



### Harry Truman and the atomic bomb

On the morning of 6 August 1945, an atomic bomb was used in war for the first time. Normal life in the crowded Japanese city of Hiroshima came to a sudden and terrifying end when a US plane dropped an atomic device on to the city. More than 70,000 people died and many more were injured. The heat of the blast was so intense that people at the centre of the explosion were simply vaporised. Many who survived the blast died later from the radiation.

The president of the USA, Harry Truman, warned the Japanese to surrender. When they did not, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, killing around 40,000 people and wounding 60,000.

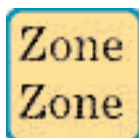


Japan quickly surrendered. Truman had achieved his objective - the war in the Pacific and World War 2 was ended. Thousands of soldiers on both sides, who would have died if the fighting had continued, were saved. Notice was served to the world that the USA was now an atomic power.

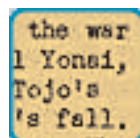
At the time, many people saw Truman's decision to use atomic weapons as the right one. With some Japanese leaders vowing to fight to the bitter end, only a long military campaign or this atomic shock could have ended the war. There was little sympathy for an enemy who had started the fight and had behaved cruelly in the countries they occupied.

Later commentators have questioned whether dropping the bomb was the only option open to Truman and whether an attack on unarmed civilians was the right decision to take. What do you think?

Find out more from the original sources in these case studies:



**Why did firebombing not bring Japan to surrender?**



**Why did Truman decide to use the atomic bomb?**



**What were the effects on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?**