The Decision to Drop the Bomb

INTRODUCTION

Imagine it is 1945 and World War II has just come to a conclusion. Just before the end of the War, the Atomic Bomb was dropped on and Nagasaki. Many wonder whether dropping the bomb was necessary but others think it was in order to limit the amount of Allied casualties and bring the long arduous war to an end. A community in California is getting together to discuss the reason for dropping the bomb. Four teams of people representing a Japanese citizen, President Truman's advisor, the Secretary of Defense, and a nuclear physicist will congregate to debate this controversial issue. Your role as one of these people is to research your particular point of view and decide whether dropping the Atomic Bomb was necessary or not.

TASK

You are going to participate in a town meeting in which a board of experts will be speaking about the decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. There will be groups representing Harry S. Truman, the American military, the Japanese, and the scientists who worked to develop the bomb.

There will be four students in each group who will research the decision to drop the bomb from their given perspective. After the research is complete, within each group a spokesperson will be chosen to voice the group's opinion in answering the question: "Should the United States have dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?" Those not chosen as the spokesperson will sit in the audience and help their spokesperson by asking questions of the other spokespeople and supplying any information their spokesperson may need to make his points more convincing. Your teacher will serve as the moderator of the meeting.

CONCLUSION

After this assignment, you will be able to:

- Plan and organize arguments
- Think critically
- Execute a plan of action
- State the sequence of events during World War II
- Draw your own conclusion about the necessity of dropping the bomb
- Research and analyze the issue of the atomic bomb using technology
- Work effectively under time constraints
- Collaborate in teams
**PROCESS**

1. Your classroom will be divided into teams of four groups of people with one spokesperson for each group. Each group will represent a Japanese citizen, President Truman's advisor, the Secretary of Defense, or a nuclear physicist.

2. Once you have been designated a certain role, your team will research that particular person for two days. See the chart below for a description of the roles and links to sites for your research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advisor to President Harry S. Truman</th>
<th>American Military Personnel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truman was president when the bomb was dropped. He was the person who made the final decision to drop it. The advisor will be representing the Commander-in-Chief and speaking in favor of his decision.</td>
<td>This person represents the military's point of view. He looks at things from a purely military perspective. Keep in mind that he is obligated to fulfill the orders of the President. While he personally may or may not have favored the decision, he has to do what is decided to be militarily necessary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sites for Advisor to President Truman</td>
<td>Sites for American Military Personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enola Gay Perspective</td>
<td>The Dropzone</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hiroshima-Was It Necessary?</td>
<td>Air Force Cartoon Journals</td>
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<td>Truman Digital Archive</td>
<td>Hiroshima-Was It Necessary?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Atomic Bomb Decision</td>
<td>Major Effects of the Atomic Bomb</td>
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</tbody>
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Japanese Survivor - This person is Japanese and has survived the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. Although he was fortunate enough not to have perished, he has witnessed several deaths and injuries. He does not believe that dropping the bomb was necessary, being that it caused much devastation to his homeland.

Sites for Japanese Survivor

Take a Closer Look at Hiroshima
Japanese Perspective
Voice of Hibakusha
The Nagasaki A-Bomb Disaster

Scientist for Manhattan Project - This person helped research and develop the atomic bomb and was there when it was tested in New Mexico a few years before it was actually detonated in Japan. He was excited about the scientific discoveries before the bomb, but soon realized the great implications it would have for much more serious and dangerous warfare in the future.

Sites for Scientist for Manhattan Project

Major Effects of Atomic Bomb
Robert Oppenheimer
Invention and Discovery: The A-Bomb
Manhattan Project

3. While individually doing your research keep in mind not only your arguments but also opposing views and how you will defend yourself. Analyze how you relate to the other teams involved.

4. Brainstorm in your group, strategies you will use to support your arguments using your research material. In formulating your arguments do not take a personal bias towards the subject.

5. Once you have thoroughly discussed your role in your group, you must organize a clear team action plan. Think of yourselves as a team of lawyers, all trying to prove your case and convince the jury that your arguments are favorable. As a team your arguments must concur. Feel free to use visual aides.

6. Role-play within your group to practice debating and perhaps this will help you strengthen your position.
7. After the week of preparation is over, it is now time for THE DEBATE.

8. THE DEBATE
You are going to write an argumentative paper from the point of view of your team. Your task is to form an argument on whether or not the atomic bomb should have been used from the standpoint of one of the four characters to which you have been assigned.

Questions to consider

- Was the U.S. justified in dropping the atomic bomb?
- Did the U.S. have any other option?
- Now that you have completed your teamwork, how do you feel about this issue?
- How would your arguments be different if this was an individual project?
- Defend your point of view.
- What should be done about atomic bombs now and in the future?

RESOURCES

Use these links for general background information.

WWII Remembered

World War II General Links

Guide to Japanese A-Bomb

Hyperwar:A Hypertext of WWII

A-Bomb Museum

EVALUATION

Your teacher will grade you on the following:

10% Preparation work = at least ½ page of notes by day 2
10% argument = How well you present your information
10% How well you worked in a group, based on evaluation from members within your group
70% Written Paper: historical content, analytical thinking, writing style, and overall presentation