**Main Idea:**

Though President Roosevelt recognized the threat posed by the Axis Powers, most Americans were more concerned with their own economic hardships. Many still had haunting memories of the horrors of World War I and were reluctant to become involved in another European conflict.

***Quote 1:***

*“When Peace is broken anywhere the peace of all countries everywhere is in danger… This nation will remain a neutral nation, but I cannot ask that every American remain neutral in thought as well.”*

- Franklin D. Roosevelt

The outbreak of war in Europe came after years of trying to peacefully appease Hitler. Roosevelt watched the developments with increasing concern.

Most Americans felt protected by the vast oceans separating us from the conflicts in Europe and Asia. Remembering the horrific loss of American lives in the First World War, and still suffering from the effects of the Great Depression, Americans were focused more on their own hardships than the conflicts emerging overseas.

But Roosevelt recognized the grave danger the Axis Powers posed to America’s security. He believed that our best defense was to aid nations that were fighting Hitler. Isolationists argued America should look to its own defenses rather than aid other nations. At the time the U.S. military was woefully unprepared for war. Neutrality laws passed by Congress during the 1930s prohibited the sale of American arms to warring nations. These factors placed limits on FDR’s ability to act.

***Quote 2:***

*“Our neutrality laws may operate unevenly and unfairly, may actually give aid to an aggressor and deny it to the victim.” -* Franklin D. Roosevelt

**America Says It Is Neutral, But Really Isn’t**

As Britain was intensely attacked by the Luftwaffe, **Pres. Franklin Roosevelt desperately wanted to do something to help the Allies.** His hands were tied by the Amer. public & Congress.

**1937 U.S. Neutrality Act ---** U.S. can sell **only nonwar supplies** on a **"cash & carry"** basis.

**By 1940, FDR felt this embargo was mainly hurting the Allies so he took actions:**

1. **1939 Neutrality Act** = U.S. can sell **war** supplies on **"cash & carry"** basis.

2. **May 1940 U.S. Congress votes $17 billion to build up U.S. military.**

3. **Sept. 1940 Destroyer For Bases Deal** = U.S. trades 50 old WW I era destroyers to Br. in exchange for a lease on military bases in Canada & the Caribbean. This act was passed during the Battle of Britain to give Britain more ships to escort supply convoys across the Atlantic (mostly from the U.S.)..

4. **Sept. 1940 Selective Training & Service Act** = requires males 21 - 35 to register for the draft. Trains 2 million men!

5. \*\*\*\***March 1941 Lend Lease Act** = Pres. can lend, lease, or sell weapons or supplies **to any nation he feels is vital to the security of the U.S.** This was an effort to help cash poor Britain & it quickly led the U.S. into the war.

6. **Late March 1941 U.S. seized Axis ships in U.S. ports**

7. **Late May 1941 U.S. froze Axis credit in U.S.**

8. **July 1941 The U.S. Navy began convoying British supplies to Iceland where the British Navy picked them up for the most dangerous waters, closer to Britain.** This allowed the British to keep more ships home to protect the home island from Germans.U.S. destroyers followed German submarines until British destroyers could arrive to sink them!

9. **Aug. 1941 ATLANTIC CHARTER** – **President Franklin Delano Roosevelt** & **British Prime Minister Winston Churchill** met secretly on a ship off the coast of Newfoundland to establish Allied war goals, even though the U.S. was still saying it was neutral!!! A strong personal friendship developed between FDR & Churchill and this friendship helped to make the American--British alliance one of most effective in world history!!

10. **Oct. 1941 The U.S. Navy was already at war with Germany in the waters close to Iceland!!** {Most Americans were not aware of it!}