

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

### *Lesson Title – Would You Drop the Bomb?*

Grade – US History 11: Level 2 (third of four academic levels – instructional, not remedial)

Length of class period – 48 Minutes

Inquiry – Was President Truman justified in his decision to drop the atomic bomb?

Objectives – Students will use primary source documents to analyze a source, address a question and form an opinion in relation to a set of documents and an assigned prompt.

Materials – All materials are included in the attached lesson.

Activities –

Day 1: Student read-through and guided interpretation of source materials.

Day 2: Student completion of a graphic organizer to help set up ideas to be included in a primary source analysis essay.

Day 3: Student completion of the essay which includes direct citation and analysis of sources.

How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?

Student completed essay was evaluated by the school-wide writing rubric and the activity was used to fulfill a social studies department requirement of a primary source analysis. Rubric is attached as well.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards –

- 1) demonstrate knowledge of the structure of United States and world history to understand life and events in the past and how they relate to one's own life experience
- 2) analyze the historical roots and the current complexity of relations among nations in an increasingly interdependent world
- 3) demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture and how different perspectives emerge from different cultures
- 4) apply concepts from the study of history, culture, economics and government to the understanding of the relationships among science, technology and society

# U.S. History – Mr. Clifton

## Primary Source Analysis

### Portfolio Submission

On August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, at approximately 2:00 a.m., the B-29 Enola Gay prepared to execute its orders to deliver the first atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. The weeks and months leading up to the decision made by President Truman to authorize the use of the atomic weapon authored in a scholarly debate for the ages. The President had numerous military and scientific advisors providing him with intelligence about the devastating impact and the strategic importance of the atomic bomb.

The sources below are primary documents that helped President Truman make the decision to send the Enola Gay towards its target. It is up to you to construct an argument to support or criticize the decision. You need to incorporate the following sources into your argument. Use the documents as their document numbers in your citations of information [e.g. (Document 5)]. You must include internal citations in your analysis of primary sources in order to complete this assignment. You may focus your argument on the information above or use the following question to base your product upon.

- Did the ends justify the means of the deployment of the atomic bomb? Was President Truman justified in his authorization of the new weapon?

Today you will begin the task and consider the documents listed. You need to read over the documents and begin to highlight information that you feel that you can use in your essay.

Thursday you will fill out a graphic organizer to help you set up your thoughts for this essay and work to include specific pieces of information to prove your point.

Friday you will come to class and write the essay during the period. This essay must be at least five full paragraphs in length and is required to include internal citations of information. You will be evaluated according to the school-wide writing rubric.

**Document #1: Memorandum from Vannevar Bush and James B. Conant, Office of Scientific Research and Development, to Secretary of War, September 30, 1944, Top Secret**

Source: Record Group 77, Records of the Army Corps of Engineers (hereinafter RG 77), Manhattan Engineering District (MED), Harrison-Bundy Files (H-B Files), folder 69

2. Future Military Potentialities. We are dealing with an expanding art and it is difficult to predict the future. At present we are planning atomic bombs utilizing the energy involved in the fission of the uranium atom. It is believed that such energy can be used as a detonator for setting off the energy which would be involved in the transformation of heavy hydrogen atoms into helium. If this can be done a factor of a thousand or more would be introduced into the amount of energy released. This means that one such super-super bomb would be equivalent in blast damage to 1,000 raids of 1,000 B-29 Fortresses delivering their load of high explosive on one target. One must consider the possibility of delivering either the bombs at present contemplated or the super-super bomb on an enemy target by means of a robot plane or guided missile. When one considers these possibilities we see that very great devastation could be caused immediately after the outbreak of hostilities to civilian and industrial centers by an enemy prepared with a relatively few such bombs. That such a situation presents a new challenge to the world is evident.

3. Present Advantage of United States and Great Britain Temporary. Unless it develops that Germany is much further along than is now believed it is probable that the present developments in the United States undertaken in cooperation with Great Britain put us in a temporary position of great ascendancy. It would be possible, however, for any nation with good technical and scientific resources to reach our

present position in three or four years. Therefore it would be the height of folly for the United States and Great Britain to assume that they will always continue to be superior in this new weapon. Once the distance between ourselves and those who have not yet developed this art is eliminated the accidents of research could give another country a temporary advantage as great as the one we now enjoy.

Although these memoranda are directed to the international situation, we would like to point out again at this time that the manufacture of these atomic bombs and any further experimentation in the whole field of atomic power presents very great hazards to the health of a country unless the experiments are carefully controlled. It is now relatively easy to construct a device which develops atomic energy in the form of heat using relatively small quantities of separated uranium. Such atomic energy machines, which can produce heat but not explosive energy, are known as "water boilers". These small water boilers also produce intense neutron radiation which is fatal to anyone coming within 100 feet or so unless adequate shielding is provided. Furthermore, in the operation of these water boilers radioactive poisons are produced. Clearly such establishments should be allowed only under careful regulation by the government, yet such installations will be of prime importance to the further development of the sciences of physics, chemistry, and biology. It would be unthinkable to prohibit developments of this sort in private laboratories, yet clearly all such experimentation must be carefully supervised and controlled.

**Document #2: Memorandum from J. R. Oppenheimer to Brigadier General Farrell,  
May 11, 1945**

Source: RG 77, MED Records, Top Secret Documents, File no. 5g (copy from microfilm)

A. The bomb under consideration differs from normal explosive bombs in that its detonation involves the production of radiation and of radioactive substances.

1. The active material of the bomb itself is toxic. There is about  $10^9$  times as much toxic material initially in the bomb itself as is needed for a single lethal dose.

2. During the detonation, radiations are emitted which (unless personnel is shielded) are expected to be injurious within a radius of a mile and lethal within a radius of about six-tenths of a mile.

3. After detonation, highly radioactive materials are produced. The activity decreases inversely with the time. One second after detonation there will be the equivalent of about  $10^{12}$  curies of radium. After a day this will fall to about 10 million curies.

B. The circumstances of delivery of the bomb should not normally lead to the deposition of a large fraction of either the initial active material or the radioactive products in the immediate vicinity of the target; but the radiations emitted during detonation will, of course, have an effect on exposed personnel in the target area. The actual physical distribution of the radioactive products is not known to us, since it depends in detail on meteorological conditions as well as on the specific air mass motions induced by the explosion; these latter have not been experimentally studied. It is, however, likely that most of the activity will rise to a considerable height above the target and will remain as a fairly compact cloud for a period of hours after the detonation. The subsequent history depends essentially on temperature and wind conditions. If the bomb is delivered during rain, or under conditions of such high humidity that it itself causes rain, it may be expected that most of the active material will be brought down by the rain in the vicinity of the target area.

**Document #3: Memorandum from Major J. A. Derry and Dr. N.F. Ramsey to General L.R. Groves, "Summary of Target Committee Meetings on 10 and 11 May 1945," May 12, 1945, Top Secret**

Source: RG 77, MED Records, Top Secret Documents, File no. 5d (copy from microfilm)

**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 a large urban area of more than three miles diameter, (2) they be capable of being damaged effectively 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 there 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 rivers it is not a good incendiary target. (Classified as an AA Target)

**Document #4: Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, "Memorandum of Conversation with General Marshall May 29, 1945 - 11:45 p.m.," Top Secret**

Source: Record Group 107, Office of the Secretary of War, Formerly Top Secret  
Correspondence of Secretary of War Stimson ("Safe File"), July 1940-September 1945, box 12, S-1

Opprobrium (def.): the disgrace or the reproach incurred by conduct considered outrageously shameful; infamy

General Marshall said he thought these weapons might first be used against straight military objectives such as a large naval installation and then if no complete result was derived from the effect of that, he thought we ought to designate a number of large manufacturing areas from which the people would be warned to leave - telling the Japanese that we intended to destroy such centers. There would be no individual designations so that the Japs would not know exactly where we were to hit - a number should be named and the hit should follow shortly after. Every effort should be made to keep our record of warning clear. We must offset by such warning methods the opprobrium which might follow from an ill considered employment of such force.

**Document #5: Memorandum from Arthur B. Compton to the Secretary of War, enclosing "Memorandum on 'Political and Social Problems,' from Members of the 'Metallurgical Laboratory' of the University of Chicago," June 12, 1945, Secret**  
Source: RG 77, MED Records, H-B files, folder no. 76 (copy from microfilm)

The main point of this memorandum is the predominating importance of considering the use of nuclear bombs as a problem of long-range policy rather than for its military advantage in this war. Their use should thus be directed primarily toward bringing about some international control of the means of nuclear warfare.

The proposal is to make a technical but not military demonstration, preparing the way for a recommendation by the United States that the military use of atomic explosives be outlawed by firm international agreement. It is contended that its military use by us now will prejudice the world against accepting any future recommendation by us that its use be not permitted.

I note that two important considerations have not been mentioned:

- (1) that failure to make a military demonstration of the new bombs may make the war longer and more expensive of human lives, and
- (2) that without a military demonstration it may be impossible to impress the world with the need for national sacrifices in order to gain lasting security.

This document contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the Espionage Laws, Title 18, U. S. C. 56, 3781 and 32. Its transmission or revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

**Document #6: Memorandum by J. R. Oppenheimer, "Recommendations on the Immediate Use of Nuclear Weapons," June 16, 1945, Top Secret**

Source: RG 77, MED Records, H-B files, folder no. 76 (copy from microfilm)

You have asked us to comment on the initial use of the new weapon. This use, in our opinion, should be such as to promote a satisfactory adjustment of our international relations. At the same time, we recognize our obligation to our nation to use the weapons to help save American lives in the Japanese war.

(1) To accomplish these ends we recommend that before the weapons are used not only Britain, but also Russia, France, and China be advised that we have made considerable progress in our work on atomic weapons, that these may be ready to use during the present war, and that we would welcome suggestions as to how we can cooperate in making this development contribute to improved international relations.

(2) The opinions of our scientific colleagues on the initial use of these weapons are not unanimous: they range from the proposal of a purely technical demonstration to that of the military application best designed to induce surrender. Those who advocate a purely technical demonstration would wish to outlaw the use of atomic weapons, and have feared that if we use the weapons now our position in future negotiations will be prejudiced. Others emphasize the opportunity of saving American lives by immediate military use, and believe that such use will improve the international prospects, in that they are more concerned with the prevention of war than with the elimination of this specific weapon. We find ourselves closer to these latter views; we can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use.

**Document #7: Memorandum from George L. Harrison to Secretary of War, June 26, 1945, Top Secret**

Source: RG 77, MED, H-B files, folder no. 77 (copy from microfilm)

One group of scientists, working in the Chicago Laboratories, urges that we should not make use of the bomb, so nearly completed, against any enemy country at this time. They feel that to do so might sacrifice our whole moral position and thus make it more difficult for us to be the leaders in proposing or enforcing any system of international control designed to make this tremendous force an influence towards the maintenance of world peace rather than an uncontrollable weapon of war.

This anonymous statement of the Chicago scientists was submitted for comment to the Panel of Scientists appointed by the Interim Committee. Their answer was that they saw no acceptable alternative to direct military use since they believe that such

use would be an obvious means of saving American lives and shortening the war.

It is interesting that practically all of the scientists, including those on the panel, feel great concern for the future if atomic power is not controlled through some effective international mechanism. Accordingly, most of them believe that one of the effective steps in establishing such a control is the assurance that, after this war is over, there shall be a free interchange of scientific opinion throughout the world supplemented, if possible, by some system of inspection. This they admit is a problem of the future. In the meantime, however, they feel that we must, even before actual use, briefly advise the Russians of our progress.

**Document #8: Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between General Groves and Lt. Col. Rea, Oak Ridge Hospital, 9:00 a.m., August 28, 1945, Top Secret**  
Source: RG 77, MED Records, Top Secret Documents, File no. 5b

G: " . . . . which fatally burned 30,000 victims during the first two weeks following its explosion."

R: That's kind of crazy.

G: Of course, it's crazy - a doctor like me can tell that. "The death toll at Hiroshima and at Nagasaki, the other Japanese city blasted atomically, is still rising, the broadcast said. Radio Tokyo described Hiroshima as a city of death. 90% of its houses, in which 250,000 had lived, were instantly crushed." I don't understand the 250,000 because it had a much bigger population a number of years ago before the war started, and it was a military city. "Now it is peopled by ghost parade, the living doomed to die of radioactivity burns."

R: Let me interrupt you here a minute. I would say this: I think it's good propaganda. The thing is these people got good and burned - good thermal burns.

G: That's the feeling I have. Let me go on here and give you the rest of the picture. "So painful are these injuries that sufferers plead: 'Please kill me,' the broadcast said. No one can ever completely recover."

R: I would say this: You yourself, as far as radioactivity is concerned, it isn't anything immediate, it's a prolonged thing. I think what these people have, they just got a good thermal burn, that's what it is. A lot of these people, first of all, they don't notice it much. You may get burned and you may have a little redness, but in a couple of days you may have a big blister or a sloughing of the skin, and I think that is what these people have had.

G: That is brought out a little later on. Now it says here: "A special news correspondent of the Japs said that three days after the bomb fell, there were 30,000 dead, and two weeks later the death toll had mounted to 60,000 and is continuing to rise." One thing is they are finding the bodies.

G: That's true - that's what I want. Did you also see anything about the Geiger counter? It says that the fact that the uranium had permeated into the ground has been easily ascertained by using a Geiger counter and it has been disclosed that the uranium used in the atomic bomb is harmful to human bodies. Then it talks about this, which is just the thing that we thought -- The majority of injured persons received burns from powerful ultra-violet rays and those within a two-kilometer radius from the center received burns two or three times, which, I suppose, is second or third degree. Those within three to four kilometers received burns to the extent that their skin is burned bright red, but if these burns are caused by ultra-violet, they hardly felt the heat at that time. Later, however, blisters formed resulting in dropsy.

Element	Criteria	Rating	Comments
<p>Content and Insight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ insightfulness in interpretation of text or material</li> <li>➤ depth of understanding</li> </ul>	<p>3 ideas are insightful and demonstrate thorough and in-depth consideration of material/concept/text in question</p> <p>2 some ideas are insightful and demonstrate adequate/predictable interpretation of material/text/concept in question</p> <p>1 few ideas are insightful and demonstrate a superficial or literal understanding/interpretation of the text/material in question</p> <p>0 no ideas are evident which shows a lack of understanding of material/text in question</p>		
<p>Purpose and Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ establishment of focus</li> <li>➤ awareness of audience through voice, tone, and diction</li> </ul>	<p>3 focus of argument is clear; awareness of audience is consistently maintained through elements such as voice, tone and diction</p> <p>2 focus is established but not strongly maintained throughout writing; awareness of audience is evident, although not fully maintained through elements such as voice, tone and diction</p> <p>1 focus is established but is not maintained throughout writing; awareness of audience is evident at times but is not maintained through elements such as voice, tone and diction</p> <p>0 no focus is established; writing may not fulfill established purpose; awareness of audience is not evident through elements such as voice, tone and diction</p>		
<p>Structure and Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ presentation and development of ideas are logical, understandable and coherent</li> </ul>	<p>3 ideas in writing are presented in a logical, coherent and understandable manner and are developed from the introduction through the body and into the conclusion</p> <p>2 ideas in writing are generally presented in a logical, coherent and understandable manner and are developed from the introduction through the body and into the conclusion</p> <p>1 some ideas in writing are not presented in a logical, coherent, and/or understandable manner. Some lapses in structure/organization make it difficult to follow argument</p> <p>0 ideas in the writing are not presented in a logical, coherent, and understandable manner. Lapses in structure/organization make it difficult to comprehend points made in the writing</p>		
<p>Support and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ specific and direct reference to material/text used to demonstrate validity of thesis</li> </ul>	<p>3 conclusions are based on specific textual evidence; support is logical and clearly/directly demonstrates the validity of thesis</p> <p>2 conclusions are based on evidence from text; support is logical and generally demonstrates the validity of thesis</p> <p>1 some conclusions are based on evidence from text; support lacks specificity</p> <p>0 conclusions are not supported with evidence from the text</p>		
<p>Grammar, Usage and Mechanics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ rules of standard English are applied as appropriate to topic</li> </ul>	<p>3 writing has minor, if any, errors relative to length and complexity of the work</p> <p>2 writing has errors but is fundamentally sound relative to the length and complexity. Errors do not hinder effective communication of ideas</p> <p>1 writing has a pattern of errors which may hinder effective communication of ideas</p> <p>0 writing has excessive errors which seriously hinder communication of ideas</p>		
<p>Presentation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ writing conforms to guidelines as established by instructor</li> </ul>	<p>3 all guidelines for assignment have been followed</p> <p>2 most guidelines for assignment have been followed</p> <p>1 some guidelines for assignment have been followed</p> <p>0 guidelines for assignment have not been followed</p>		