Should the United States have dropped atomic bombs on Japan?

**Step One**: Based on what you know NOW, answer the question in the space and give a reason / justification for your answer.

**Step Two:** Read and watch the documents and answer the corresponding questions. Discuss your answers with your partner.

Due date for Step Two: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step Three:** Based on the information and reasoning in the documents, create a Tree Map, listing (1) details (2)arguments supporting the dropping of the bomb (3) arguments against dropping the bomb. (Further instructions to follow.)

Due date for Step Three: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step Four**: Based on the information and reasoning in the documents, on your thinking map and in your textbook, re-answer the question and list three reasons/ justifications for your answer.

Due date for Step Four: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Step Five:** Write a five paragraph essay explaining your answer using three supporting reasons. Your essay must reference and include information from 6 of the documents. (Further instructions to follow.)

Due date for Step Five (rough draft): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Due date for Step Five (final draft):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Scoring Guide

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Description / Assignment | Pts Poss. | Total Poss. | Total Rec’d |
| Step One | Initial answer and justification | 10 |  |  |
|  | | | 10 |  |
| Step Two | Document 1 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 2 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 3 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 4 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 5 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 6 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 7 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Document 8 Answers | 10 |  |  |
|  | Complete and on time | 10 |  |  |
|  | | | 90 |  |
| Step Three | Correct Format | 10 |  |  |
|  | Includes details about bomb | 10 |  |  |
|  | Includes details supporting the bomb, including document #s | 10 |  |  |
|  | Includes details against the bomb, including document #s | 10 |  |  |
|  | Complete and on time | 10 |  |  |
|  | | | 50 |  |
| Step Four | Thesis paragraph turned in, including your answer and three reasons to support your answer | 20 |  |  |
|  | | | 20 |  |
| Step Five | Rough Draft complete and on time | 50 |  |  |
|  | Thesis paragraph | 15 |  |  |
|  | Supporting paragraph 1, including 2 documents | 10 |  |  |
|  | Supporting paragraph 2, including 2 documents | 10 |  |  |
|  | Supporting paragraph 3, including 2 documents | 10 |  |  |
|  | Conclusion that addresses and responds to counterpoints | 15 |  |  |
|  | Spelling and grammar | 10 |  |  |
|  | Typed | 10 |  |  |
|  | | | 130 |  |
| **GRAND TOTAL** |  |  | **300** |  |

**Document A**

*From a pamphlet dropped over major cities in Japan before the dropping of the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki*.

To the Japanese People:

America asks that you take immediate heed of what we say on this leaflet.

We are in possession of the most destructive explosive ever devised by man. A single one of our newly developed atomic bombs is actually the equivalent in explosive power to what 2000 of our giant B-29’s can carry on a single mission. This awful fact is one for you to ponder and we solemnly assure you it is grimly accurate.

We have just begun to use this weapon against your homeland. If you still have any doubt, make inquiry as to what happened to Hiroshima when just one atomic bomb fell on that city.

Before using this bomb to destroy every resource of the military by which they are prolonging this useless war, we ask that you now petition the emperor to end the war. Our president has outlined for you the thirteen consequences of honorable surrender: We urge that you accept these consequences and begin the work of building a new, better, and peace-loving Japan.

You should take steps now to cease military resistance. Otherwise, we shall resolutely employ this bomb and all our other superior weapons to promptly and forcefully end the war.

Discussion Questions

1. What is the message that the United States is sending to Japan with this leaflet?
2. This pamphlet was dropped over major cities. Why do you think the message was not just sent to Japanese government officials? What were the Americans hoping would happen?

**Document B**

*From a memorandum given to General Leslie Groves including a summary from the target selection committee that choose four targets for the atomic bombs.*

6. Status of Targets

A. Dr. Stearns described the work he had done on target selection. He has surveyed possible targets possessing the following qualifications: (1) they be important targets in an large urban area of more than three miles diameter, (2) they are capable of being damaged by a blast, and (3) they are likely to be unattacked by next August. Dr. Stearns had a list of five targets which the Air Forces would be willing to reserve for our use unless unforeseen circumstances arise. These targets are:

1. Kyoto – This target is an urban industrial area with a population of 1,000,000. It is the former capital of Japan and many people and industries are now being moved there as other areas are being destroyed. From the psychological point of view there is the advantage that Kyoto is an intellectual center for Japan and the people are more apt to appreciate the significance of such a weapon as the gadget. (Classified as an AA Target)
2. Hiroshima – This is an important army depot and port of embarkation in the middle of an urban industrial area. It is a good radar target and it is such a size that a large part of the city could be extensively damaged. There are adjacent hills which are likely to produce a focusing effect which would considerably increase the blast damage. Due to the rivers it is not a good incendiary target. (Classified as an AA Target)
3. The possibility of bombing the Emperor’s palace was discussed. It was agreed that we should not recommend it but that any action for this bombing should come from authorities on military policy. It was agreed that we should obtain information from which we could determine the effectiveness of our weapon against this target.

B. It was the recommendation of those present at the meeting that the first four choices of targets for our weapon should be the following:

a. Kyoto

b. Hiroshima

c. Yokohama

d. Kokura Arsenal

Discussion Questions

1. According to this memo, what were the 3 qualifications the US used in deciding where to drop the bomb?
2. Explain why Hiroshima met those qualifications.
3. Explain why Hiroshima might not have met those qualifications.
4. Do you think Hiroshima was an appropriate target for the atomic bomb? Explain.

**Document C**

*From President Truman’s diary on July 25, 1945 stating he had approved the use of an atomic bomb on Japan. Truman hoped that the bomb would be dropped on a “purely military” target, so that “military objectives and soldiers and sailors [would be] the target and not women and children.”*

We have discovered the most terrible bomb in the history of the world. It may be the fire destruction prophesied in the Euphrates Valley era, after Noah and his fabulous ark.

Anyway we “think” we have found the way to cause a disintegration of the atom. An experiment in the New Mexico desert was startling- to put it mildly. Thirteen pounds of the explosive caused the complete disintegration of a steel tower 60 feet high, created a crater 6 feet deep and 1,200 feet in diameter, knocked over a steel tower ½ mile away and knocked men down 10,000 yards away. The explosion was visible for more than 200 miles and audible for 40 miles and more.

This weapon is to be used against Japan between now and August 10th. I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless, and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop that terrible bomb on the old capital or the new.

He and I are in accord. The target will be a purely military one and we will issue a warning statement asking the Japs to surrender and save lives. I’m sure they will not do that, but we will have given them the chance. It is certainly a good thing for the world that Hitler’s crowd or Stalin’s did not discover this atomic bomb. It seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful…

Discussion Questions

1. According to the diary entry, what did President Truman believe would be the targets of the atomic bombs?
2. What did Truman mean when he said the bomb “seems to be the most terrible thing ever discovered, but it can be made the most useful”?

**Document D**

*This article analyzes positive and negative consequences of the dropping of the atomic bombs, according to several historians.*

Pros and Cons on Dropping the Bomb

By Bill Deitrich

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| **Why the bomb was needed or justified** | **Why the bomb was not needed or unjustified** |
| * The Japanese had demonstrated near-fanatical resistance, fighting to almost the last man on Pacific islands, committing mass suicide on Saipan and unleashing kamikaze attacks at Okinawa. Fire bombing had killed 100,000 in Tokyo with no political effect. Only the atomic bomb could jolt Japan’s leadership to surrender. | * Japan was ready to call it quits anyway. More than 60 of its cities had been destroyed by conventional bombing, the home islands were being blockaded by the American Navy and the Soviet Union entered the war by attacking Japanese troops in Manchuria. |
| * With only two bombs ready (and a third on the way by late August 1945) it was too risky to “waste” one in a demonstration over an unpopulated area. | * American refusal to modify its “unconditional surrender” demand to allow the Japanese to keep their emperor needlessly prolonged Japanese resistance. |
| * An invasion of Japan would have caused casualties on both sides that could easily have exceeded the toll at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. | * A demonstration explosion over Tokyo harbor would have convinced Japan’s leaders to quit without killing many people. |
| * The two targeted cities would have been firebombed anyway. | * Even if Hiroshima was necessary, the US did not give enough time for word to filter out of its devastation before bombing Nagasaki. |
| * Immediate use of the bomb convinced the world of its horror and prevented future use when nuclear stockpiles were far larger. | * The bomb was dropped partly to justify the $2 billion spent developing and building it. |
|  | * The two cities were of limited military value. Civilians outnumbered troops in Hiroshima five to one. |

Discussion Questions

1. Which of the arguments about why the bomb was needed do you find most convincing? Why?
2. Which of the arguments about why the bomb was not needed do you find most convincing? Why?

Document E

**Arguments Against The Bomb**by Michael Barnes

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| **Argument 1: The Bomb Was Made For Defense Only**  German scientists had just conducted a successful nuclear fission experiment, and based on those results, Szilard was able to demonstrate that uranium was capable of producing a nuclear chain reaction. |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard [Albert Einstein and Leo Szilard](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/1-war/4-Pacific/4-abombdecision/3-against/Einstein_and_Szilard.jpg) | | He feared that Germany was trying to build an atomic bomb, while the United States was sitting idle.  Although WWII had not yet started, Germany was clearly a threat, and if the Germans had a monopoly on the atomic bomb, it could be deployed against anyone, including the United States, without warning. Szilard worked with Albert Einstein, whose celebrity gave him access to the president, to produce a letter informing Roosevelt of the situation.  Their warning eventually resulted in the Manhattan Project.  Bomb opponents argue that the atomic bomb was built as a defensive weapon, not an offensive one.  It was intended to be a deterrent, to make Germany or any other enemy think twice before using such a weapon against the United States. | |
| **Argument 2: Use of the Bomb was Illegal** On September 39, 1938, the League of Nations, "under the recognized principles of international law," issued a unanimous resolution outlawing the intentional bombing of civilian populations, with special emphasis against bombing military objectives from the air.  The League warned, *"Any attack on legitimate military objectives must be carried out in such a way that civilian populations in the neighborhood are not bombed through negligence."*Significantly, the resolution also reaffirmed that *"the use of chemical or bacterial methods in the conduct of war is contrary to international law."*  In other words, a special category of illegal weapons had been recognized, a category today called Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). |
| |  | | --- | | However, bomb supporters point out that since the United States was not a member of the League of Nations; its laws did not apply.  And anyway, the League had been disbanded in 1939, long before the atomic bomb was used.  To that counter-argument, bomb opponents reply that since America presents itself to the world as a model for human rights, the U.S. should aspire to at least meet the basic code of conduct agreed to by the rest of the civilized world. | |
| **Argument 3: Use of the Atomic Bombs Was Racially Motivated** Opponents of President Truman’s decision to use the atomic bomb argue that racism played an important role in the decision; that had the bomb been ready in time it never would have been used against Germany. All of America’s enemies were |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Ashtray: "Jam Your Cigarette Butts on This Rat" [Ashtray: "Jam Your Cigarette Butts on This Rat" (2 views)](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/1-war/4-Pacific/4-abombdecision/3-against/Ashtray-Jam_Your_Cigarette_Butts_On_This_Rat_view1.jpg) | Poster: "Tokio Kid Say: Much Waste of Material Make So-o-o-o Happy! Thank You" [Poster: "Tokio Kid Say: Much Waste of Material Make So-o-o-o Happy! Thank You"](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/1-war/4-Pacific/4-abombdecision/3-against/Tokio_Kid_Say-Much_Waste.jpg) | | stereotyped and caricatured in home front propaganda, but there was a clear difference in the nature of that propaganda.  Although there were crude references to Germans as “krauts,” and Italians as “Tonies” or “spaghettis,” the vast majority of ridicule was directed at their political leadership.  Hitler, Nazis, and Italy’s Mussolini were routinely caricatured, but the German and Italian people weren’t.  By contrast, anti-Japanese racism in American society targeted the Japanese as a race of people, and demonstrated a level of hatred comparable with Nazi anti-Jewish propaganda.  The Japanese were universally caricatured as having huge buck teeth, massive fangs dripping with saliva, and monstrous thick glasses through which they leered with squinty eyes. They were further dehumanized as being snakes, cockroaches, and rats, and their entire culture was mocked, including language, customs, and religious beliefs. | |
| |  | | --- | | American racism led to a failure to distinguish between the Japanese government, dominated by hard-line militarists, and the Japanese civilian who was caught up in their government’s war.  Racists viewed all | |
| |  | | --- | | Japanese as threats not because of their political education, but because of their genetics. As further evidence, bomb opponents point to US policy toward the Japanese-Americans living in California at the time.  They were rounded up, denied their basic liberties under the Constitution (even though many of them were American citizens), and sent to isolated camps in the deserts, surrounded by barbed wire, until the war’s end.  Nothing on this scale was done to the Germans during WWII, or even during the First World War, when there were millions of German and Austrian immigrants and their children living in the United States. | |

**Argument 4: There Were Alternatives**  
Supporters of President Truman’s decision to use atomic weapons against Japan tend to paint the decision as a difficult choice between two stark options—it was either American boys, or the bomb.  Opponents of the bomb are adamant that there were other options available to the President, which at the very least should have been tried before resorting to the bomb.

Alternative 1: A Demonstration of the bomb One alternative might have been to arrange a demonstration of the bomb. A site could have been prepared in 1945. If representatives of the Japanese government, military, and scientific community could have seen the bomb, it might have been enough to convince them of the foolishness of continued resistance.  If not, at least the U.S. could say that they had tried, thereby maintaining the moral high ground.

Bomb supporters make several counter-points.  Although the test in the New Mexican desert had been successful, the technology was still new.  What if the demonstration bomb didn't work? The United States would have looked weak and foolish.  A failed demonstration might even serve to increase Japanese resolve.  Additionally, the U.S. only had two bombs left after Los Alamos.  If the demonstration failed to convince the Japanese to surrender, only one bomb would remain.  Others would presumably be produced later, but there was no guarantee of that. One bomb, as it turned out, was not enough to force surrender.  A third counter-point is that a demonstration would eliminate the element of surprise, and the Japanese might use American POWs as human shields.

Alternative 2: Wait For the Russians

When Truman and Stalin met on the 17th, the Soviet leader confirmed they would declare war on Japan on August 15.  Bomb opponents thus question why the United States used atomic bombs on August 6 and 9, when they knew the Russians were coming a week later.

Alternative 3: Let the Japanese Keep Their Emperor

The third and perhaps most important alternative to both the bomb and the land invasion was to modify the demand for unconditional surrender and allow the Japanese to keep their emperor. The American government clearly understood that if they harmed the emperor, whom the Japanese revered as a god, the Japanese would resist forever.  Of course, he would have to be demoted to a powerless figurehead (much like the Royal Family in Great Britain), but it was possible that this one condition alone might have been enough to persuade them to surrender.

Alternative 4: Continue Conventional Bombing

Some military analysts were convinced in the summer of 1945 that Japan was very near surrender, that the pounding they were taking from conventional weapons would soon convince the Japanese cabinet that further resistance was futile. Their report, the Strategic Bombing Survey, makes the obvious observation that Japan might have surrendered earlier if they had had a different government. But it goes on to express a more startling opinion:

“Nevertheless, it seems clear that, even without the atomic bombing attacks, air supremacy over Japan could have exerted sufficient pressure to bring about unconditional surrender and obviate the need for invasion...Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts, and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.”

**Argument #5: Use of the bomb was more to scare Russia than to defeat Japan.**

**The United States and Stalin were already having disagreements over the new map of Europe post WWII. Stalin wanted to drastically spread Soviet influence over Eastern Europe.** They believed the shock-and-awe effect of using the atomic bomb against Japan would make the Soviet Union more manageable in post-war negotiations.

**Argument 6: The Atomic Bomb Was Inhumane**

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| The logical conclusion to the list of arguments against the bomb is that use of such a weapon was simply inhumane.  Hundreds of thousands of civilians with no democratic rights to oppose their militarist government, including women and children, were vaporized, turned into charred blobs of carbon, horrifically burned, buried in rubble, speared by flying debris, and saturated with |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Hiroshima survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi [Hiroshima survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/1-war/4-Pacific/4-abombdecision/3-against/Hiroshima_Victim_With_Burned_Back.jpg) | Hiroshima survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi in 2004 [Hiroshima survivor Sumiteru Taniguchi in 2004](http://www.authentichistory.com/1939-1945/1-war/4-Pacific/4-abombdecision/3-against/20041107_Survivor_Still_Suffers.jpg) | | radiation.  Entire families, whole neighborhoods were simply wiped out.  The survivors faced radiation sickness, starvation, and crippling mutilations. Then there were the “hidden cracks,” the spiritual, emotional, and psychological damage.  Japanese outside of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, scared and ignorant about radiation sickness, treated bomb victims as if they had a communicable disease.  They were shunned and ostracized from Japanese society.  Some blamed themselves for various reasons—like a woman who convinced her parents to move to Hiroshima before the bomb was dropped, | |
| |  | | --- | | or those who were the only survivor of a family, or of an entire school. Others, unable to cope with trauma left untreated, committed suicide.  Radiation continued to haunt the survivors, bringing a lifetime of sickness, not the least of which was an increase in the rates of various cancers.  Birth defects for those pregnant at the time jumped significantly, and although the data on birth defects passed down through generations is inconclusive (Hiroshima and Nagasaki are ongoing laboratories of the long-term effects of radiation exposure), bomb survivors and their offspring continue to suffer anxiety about the possibilities. | |

**Discussion Questions:**

1. According to the author, Michael Barnes, what are 5 reasons why the United States should not have dropped the atomic bombs on Japan?
2. What alternatives to dropping the bombs did Barnes give?
3. Explain what the author means when he wrote “the use of the atomic bomb was racially motivated”.
4. One of the alternatives to dropping the atomic bombs was to release a demonstration bomb somewhere. How would have this worked and how might it have failed?

Document F

My Japan

After watching the video clip “My Japan”, answer the following questions the best you can.

The United States created this video to look like a real Japanese newscast as propaganda.

Discussion Questions

1. How does this video portray the Japanese?
2. How does this video portray the Americans?
3. In what ways does this video claim the Japanese are stronger than Americans?
4. How would you use this video to justify dropping the atomic bombs?

Document G

After viewing the PPT, answer the questions below.

1. Who were the victims in the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?

2. What were some of the effects of the bombs?