<http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/pearlharborattack1.htm>

**Part 1: The Noise at Dawn**

It was a Sunday morning. Many sailors were still sleeping in their quarters, aboard their ships. Some were sleeping on land.

At 7:02 a.m. at the Opana Radar Station on Oahu, privates Joseph Lockhard & George Elliott saw something on their screen. It looked like a lot of planes flying toward them. Opana's was the only radar turned on just then, and it was on only for training. The other radar stations had been turned off. It was standard procedure.

Following standard procedure, Lockhard and Elliott reported what they saw. (Click [here](http://www.socialstudiesforkids.com/articles/ushistory/pearlharboraccount1.htm) for an eyewitness account of the attack.) The commanding officer on duty knew that a squadron of American planes was due in from California about the same time. Reasoning that what Lockhard and Elliott saw was that squadron of American planes, the commanding officer told the two privates not to worry.

What they didn't know and what nobody in America knew was that Japanese planes had taken off at 6 a.m. from aircraft carriers 230 miles away. What nobody in America thought was possible was happening: The Japanese were attacking Pearl harbor.

At 7:55, the Japanese attacked with deadly force. The first wave of 183 planes dropped bombs and fired bullets at the almost defenseless American ships in Pearl Harbor and planes at three nearby airfields. A second wave of 167 planes followed about an hour later. American sailors fought back, struggling to get their planes off the ground and fire their guns at targets they couldn't quite see.

A fleet of midget submarines was also part of the Japanese attack. These subs dropped deadly torpedoes, which had been modified with wooden fins to run their course in the shallow waters of Pearl Harbor.

**Part 2: The Damage**

When the attack was finished, 21 of the 96 ships at anchor had been sunk and others had been severaly damaged. Of the 394 planes at Hickam, Wheeler, and Bellows airfields, 188 were destroyed and 159 were damaged. The death total was 2,403 (including 68 civilians). The wounded total was 1,178.

Eight battleships were damaged in the attack, along with three destroyers and four other smaller ships. Among the battleship casualties:

* The USS *Arizona* was struck by a torpedo, which hit a gun magazine. The ship went down in 9 minutes, killing 1,177 aboard.
* The USS *Oklahoma* rolled over on its side, pinning many men inside and underwater. Some were rescued; many were not. Of the crew of 1,301, 429 died.
* The USS *West Virginia* was struck numberous times by both torpedos and bombs. It sank.
* The USS *Nevada* was struck numberous times by both torpedos and bombs. After the first wave, the *Nevada* tried to get out to sea through the narrow channel leading into the harbor. The*Nevada* had almost made it when the second wave of Japanese planes attacked. The planes tried to sink the *Nevada* and block the channel, but the *Nevada* chose to beach itself instead.

Two other smaller ships, the *Shaw* and the *Oglala*, were badly damaged. (The *Oglala* capsized.) The*Vestal* was beached. The *Utah*, which had been a target ship for the U.S. military, was itself sunk in the attack.

The Japanese attack force lost 29 planes and a handful of midget submarines.

In a little more than two hours, the Japanese had sunk 21 ships and killed more than 2,000 Americans. It was a devastating blow.

However, the American aircraft carriers were not in port. They were out to sea. As later results would prove, the aircraft carrier was the dominant ship in the navy. By not sinking the American carriers, the Japanese left the American left fleet largely intact. Of the 21 ships that were sunk on December 7, 1941, all but three were eventually refitted and sailed again under the American flag during the war.

When U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war on Japan the day after the attack, the answer was a resounding yes. An American that had been deeply divided over how much aid to give the Allies was not united in a common purpose: make the Japanese pay for their attack and rid the world of Nazism and Fascism.

Admiral Isoruku Yamamoto, who had planned the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, had studied at Harvard University and knew well the temperament and capabilities of the American people. He had warned others in the Japanese government that for the Pearl Harbor attack to succeed, it must be a crushing blow.

The attack was devastating, yes, but it wasn't a crushing blow. Moreover, it gave the American soldiers and their families a rallying cry that carried them through to the end of the war: "Remember Pearl Harbor."