
The Critical Thinking of Franklin Roosevelt Ensured America's Triumph Over Japan

On December 7th, 1941, Pearl Harbor, a United States Naval base located around Oahu, was unexpectedly and ruthlessly attacked by Japanese air forces. In accordance to this unprecedented attack, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issues unto congress one of today's most infamous speeches. Throughout this speech, Roosevelt addresses his feelings in regards to the Japanese betrayal, elaborates on the Japanese attack against American forces, and discusses how he, as commander and chief, will prevent an attack like this from happening again. However, the style of this speech is unique; Roosevelt avoids the usage of elaborate words and hard-to-grasp ideas, instead he utilizes relatable, but strong diction, and organizes his ideas in a relatively simple manner that helps show the urgency and necessity of the situation.

Beginning with a discussion of the details regarding the attack on Pearl Harbor, FDR immediately informs Congress of the deception and betrayal implemented by the Japanese Empire. In fact, he tells congress that while the United States have been “looking toward peace” and have been in “existing diplomatic negotiations” with Japan, they will no longer continue to be lied to. However, instead of simply saying that the Japanese empire had been lying to the U.S prior to the bombings, Roosevelt uses sturdy diction like “suddenly” and “deliberately” to describe the treachery by Japan, which in turn reveals his bitter tone. Cleverly though, FDR consistently repeats these words to remind congress of the mockery the Japanese people have made of the American government, ultimately inciting their pride and persuading Congress to evoke war against Japan.

FDR then begins to explain the nature of the attack on Pearl Harbor, furthers his argument that the American people have been manipulated and betrayed by the Japanese. However, rather than using multiple adjectives and meaningless word play to describe the attacks, Roosevelt utilizes a unique literature strategy: simple parallel syntax. Roosevelt uses this form of syntax- Time, subject, and location of attack- to not only list off the other territories attacked by Japan's air force, but to prove to the congressman that the attack was planned, deceitful, and without reasonable cause. Like the attacks, the style of Roosevelt's use of syntax is short and to the point, which in itself only continues to further FDR's message that the Japanese people deceived and manipulated the American government. He doesn't stop there though, for instance, Roosevelt goes on to mention the loss of “very many American lives and ships” in order to further convince congress of Japan's lack of respect and honor for the United States.

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FDR finishes with the measures he has put into place, and reiterates to congress the need to go to war with Japan. Although seemingly simple, this portion of Roosevelt's speech happens to be his strongest, as he implements the use of powerful diction to appeal to Congress. In fact, he deliberately continues to refer back to his original point, stating that the "onslaught" against the United States was "premeditated," "unprovoked," and "dastardly." He also uses words like "righteous" and "inevitable," as well as refers to God in order to force congress to relate the American people's strength with god and ultimately convince them through the use of religion. FDR concludes his speech with a statement of war, disguised as a question, asking if Congress would "declare... Sunday, December 7th, 1941, a state of war" between the United States and Japanese Empire.

Throughout the course of his speech, FDR is filled with somberness and a desire for revenge; however, he doesn't let this affect his purpose. Instead, he convinces Congress to declare war on Japan. While his overall speech is short and without much detail, FDR achieves his purpose. In actuality, he does more than this, as Congress will not only go on to side with Roosevelt and go to war with the Japanese Empire, but United State forces will win. Although many told FDR his speech did not contain enough "supplemental" information, he convinces Congress through his straight forward, simply poignant speech, and ultimately serves as a pivotal conduit to the success of the United States in World War II.

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