

Atomic Bomb Lesson Plan

Central Historical Question:

How should we remember the dropping of the atomic bomb?

Warning: The images presented in this lesson are of a graphic nature and may not be appropriate for younger students.

Materials:

- Copies of Two Historical Narratives Sheet
- Copies of Atomic Bomb Documents A-E
- Copies of Japanese Experience Graphic Organizer (copies for half the class)
- Copies of American Experience Graphic Organizer (copies for half the class)
- PDF of Atomic Bomb Images (print out ONE packet for each group of 4)
- Copies of Online Memorial Decision Sheet

NECESSARY BACKGROUND:

- *Manhattan Project*
- *Background on fighting in Pacific (specifically, Bataan Death March, Okinawa)*

Plan of Instruction:

1. Do Now: Write down everything you know about the dropping of the atomic bomb at the end of WWII.

Elicit student responses.

Today's question: *How should we remember the dropping of the atomic bomb?*

Today you are going to choose an image that will go on a United Nations website commemorating the dropping of the atomic bomb.

2. Hand out Two Historical Narratives sheet.

Explain that a narrative is a story and like anything, there are many different ways to tell a story.

Read Two Historical Narratives as a class. Have students complete the questions at the bottom of the sheet.

3. Divide class into two groups: Japanese Experience Experts and American Experience Experts.

Hand out: Documents A-E to all students with appropriate Graphic Organizer ($\frac{1}{2}$ class Japanese Experience; $\frac{1}{2}$ class American Experience)

In pairs, students read through the documents and find evidence to support their side.

4. Rearrange students into groups of 4, with 2 Japanese Experience Historians and 2 American Experience Historians.

Hand out Online Memorial Decision sheet.

Together, each pair shares the evidence for their argument with the other pair.

5. Hand out one packet of Atomic Bomb Images to each group of 4.

Together, the group has to decide which image they think should be selected to represent the dropping of the atomic bomb on a United Nations website.

6. Debrief:

- Each group shares which image they selected and why.
- Which images were easy to eliminate?
- Students are often asked: *Should* the United States have dropped the bomb? Why is that a difficult question?
- Do you feel like we can judge Truman's decision? Why or why not? What would we need to know to feel qualified to judge?

Citations:

John Dower, "Three Narratives of Our Humanity," in Edward T. Linenthal and Tom Engelhardt, eds., *History Wars: The 'Enola Gay' and Other Battles for the American Past*, (Metropolitan Books, 1996), 63-96.

Paul Fussell, "Thank God for the Atomic Bomb," *Thank God for the Atomic Bomb and Other Essays*. (New York: Ballentine Books, 1990), 1-22.

Spencer Weart and Gertrud Szilard, *Leo Szilard: His version of the Facts*, (MIT Press, 1980), 184.

Testimony of Yoshitaka Kawamoto, <http://www.inicom.com/hibakusha/yoshitaka.html>

Statistics on the Atomic Bomb,
http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/MED/med_chp10.shtml