



## Source 1

**Part of a radio broadcast by Truman on 9 August 1945, referring to the atomic bombing of Japan**

(Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum, ref 427/1)

### Questions

1. What reasons does Truman give for atomic bombing Japan?
2. Why does Truman say that Hiroshima was a military base chosen as a target to limit civilian casualties?
3. Do you think Truman is being sincere when he says that the decision to use the bomb was not taken lightly?
4. The same day Truman gave this speech, a second different type of atomic bomb (made with plutonium) was dropped on Nagasaki. What reasons might there have been for bombing Nagasaki?
5. These are words that Truman really spoke. Does this mean that this is a reliable piece of evidence for a historian?



# HEROES & VILLAINS

Truman & the atomic bomb > Why did Truman use it?

## Source 1

...The British, Chinese and United States governments have given the Japanese people adequate warning of what is in store for them. We have laid down the general terms on which they can surrender. Our warning went unheeded. Our terms were rejected.

Since then, the Japanese have seen what our atomic bomb can do. They can foresee what it will do in the future.

The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in the first attack to avoid insofar as possible, the killing of civilians. But that attack is only a warning of things to come. If Japan does not surrender, bombs will have to be dropped on her war industries and unfortunately thousands of civilian lives will be lost. I urge Japanese civilians to leave industrial cities immediately and save themselves from destruction.

I realise the tragic significance of the atomic bomb. Its production and its use were not lightly undertaken by this government. But we knew that our enemies were on the search for it. We know now how close they were to finding it. And we knew the disaster which would come to this nation and to all peace-loving nations, to all civilisation, if they had found it first. That is why we felt compelled to undertake the long and uncertain and costly labour of discovery and production. We won the race of discovery against the Germans.

Having found the bomb, we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbour, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretence of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war; in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans. We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan's power to make war. Only a Japanese surrender will stop us. ...