ESSENTIAL QUESTION: What factors influenced President Truman to use atomic weapons during World War II against the Empire of Japan and what were the short-term and long-term effects?

PROCEDURES:
Day 1: Read the text and respond to the Guided Questions (multiple choice question)
Day 2: Respond to the Text Dependent Questions.
Day 3: Use the text to respond to the Discussion Questions

WORK TO BE RETURNED:
Assignment 1: Guided Questions (multiple choice)
Assignment 2: Text Dependent Questions (multiple choice)
Assignment 3: Discussion Questions

RESOURCES:

TIME ALLOCATED: 3 (20) minute lessons

The Bombing of Hiroshima

Background: World War II (1939-1945) was a global war that fought between many different countries. Though the war ended in Europe when the Allies invaded Germany and Hitler committed suicide, Japan did not surrender until after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As you read, take notes on the consequences of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

World War II (1939-1945) was a global war that fought between many different countries. Though the war ended in Europe when the Allies invaded Germany and Hitler committed suicide, Japan did not surrender until after the United States dropped atomic bombs on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. As you read, take notes on the consequences of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

On August 6th, 1945, with the United States military seeking to bring World War II to a swift end, the world’s first atomic bomb was dropped onto the city of Hiroshima, Japan. At the time it was dropped, the bomb was more powerful than any other bomb in history. It destroyed more than two-thirds of the city. This event was one of the most important factors in Japan’s surrender to American forces six days later and the end of the war.

A STRATEGIC CITY

Hiroshima was an important military and economic center in Japan during the early 20th century. Industrialization and the construction of new railroad tracks around the turn of the century expanded the city. It became an industrial powerhouse. During World War I (1914-1917) it was an important staging area for military supplies, and it was the place the Japanese military kept their prisoners of war.
Japan continued to use Hiroshima as a military headquarters during World War II (1939-1945). In addition to housing resources, the city also had a radio communications center to send orders to troops stationed elsewhere. The government trained workers on how to build new weapons and bombs in Hiroshima.

**EARLY MORNING, AUGUST 6**

Because of Hiroshima’s importance to Japan, as a military center, it was targeted by the US military. American Colonel Paul Tibbets flew a B-29 bomber aircraft, the Enola Gay, over Hiroshima early in the morning on August 6th, 1945. At 8:15 a.m. the plane released the atomic bomb — ironically codenamed “Little Boy” — over the city.

An unexpected wind diverted the bomb’s fall slightly; instead of landing on a bridge, it landed on a hospital 800 feet away. The force directly killed at least 70,000 of the city’s 340,000 residents and destroyed nearly 70% of Hiroshima’s buildings. The radius of total destruction was about 1 mile, but heat and force caused fires to spread over another 4.4 miles in every direction.

**SHORT-TERM EFFECTS**

In addition to killing tens of thousands of people and destroying much of Hiroshima’s architecture, the bomb and the resulting fires gave thousands of other residents serious burns. The heat was so intense that, for some people, the pattern of the clothes they wore had burned directly onto their skin. It also killed over 90% of the doctors living in the area. This made it even harder to treat the injured.

Atomic bombs release dangerous radiation that can cause burns, internal problems, and birth defects. Nuclear scientists in 1945 were just beginning to fully understand the dangers of radiation, and it was unclear how much it would affect the people and environment in the coming years.

The U.S. dropped the bomb to force Japan to surrender and end the war. However, Japanese military officials were not willing to admit defeat. Their decision was challenged when the U.S. dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, another Japanese city, a few days later. At that point, the Japanese head of state, Emperor Hirohito, agreed to surrender. On August 12, he said:

“[This weapon has] the power to destroy many innocent lives and do incalculable damage. Should we continue to fight, not only would it result in an ultimate collapse... of the Japanese nation, but also it would lead to the total extinction of human civilization.”

**LONG-TERM EFFECTS**

The survivors of the bombings are called hibakusha in Japan, which means “explosion-affected people.” There were about 650,000 hibakusha in total between the two bombings and as of March 31, 2017, 164,621 of them are still alive. The Japanese government estimates that about 1% of these survivors have an illness caused by the radiation they were exposed to.

Fortunately, there have not been nearly as many long-term consequences from radiation as people expected. Scientists conducted studies over the next several decades and found no notable difference between birth defects in Hiroshima and in other parts of Japan. The larger problem has been psychological effects; survivors had more symptoms of anxiety and other psychological problems even 20 years after the bombings occurred.

Hibakusha and their children faced discrimination because other Japanese citizens were afraid of the possible effects of radiation. They thought illnesses caused by radiation could be contagious or hereditary. Even though studies have shown the long-term effects are minimal, some hibakusha are still treated with suspicion today.
Scholars still debate whether the U.S. made the right decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Many people see it as a moral gray area. Some say it was right because it ended the war quickly instead of dragging it out for months or maybe years; others say it was wrong because it killed so many innocent civilians and caused too much long-term damage.

The U.S. decided to use an atomic bomb in order to speed up Japan’s surrender. U.S. leaders were fairly sure they could defeat Japan eventually, using conventional methods, but they wanted to bring a quick end to the war. By 1945, over 40,000 U.S. soldiers had already died in the fight against Japan, and military strategists were worried the number would continue to climb if they tried to invade by land. They chose to use the atomic bomb to quickly disable the Japanese military, hoping that, ultimately, fewer people would die.

We will never truly know whether their calculations were accurate, and we may never decide whether the risk was “worth it.” The bombing of Hiroshima has raised many of these kinds of moral questions that still trouble scholars today.


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Notes

1. Swift (adjective) : quick
2. The process by which an economy changes from being a mostly agricultural economy to one based on producing, or manufacturing, goods
3. It was ironic because the bomb was so powerful: the opposite of a little boy.
4. Divert (verb) : to cause something to change course
5. Impossible to measure
6. The state or process of an entire species dying out
7. Able to be passed down from parents to children
8. Conventional (adjective) : following the usual or widely accepted way of doing things

Assignment 1 - Guided Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer. When you locate the answer for the multiple
1. Why did the United States target Hiroshima?

A. It was an important military location.
B. It was where the Japanese kept their prisoners of war.
C. It was the capital of Japan.
D. It was the easiest city for the U.S. to reach.

2. The bomb...

A. was less powerful than expected.
B. did not destroy the hospital.
C. was incredibly destructive.
D. was meant to only destroy a bridge.

3. Why did Japan eventually surrender?

A. The bombing of Hiroshima killed many civilians.
B. Japan didn’t think it could survive more nuclear bombs.
C. Japan realized that the long-term effects of the bomb would be serious.
D. More people died in the bombing of Nagasaki than Hiroshima.

4. Which of the following was NOT a long-term effect of the bombing?

A. Civilians developed illnesses from radiation.
B. Civilians affected by the bombing couldn’t have children.
C. People who survived the bombing struggled mentally.
D. People affected by the bomb were treated differently.

5. The United States’ bombing of Japan is controversial because…

A. the war was already over.
B. atomic weapons were not legal at the time.
C. Japan never recovered from the bombings.
D. people question whether the bomb was necessary.

Assignment 2 - Historical Thinking Questions

1. PART A: What is the author’s claim in the text *The Bombing of Hiroshima*?
   A. The author claims that the bombing of Hiroshima was the most tragic event in human history.
   B. The author claims that the bombing of Hiroshima was an unnecessary choice.
   C. The author claims that there are valid points for bombing and for not bombing Hiroshima.
   D. The author claims that the war would not have ended as quickly without bombing Hiroshima.

2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
   A. “This event was one of the most important factors in Japan’s surrender to American forces six days later and the end of the war.” (Paragraph 1)
   B. “The radius of total destruction was about 1 mile, but heat and force caused fires to spread over another 4.4 miles in every direction.” (Paragraph 5)
   C. “Nuclear scientists in 1945 were just beginning to fully understand the dangers of radiation, and it was unclear how much it would affect the people and environment in the coming years.” (Paragraph 7)
   D. “Some say it was right because it ended the war quickly instead of dragging it out for months or maybe years; others say it was wrong because it killed so many innocent civilians and caused too much long-term damage.” (Paragraph 12)

3. Is this source a primary or secondary source?
   A. Primary source
   B. Secondary source

4. What about the source makes it reliable or unreliable?
   A. The source is likely reliable because it is an educational organization
   B. The source is likely reliable because it was updated in 2017
   C. The source is likely unreliable because it does not cite real historians as references
   D. The source is likely unreliable because it does not reference any primary sources

5. What would make the source more reliable and/or credible?
   A. The inclusion of a primary source to corroborate the information.
B. The inclusion of a historian’s perspective to make it legitimate.
C. Statistical evidence to support the claim.
D. Updated evidence from the government.

Assignment 3 - Discussion Questions

Directions: Write your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Imagine you had to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. After learning about the effects of atomic bombs, do you think they should be used during war? Why or why not?

2. Many nations besides the United States now have nuclear weapons. How do you think this changes the way countries think about war?
3. The author discusses the controversy around the United States’ decision to bomb Japan. Do you think using atomic weapons against Japan was necessary? Why or why not?