacks would meet resistance. It took the defeat of Poland six months later to induce the British and French governments to declare war. ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/1/newsid\\_3506000/3506335.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/1/newsid_3506000/3506335.stm))

The United States between the two world wars enacted an isolationist foreign policy having been disillusioned following World War I. With the onset of the Great Depression and subsequently the worldwide depression in the 1930s American retracted further inward especially with regard to financial commitments abroad. American looked upon the growing tide of fascism and Nazism in Europe as not their problem, but kept a close eye on Japan's territorial aggressions in East Asia. The United States, operating under the Stimson Doctrine, grew increasingly at odds with Japan and negotiations between the two countries diminished. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 the United States quickly mobilized with a congressional declaration of war against the Empire of Japan on December 8. Nazi Germany and the United States declared war on each other on December 11, 1941 and thus began World War II.

## V. Preparation for Teaching this Lesson

Handouts (included): Churchill's "[War Speech](#), 3 September 1939, House of Commons," available at the website of The Churchill Centre, [www.winstonchurchill.org](http://www.winstonchurchill.org)  
And Roosevelt's "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan"

Colored Pencils or Markers

Easel Paper

Suggested Graffiti Questions (when creating graffiti questions remember to make them open-ended): Is war an opportunity or a burden? Is war ever justified? Are these great speeches or merely propaganda? Was Britain right to go to war in 1939? Was America right to go to war in 1941? Do alliances create wars? Who is guilty in war?

## VI. Suggested Activities

### 1. Primary Source Document Reading:

Students should read and answer questions individually on Churchill's "War Speech, 3 September 1939, House of Commons." Teacher and students should discuss the speech and responses to questions. (see below)

Students should read and answer questions individually on Roosevelt's "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan." Teacher and students should discuss the speech and responses to questions. (see below)

Teacher and students should compare the contrast the two speeches in terms of rhetoric, message, objectives, and determine who made the better case for war.

### 2. Graffiti Activity:

The teacher should print out the graffiti questions in large font and post them around the room. It would be helpful to have large easel paper on which to post the questions so that student groups can write around the question. The teacher should create three to five person student groups and give each group

a different colored pencil or marker. Each group is assigned to a graffiti question. Students will have one to two minutes to discuss and respond in writing on the easel paper to the graffiti question. At the set time students will move to next graffiti question and repeat this process until they return to their original question. At that time they should synthesize all of the group responses and be able to present a cogent response when asked to share their question. Following this response the teacher should allow other groups to comment and discuss. This should be repeated for every group until finished. The teacher should allow for final comments by students.

## **VII. Assessment**

Students should choose one of the graffiti questions that their group was not assigned and respond in writing. The response should be cogent, written in complete sentences, but without a specified length. Students must make specific reference to both Churchill's "War Speech, 3 September 1939, House of Commons" and Roosevelt's "Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan" in order to receive full credit. This can be done in class if there is enough time remaining or be assigned for homework for the next class

## **VIII. Extending the Lesson**

**Class Debate:** have students choose sides as to who gave a better speech, or who was a better overall leader.

**Counter speech, support speech:** similar to the debate, but strictly in writing. Have students write their own speeches for or against the words of Churchill or Roosevelt. An additional writing assignment might be a polemic in the same vein.

**Propaganda Posters:** look at World War II posters and have students create propaganda posters supporting either the British or American cause in World War II.

## **IX. Additional Information**

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Grade Levels: 10-12

Subject Areas: World, European, and United States History

Time Required: 1-90 minutes block; 2-45 minute periods

## War Speech September 3, 1939 • House of Commons

*At dawn on 1 September Hitler's armies invaded Poland. In accordance with the British and French Governments' Guarantee to Poland, on 2 September an Ultimatum was issued demanding Germany's withdrawal and respect of Polish Sovereignty. At 11.15 on 3 September the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, announced in his melancholy voice that the Ultimatum had expired without any reply being received from Germany. After an air-raid warning, which proved false, the House met in early afternoon and Churchill made his last speech from the backbenches.*

*Following the debate Chamberlain invited Churchill to become First Lord of the Admiralty. At 6 p.m. he took up post and the signal was flashed to the Fleet: 'Winston is back!' As he later wrote in The Gathering Storm: 'So it was that I came again to the room I had quitted in pain and sorrow almost a quarter of a century before...Once again we must fight for life and honor against all the might and fury of the valiant, disciplined, and ruthless German race. Once again! So be it!'*

Never Give In! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches page 197

In this solemn hour it is a consolation to recall and to dwell upon our repeated efforts for peace. All have been ill-starred, but all have been faithful and sincere. This is of the highest moral value--and not only moral value, but practical value--at the present time, because the wholehearted concurrence of scores of millions of men and women, whose co-operation is indispensable and whose comradeship and brotherhood are indispensable, is the only foundation upon which the trial and tribulation of modern war can be endured and surmounted. This moral conviction alone affords that ever-fresh resilience which renews the strength and energy of people in long, doubtful and dark days. Outside, the storms of war may blow and the lands may be lashed with the fury of its gales, but in our own hearts this Sunday morning there is peace. Our hands may be active, but our consciences are at rest.

We must not underrate the gravity of the task which lies before us or the temerity of the ordeal, to which we shall not be found unequal. We must expect many disappointments, and many unpleasant surprises, but we may be sure that the task which we have freely accepted is one not beyond the compass and the strength of the British Empire and the French Republic. The Prime Minister said it was a sad day, and that is indeed true, but at the present time there is another note which may be present, and that is a feeling of thankfulness that, if these great trials were to come upon our Island, there is a generation of Britons here now ready to prove itself not unworthy of the days of yore and not unworthy of those great men, the fathers of our land, who laid the foundations of our laws and shaped the greatness of our country.

This is not a question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for Poland. We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defense of all that is most sacred to man. This is no war of domination or imperial aggrandizement or material gain; no war to shut any country out of its sunlight and means of progress. It is a war, viewed in its inherent quality, to establish, on impregnable rocks, the rights of the individual, and it is a war to establish and revive the stature of man. Perhaps it might seem a paradox that a war undertaken in the name of liberty and right should require, as a necessary part of its processes, the surrender for the time being of so many of the dearly valued liberties and rights. In these last few days the House of Commons has been voting dozens of Bills which hand over to the executive our most dearly valued traditional liberties. We are sure that these liberties will be in hands which will not abuse them, which will use them for no class or party interests, which will cherish and guard them, and we look forward to the day, surely and confidently we look forward to the day, when our liberties and rights will be restored to us, and when we shall be able to share them with the peoples to whom such blessings are unknown. (The Churchill Centre: [War Speech](#), September 3, 1939)

**Questions: please answer individually and be prepared to discuss as a class.**

1. According to Churchill why is it necessary for Britain and France to go to war with Germany in September 1939?
2. How would you describe Churchill's rhetoric in this speech? What effect does his rhetoric have on the reader?
3. Why do you think Churchill is "thankful" for this opportunity?
4. Ultimately what is the main objective that Churchill seeks to achieve?

## **Joint Address to Congress Leading to a Declaration of War Against Japan** *December 8, 1941*

Mr. Vice President, and Mr. Speaker, and Members of the Senate and House of Representatives:

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 United States was at peace with that Nation and, at the solicitation of Japan, was still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific. Indeed, one hour after Japanese air squadrons had commenced bombing in the American Island of Oahu, the Japanese Ambassador to the United States and his colleague delivered to our Secretary of State a formal reply to a recent American message. And while this reply stated that it seemed useless to continue the existing diplomatic negotiations, it contained no threat or hint of war or of armed attack.

It will be recorded that the distance of Hawaii from Japan makes it obvious that the attack was deliberately planned many days or even weeks ago. During the intervening time the Japanese Government has deliberately sought to deceive the United States by false statements and expressions of hope for continued peace.

The attack yesterday on the Hawaiian Islands has caused severe damage to American naval and military forces. I regret to tell you that 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. And this morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island.

Japan has, therefore, undertaken a surprise offensive extending throughout the Pacific area. The facts of yesterday and today speak for themselves. The people of the United States have already formed their opinions and well understand the implications to the very life and safety of our Nation.

As Commander in Chief of the Army and Navy I have directed that all measures be taken for our defense.

But always will our whole Nation remember the character of the onslaught against us.

No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated invasion, the American people in their righteous might will win through to absolute victory. I believe that I interpret the will of the Congress and of the people when I assert that we will not only defend ourselves to the uttermost but will make it very certain that this form of treachery shall never again endanger us.

Hostilities exist. There is no blinking at the fact that our people, our territory, and our interests are in grave danger.

With confidence in our armed forces- with the unbounding determination of our people- we will gain the inevitable triumph- so help us God.

I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attack by Japan on Sunday, December 7, 1941, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.

(Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum:  
<http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/dec71941.html>)

**Questions:** please answer individually and be prepared to discuss as a class.

1. Why does President Franklin D. Roosevelt think that the attack by Japan was premeditated?
2. What is the effect of Roosevelt's repetitive nature of the speech on the reader?
3. How would you describe Roosevelt's rhetoric in this speech? What effect does it have on the reader?