Declaration of War with Japan: Audio Transcript – ANSWERS (a guide, not definitive answers)

Use the transcript (page 3) to complete these activities before listening to the audio recording at http://espace.library.curtin.edu.au:80/R?func=dbin-jump-full&local_base=era01jcpml&object_id=82655

1. Title – When did Australia declare war on Japan? 8 December 1941

2. Paragraph 2

   a) Unprovoked means that you did not cause something to happen. Using your own words, rewrite the sentence that includes the word unprovoked.
   
   That has happened because in the first instance Japanese naval and air forces launched an attack on British and United States territory without cause.

   b) Peril means in danger and assailed means to be violently attacked by someone trying to gain control of you. Rewrite the sentence that uses the words peril and assail.
   
   Because our vital interests are in danger and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are under attack.

   c) Look at the map showing Japanese control of the Far East (page 4). Locate the Netherlands (Dutch) East Indies. What is this country called today? Indonesia

3. Paragraph 3

   • Representatives abroad refers to people that our government has sent to other countries to represent our interests in that country. These people are called diplomats and work in embassies, consulates or legations. They know how to negotiate with important people in other countries.

   • Diplomatic initiative means that Australia encouraged the United States to keep negotiating with Japan in order to prevent war.

   • Democratic powers refers to countries like Australia, Great Britain and the Netherlands. It also included New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.

   a) Find Japan on the map. In which ocean are the islands of Japan located? Pacific

   b) Explain what Prime Minister John Curtin meant by: If war came to the Pacific it would be of Japan’s making. He meant that any war in the Pacific would be Japan’s fault. The country’s people would have nobody to blame but themselves.
4. **Paragraph 4**

Use your dictionary to explain the following terms. You could work as a team of three to find the meaning of one word/phrase each.

a) **Bandying of words**  
Pointless discussions that do not achieve anything. The Allied governments really wanted a peaceful solution so they did not just engage in pointless discussions.

b) **Fraught**  
Filled with something – usually a situation filled with a risk of a bad result.

c) **Dominion governments**  
Self-governing territories within a community of nations, such as the Commonwealth of Nations. Each member is an independent country but members work together, usually because they have a shared history.

d) **Use**  
Useful facts about Japan in World War II (page 4) to fill in the missing information:

Hirohito was Emperor of Japan during World War II. The Japanese people believed that he was descended from the goddess Amaterasu and that he was a living god. The Emperor appointed the Prime Minister and all the members of the House of Peers. The elected House of Representatives had no real power. Children from school age were taught to be obedient, subject to authority and loyal to the Emperor. This made the Emperor very powerful.

e) Use the dictionary to find the meanings of the following terms. Work as a team of three.

i) **Imperial intervention**  
[What did you find out about the Emperor’s powers in the activity above?]  
The Emperor was very powerful because he appointed the Prime Minister and the House of Peers. If he asked the Japanese government not to make war they would probably agree.

ii) **War government**  
[see Useful facts about Japan in World War II (page 4)]  
Tojo’s government.

iii) **Lusting for power**  
Seeking power over other countries, not caring how this is achieved.

iv) **Axis (powers)**  
[clue: look back at the Axis Character Profiles] Germany, Italy and Japan.

5. **Paragraph 5**

Explain the meaning of the phrase arm ed conflict stalks abroad by using a step-by-step approach:

a) What does armed conflict mean? War between two or more well-armed groups

b) What does to stalk mean? To pursue someone with stealth

c) What does abroad mean? All around the place (in this case it means the Pacific Ocean)

d) So when John Curtin said armed conflict stalks abroad he meant: The Japanese were well-armed, roaming around the Pacific Ocean, watching and waiting, ready to attack.
John Curtin announcing the declaration of war with
Japan, 8 December 1941 – transcript (excerpt, 0:00:00 – 0:03:52)

Men and women of Australia,

We are at war with Japan. That has happened because, in the first instance, Japanese naval and air forces launched an unprovoked attack on British and United States territory; because our vital interests are imperilled and because the rights of free people in the whole Pacific are assailed. As a result, the Australian Government this afternoon took the necessary steps which will mean that a state of war exists between Australia and Japan. Tomorrow, in common with the United Kingdom, the United States of America and the Netherlands East Indies Governments, the Australian Government will formally and solemnly declare the state of war it has striven so sincerely and strenuously to avoid.

Throughout the whole affair, and despite discouragement, the Australian Government and its representatives abroad struggled hard to prevent a breakdown of discussions. Australia encouraged the United States to retain the diplomatic initiative on behalf of the democratic Powers. We did not want war in the Pacific. The Australian Government has repeatedly made it clear – as have the Governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and the Netherlands East Indies – that if war came to the Pacific it would be of Japan's making. Japan has now made war.

I point out that the hands of the democracies are clean. The discussions and negotiations which have taken place between Japan and the democracies were not merely empty bandying of words on the democracies' part. Since last February it has been the constant aim and endeavour of the democracies to keep peace in the Pacific. It has been a problem fraught with grave difficulties but, in the view of the democracies, it was a problem that was capable of being overcome. Accordingly, the best brains of the democracies were brought to bear on the problem. It will stand on record that the President of the United States himself, the American Secretary of State (Mr Cordell Hull), the British and the Dominion Governments worked untiringly and unceasingly. Yet, when the President of the United States had decided to communicate direct to the Japanese Emperor a personal appeal for Imperial intervention on the side of peace, the war Government of Japan struck. That war Government, set on aggression and lusting for power in the same fashion as its Axis partners, anticipated the undoubted weight of the President's plea and shattered the century-old friendship between the two countries.

For the first time in the history of the Pacific, armed conflict stalks abroad. No other country but Japan desired war in the Pacific. The guilt for plunging this hemisphere into actual warfare is, therefore, upon Japan.
Useful facts about Japan in World War II

**HIDEKI TOJO, Prime Minister of Japan 1941–1944**
Hideki Tojo, an army general, became Prime Minister of Japan in October 1941. Members of the House of Peers, to which the Prime Minister belonged, were appointed for life by the Emperor. The elected House of Representatives had no real power. Tojo belonged to a strong group of army officers who believed that Japan could successfully fight a war against Britain, the United States and their allies. Prime Minister Tojo gave the order to attack Pearl Harbour.

**EMPEROR HIROHITO**
The Japanese Emperor, Hirohito, was considered to be a living god who was descended from the sun-goddess Amaterasu. The official Japanese religion – Shinto, ‘the way of the gods’ – emphasised the importance of the Emperor in society. It was used by the government to instil loyalty to the Emperor (the ‘throne’) and obedience to authority. The Japanese education system taught children to put the interests of their nation before their own. They were taught to be obedient, subject to authority and loyal to the emperor. Patriotism was all-important – the individual counted for nothing. If the Emperor asked the people to go to war, then the people went to war.