

Module 8: World War II - 1939 to 1945
Topic 1 Content: America's Response to the War Notes

Introduction



At first, Americans did not want to get involved in another large-scale war. Americans were still suffering from the tough economic times of the Great Depression. The thoughts and memories of World War I were still fresh. Prior to any involvement in World War II, America supported its ally Great Britain.

Click **Next** to learn how the Americans responded to war by supporting Great Britain.

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Isolationism

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The majority of Americans believed in isolationism. They did not want to get involved in the affairs and conflicts of other nations.

America was still trying to get out of the Great Depression and the memories of World War I were still fresh in the minds of Americans.



During this early period of the war, the United States officially stayed neutral. Many Americans believed in isolationism, which was a belief that the United States should not get involved in the affairs and conflicts of other nations. Most Americans supported isolationism because they wanted the United States government to focus on helping America get out of the Great Depression. Similarly, the memories of the sacrifices of men and money during World War I were still fresh in many Americans' minds, and they did not want to repeat those losses in a second war. The popular view of the time was that this new conflict was a European problem and that the United States should not get involved.

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Support Great Britain

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A strong minority wanted to support the American ally Great Britain in its war against Germany.

America provided supplies and old naval destroyers in exchange for naval bases in Bermuda and the Caribbean.



While isolationists were in the majority, a strong minority of Americans supported Great Britain in its conflict with Germany. At the start of the war, American laws required Great Britain to pay for and transport any materials it needed from the United States. When Great Britain started to run out of money, an agreement was made in September, 1940 that allowed the United States to provide supplies and old naval destroyers to Great Britain in exchange for navy bases in Bermuda and the Caribbean. Many Americans saw this style of exchange as a good way to support Great Britain in its fight against Germany while still remaining neutral.

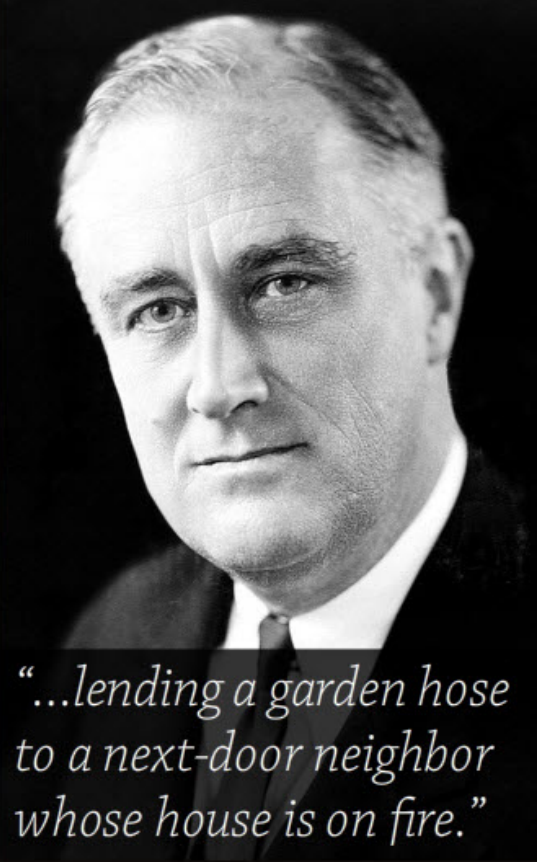
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Roosevelt and the Lend Lease Act

Roosevelt and the Lend Lease Act

In 1940, President Roosevelt addressed the nation and convinced many Americans to fully support Great Britain.

In 1941, Congress passed the Lend Lease Act, which allowed for the selling or lending of equipment to fight against Germany and the Axis Powers.



"...lending a garden hose to a next-door neighbor whose house is on fire."

In December of 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in a radio address, shifted the American policy away from neutrality and toward full support of Great Britain and other countries fighting against Germany and the Axis Powers. In his address to the nation, Roosevelt said, "We must be the great arsenal of democracy. For us this is an emergency as serious as war itself. We must apply ourselves to our task with the same resolution, the same sense of urgency, the same spirit of patriotism and sacrifice as we would show were we at war."

In March of 1941, Congress passed the Lend Lease Act, which gave President Roosevelt permission to sell or lend equipment to countries fighting against Germany and the Axis Powers. President Franklin Roosevelt described the Lend Lease Act as "lending a garden hose to a next-door neighbor whose house is on fire."