

Questions 1 – 3 refer to the excerpt below.

“It is now two years since this latest European war began. From that day in September, 1939, until the present moment, there has been an ever-increasing effort to force the United States into the conflict. That effort has been carried on by foreign interests, and by a small minority of our own people; but it has been so successful that, today, our country stands on the verge of war.

“At this time, as the war is about to enter its third winter, it seems appropriate to review the circumstances that have led us to our present position. Why are we on the verge of war? Was it necessary for us to become so deeply involved? Who is responsible for changing our national policy from one of neutrality and independence to one of entanglement in European affairs?

“Personally, I believe there is no better argument against our intervention than a study of the causes and developments of the present war. I have often said that if the true facts and issues were placed before the American people, there would be no danger of our involvement.”

Charles Lindbergh, Speech in Des Moines, Iowa, 1941

1. Which of the following best represents the views of the majority of Americans regarding the “European war” at the time that Lindbergh delivered this speech?
 - (A) They were unconcerned about the rise of fascism and totalitarianism.
 - (B) They supported an embargo in response to impressment of American sailors.
 - (C) They favored American military intervention against Germany.
 - (D) They preferred for the United States to remain neutral in the conflict.
2. Which American president would have been most likely to support the ideas in Lindbergh’s speech?
 - (A) Abraham Lincoln
 - (B) Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - (C) George Washington
 - (D) Woodrow Wilson
3. American public opinion on foreign involvement changed significantly when
 - (A) the United States was attacked by a foreign power
 - (B) Americans became more aware of the humanitarian crisis in Germany
 - (C) fear arose that a Soviet victory would bring communism to the United States
 - (D) newspapers began printing sensational stories that provoked the public

Answer Key and Explanations

1. D

Choice (A) is wrong because although a decisive majority of Americans opposed entering the war before the attack on Pearl Harbor, a majority also supported the Roosevelt administration's "Arsenal of Democracy" initiatives, such as Lend-Lease, to help Britain fight its war against Germany. Just because they did not want the United States to be directly involved does not mean they were not concerned about the situation. Choice (B) is out of period, as it applies to the situation that provoked the United States to declare war on Great Britain in 1812, more than a century before. Choice (C) is wrong because most Americans *did not* support direct military intervention against Germany prior to the Pearl Harbor attack. Choice (D) is correct because the majority of Americans supported Lindbergh's neutral position regarding the war prior to Pearl Harbor.

2. C

Choice (A) is irrelevant, as Abraham Lincoln is not primarily remembered in history for his foreign policy. There is not enough information available about Lincoln's foreign policy views to know whether he would have supported Lindbergh's position or not. Choice (B) is wrong because Lindbergh was a harsh critic of the Roosevelt administration, going so far as to claim that FDR's "Arsenal of Democracy" initiatives were designed to bring the United States into the war. Choice (C) is correct, as the ideas in Lindbergh's speech were directly influenced by the principles of neutrality outlined in Washington's Neutrality Proclamation, as well as his Farewell Address. Choice (D) is wrong because Woodrow Wilson advocated for the United States to join the League of Nations, which was designed to combat aggressive actions like Germany was taking in Europe at the time.

3. A

Choice (A) is correct because the attack on Pearl Harbor resulted in a majority of Americans supporting a declaration of war. Note that the allusion to the Pearl Harbor attack is vague here, as these questions are not typically designed to put the answer right in front of you. Choice (B) is wrong because Americans were aware of the discrimination that Jews were facing in Germany and this did not make a difference in most Americans' views about entering the war. Choice (C) is wrong because the Soviet Union was fighting against Nazi Germany at that time and the United States would be allied with the Soviet Union during the war. This distractor was placed here in order to lure students who would confuse World War II with the Cold War or the First Red Scare. Choice (D) is out of period since it would apply to the Spanish-American War rather than to World War II.