

# Valor in the Pacific: Education Guide



NATIONAL MUSEUM *of the*  
UNITED STATES NAVY



Pearl Harbor is located on the island of Oahu, west of Hawaii's capitol, Honolulu.



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Sailors look on from amidst plane wreckage on Ford Island as the destroyer *USS Shaw* explodes in the center background. *USS Nevada* is in the middle background.



Welcome to the National Museum of the United States Navy! We are excited to have you and welcome you to our newest Exhibit: *Valor in the Pacific*. We are here to honor the 75th anniversary of the attack of Pearl Harbor, moving us into World War II.

## How did this happen, and why?

### Background information:

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the Japanese **Imperial** Navy attacked the Navy Yard at Pearl Harbor with 353 enemy planes on board 6 aircraft carriers. Many reasons were behind the **air raid**, but let's look at the major points. Historically, Japan kept to itself on the global stage, but in 1853, Japan opened itself up to world trade. Society became more modern, and the government began growing its presence and military. By the early 20th century, Japan wanted to be more powerful, but since it is a collection of small islands, it did not have a lot of resources like coal or rubber. With this in mind, Japan invaded area countries like China in the 1930s in order to use their resources and gain power. By 1940, Japan had taken control of Eastern China and modern day Vietnam and Cambodia. The United States saw these actions as a potential threat, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an **embargo** on Japan, preventing them from getting American oil. Japan desperately needed this oil, as they did not have any of their own. Roosevelt also moved a **fleet** from California to Pearl Harbor to prepare for a potential threat.

**Imperial** Japan then signed a pact with Nazi Germany and Italy, but they were still worried about the United States and needed to keep the US from entering World War II. Eventually, Japan decided to attack Pearl Harbor in hopes of destroying American aircraft carriers and battleships in order to weaken the US Navy. The attack was scheduled for the morning of December 7, 1941.

### Timeline of Events: December 7, 1941

- **6:05**- Six aircraft carriers, located 230 miles north of Pearl Harbor, begin launch with 183 planes.
- **6:20**- Commander Fuchida of the Imperial Navy notifies polite that they are attacking Pearl Harbor, about an hour and a half away. Pilots did not know the mission until the moment.
- **6:45**- *USS Ward*, a destroyer ship, locates and sinks a Japanese submarine. Higher ranks are notified, but no action was taken.
- **7:02**- 2 Privates in Oahu see many planes on their radar, but no action was taken.
- **7:05**- Second wave of planes leave the aircraft carriers north of Pearl Harbor, making 353 fighter planes in total.
- **7:49**- Nearing the Harbor, Fuchida commands the attack.
- **7:53**- Fuchida send a signal saying "Tora, Tora, Tora!" meaning the attack is a complete surprise to the US Navy.
- **7:55**- Air attack on Pearl Harbor begins.
- **8:00**- Admiral Kimmel signals the attack "This is no drill"
- **8:05**- *USS Oklahoma* sinks with 429 people inside.
- **8:10**- The *USS Arizona* explodes, killing 1,177 on board
- **8:54**- Second wave of Japanese planes arrive, but this time, the US Navy is more prepared with return gunfire
- **9:45**- Imperial Japanese planes return back to their aircraft carriers. The attack is over.



Arial view of Navy Yard at Pearl Harbor days after the attack.

## Spotlight on Three American Heroes

### Doris Miller, Cook Third Class

At the age of nineteen, Doris “Dorie” Miller enlisted in the Navy to see the world while earning money for his family back in Texas. Three years later, in December of 1941, Miller was stationed aboard the *USS West Virginia* in Pearl Harbor. Miller was on laundry duty when the call to battle stations came over, but quickly rushed to his assigned battle station. The battery had been damaged by torpedo fire and the ship’s captain had been injured on the bridge, so Miller carried him down to the first aid station. He then returned to the bridge to man a machine gun, even though he had never worked one before! In May, 1942 Doris Miller earned the Navy Cross for his bravery, the first African American to receive such an honor.



### Peter Tomich

As the chief water tender aboard the the *USS Utah*, Tomich’s daily work consisted of tending to the fires and boilers in the ship’s engine room. On the morning of December 7, *USS Utah* became the first American ship hit by the Japanese fleet. Tomich was belowdecks in the engine room when the first torpedo hit. He saw water rushing towards the boilers, and knowing the ship was close to tipping over, he shouted to the crew to evacuate. Tomich then set about securing the boilers, realizing they would explode if it was not done. After sending many of his shipmates to safety and ensuring the boilers would not cause further **casualties**, Tomich went down with the ship he considered “home”. For his act of great bravery, he was **posthumously** awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest Navy honor.



### Commander Cassin Young

Young became the commanding officer of the *USS Vestel*, a repair ship, only a few months before the attack on Pearl Harbor. During the attack, the *Vestel* was seriously damaged, but Young was quick to organize his men and even took charge of an anti-aircraft gun himself. An explosion from the *USS Arizona* blew Young overboard into the harbor. He swam through burning oil to get back to his ship to move it away from the doomed *Arizona*. Due to his bravery and actions, the ship was salvageable, and Young received the Medal of Honor. The following year, Young was killed in the Battle of Guadalcanal, **posthumously** earning the Navy Cross.





# What were the Japanese Navy targeting? What did they hit?

## Aircraft Carrier-



About 1,090 feet long

None at Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941

An aircraft carrier is the largest ship made by the US Navy and is equipped for aircrafts to take off and land on its deck. The goal of the Imperial Japanese Navy on December 7 was to destroy as many of these as they could. Luckily, no aircraft carriers were at Pearl Harbor that day. None were destroyed in the attack.

## Battleship-



About 600 feet long

A battleship was a heavy warship of a type built mainly in the 1900's with extensive armor and large-caliber guns. During their time, they were considered the most powerful type of warship. The US Navy no longer uses Battleships, and the last one was retired in 1992. Battleships were hit the worst during the attack at Pearl Harbor, as the Japanese Imperial Navy aimed for the famous Battleship Row, where eight battleships were lined up and an easy target.

### Major battleships damaged at Pearl harbor

- *USS Arizona*- Sunk with 1,177 men on board. Still underwater.
- *USS Oklahoma*- Capsized and sunk with 429 men on board.
- *USS West Virginia*- Sunk, but it was repaired in 1944.
- *USS California*- Sunk, but it was repaired in 1944.

## Destroyer-



About 510 feet long

A destroyer is a fast long-endurance warship used to guide larger vessels in a **fleet, convoy** or battle group and defend them against smaller powerful short-range attackers. Four destroyers were badly damaged during the attack at Pearl Harbor. Fortunately, all four were repaired and returned to services within the US Navy.

### Destroyers damaged at Pearl harbor

- *USS Cassin*- Repaired and rejoined fleet in 1942.
- *USS Downes*- Repaired and rejoined fleet in 1943.
- *USS Helm*- Repaired and rejoined fleet in 1942.
- *USS Shaw*- Severely damaged and repaired in 1942.

About 18 types of ships were at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and almost 100 ships in total. Thirty ships were damaged, and six sank.

## Images from the attack- *USS West Virginia*

Take a close look at this image taken of *USS West Virginia*. The Japanese shot seven torpedoes at her. The battleship sank that day, but it was raised and repaired in 1944.



### Questions to consider

1. How many people do you see? What do you think they are doing?
2. Do you see anyone still on the *USS West Virginia*? What jobs would people have on board?
3. What else do you notice in this image, and what do you wonder about this image?

## Images from the attack- Dry Dock

Damaged US ships in dry dock at the Pearl Harbor Navy Yard shortly after the attack ended.



### Questions to consider

1. What is going on in this photo? How soon after the air raid do you think this was taken?
2. How many ships can you find? What do you think will be done with them?
3. What else do you notice in this image, and what do you wonder about this image?



## Images from the attack- Naval Air Station

This photo was taken shortly after the first wave of attacks hit the Naval Air Station at Ford Island



### Questions to consider

1. What is going on in this photo? What stands out the most?
2. What do you notice about the planes in this picture? Do you see any people? What do you think they are doing?
3. What else do you notice in this image, and what do you wonder about this image?

## Images from the attack- Naval Air Station

Men at the airfield set up machine gun entrenchments, seen in the right foreground of this photo.



### Questions to consider

1. What is going on in this photo? Do you think this photo was taken before or during the attack?
2. What do you notice about the people? What signs of damage do you see?
3. What else do you notice in this image, and what do you wonder about this image?



## Vocabulary

**Air Raid-** an attack in which bombs are dropped from aircraft to a target.

**Casualty-** a person killed or injured in a war or accident.

**Embargo-** an official ban on trade with a particular country.

**Fleet-** a group of military ships that are controlled by one leader

**Imperial (Empire)-** a group of countries or regions that are controlled by one ruler or one government. In this case, the Japanese Empire.

**Posthumously-** occurring after the death of the recipient.

Fill in the following sentences with the vocabulary words you just learned.  
Use context clues to help:

\_\_\_\_\_ Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941.  
President Franklin Roosevelt had issued an \_\_\_\_\_ on  
Japan and moved a \_\_\_\_\_ to Pearl Harbor in  
preparation, but the \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ was still a surprise,  
leaving 2,403 \_\_\_\_\_. Many brave men, like  
Peter Tomich, died while saving others on that day. Tomich  
earned a Medal of Honor \_\_\_\_\_ for his  
bravery.

