**7.1 Overview Essay**

**USHC-7.1** **Objective**: *Analyze the decision of the United States to enter World War II, including the nation's movement from a policy of isolationism to international involvement and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor*.

**Assignment: Define, explain or otherwise identify the terms in bold. Create a timeline for the events in bold that have dates. Answer the questions at the end.**

In the 1930s, as the United States confronted economic crisis at home, a crisis was brewing in

Europe. The **totalitarian regimes** of **Italy's Mussolini**, **Germany's Hitler**, and **Japan's Tojo** threatened then disrupted world peace. Initially the United States, dealing with the Great Depression, was unwilling and unprepared to become involved in events overseas. Congress passed a series of **neutrality acts** designed to prevent war based on America's experiences prior to their entrance into World War I and on Americans' disillusionment with the Great War. (WWI) These acts prohibited the sale of arms or lending of money to countries involved in any military action. This reestablished the policy of **isolationism** from foreign conflicts and severely restricted the ability of **President Roosevelt** to respond to the aggression of Nazi Germany and a militaristic Japan. **The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1937** initiated the aggressive Japanese policy against China and Indochina that was designed to create a Japanese sphere of economic domination. The response of the United States to Japan’s aggressive actions, hampered by isolationism, was limited to trade restrictions, such as embargos on gas and iron, which the Japanese viewed as threatening.

When Hitler broke the **Munich Pact** by invading Czechoslovakia, the European policy of **appeasement** ended. The **German invasion of Poland in 1939** led to war in Europe. French and British forces fell back against the onslaught of the Nazi **blitzkrieg** and the British came under devastating air attack. In an effort to provide aid to the **Allies**, Franklin Delano Roosevelt sought to have the neutrality acts amended and to change American policy from **isolationism** to international involvement. This led to the progressively more involved policies of **"Cash and Carry,"** the **destroyers-for-bases deal** and **Lend Lease**.

To supply the Allies and prepare for the possibility of war, the process of changing from a peacetime to a wartime economy was begun even before the United States was officially at war. Roosevelt's commitment to oppose German and Japanese aggression was evidenced by the signing of the **Atlantic Charter**. Prior to the official entry of the United States into World War II, the American Navy was involved in protecting shipments of **Lend Lease** goods to the Allies and therefore lost ships in the Atlantic to German attacks. By 1941, the United States was in a state of undeclared naval war with Germany. **The Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941** forced the United States to officially abandon its policy of **isolationism.** The subsequent American declaration of war against Japan led Germany to declare war on the United States. The United States was officially at war with Germany and its allies, Japan and Italy.

Questions

1. Congress passed neutrality acts between WWI and WWII. What did they prohibit?
2. What was the US response to Japan’s invasion of Manchuria in 1931? How might this have contributed to Japan’s decision to attack Pearl Harbor?
3. What steps did FDR take that led to greater American international involvement before Pearl Harbor?