

JAPAN AND THE ATOM BOMB: TASK INSTRUCTIONS

The key question: Was Hiroshima the biggest event of World War 2?

Your task: You must argue the case that dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945 was the most important event of WW2.

Click on the **starter source** for more details then open the source box.

Use this table to help plan your report.

Download a PDF of this whole investigation.

WAS HIROSHIMA THE BIGGEST EVENT OF WORLD WAR 2?

This web resource has featured many of the significant events, developments and individuals of World War 2.

Your task

You have been asked to contribute to a TV programme that debates the significance of important events in History. You have been chosen to argue that the dropping of the A-bomb on Hiroshima in August 1945 was the most important event of WW2. Other people will argue that other events, developments or individuals were more important.

Prepare a set of notes (or some other format) to help you in your programme. You should think about the tests historians use when they look at the significance of an historical event:

- Was it important to people at the time?
- Did it have a deep impact on at least some people?
- How many people were affected in a big way?
- How long lasting were the effects?
- Are there any lessons that help us understand life today?

You could look more closely at the decision to drop the bomb that US [President Truman](#) took in 1945

Use this [table](#) to help you plan your work.

**FILM CLIP FROM A DOCUMENTARY CALLED DATE WITH HISTORY ABOUT
THE DROPPING OF THE ATOM BOMB ON HIROSHIMA IN AUGUST 1945**

Catalogue ref: BP190242131817
Courtesy of ITN/Source, London.

32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43

[Sound of a huge explosion]

In a fraction of a second the explosion of the bomb became a ball of fire 1800 feet across with a temperature at its centre of 100 million degrees.

This was the bomb that killed outright some 72,000 people, many of them innocent inhabitants far remote from the decisions which led to the holocaust in which they were suddenly burned alive.

This was the bomb that many had said should never have been dropped and many have said so since.

This was the bomb nevertheless that foreshortened the war and prevented the further killing of hundreds of thousands.

This was the bomb that showed mankind the awful truth of a weapon to end all weapons. A weapon that could perhaps end mankind itself.

The flash of the bomb was followed by an immense heat. It lasted only an instant but it was so intense it melted roof tiles and charred the exposed side of telegraph poles for two miles and cremated human beings so thoroughly that the only remaining trace of them was their shadows.

[Word indistinct] and families were vaporised. Acres on acres were completely raised.

PACIFIC 1939–1945: JAPAN AND THE ATOM BOMB

What is this source?

This clip comes from a documentary made in 1965 covering the decisions surrounding the dropping of the first Atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The documentary uses archive newsreel footage from British Pathe shown here.

What's the background to this source?

The war in the Pacific was fought mostly (but not solely) between US forces and the forces of Japan. It began in December 1941 and cost many thousands of lives. By early 1945 US forces were beginning to invade the islands that made up the Japanese homelands. In February–March 1945 the Allied forces suffered huge casualties when they invaded the tiny island of Iwo Jima. Soon afterwards they suffered heavy casualties again when they invaded Okinawa. After assessing the situation US military and political leaders were faced with a terrible decision. Should they carry on invading Japan's many islands and suffer thousands of casualties? Or should they use the terrible power of the new weapon, the Atom Bomb, which they had just developed?

US President Truman consulted his commanders, scientists and also his allies, particularly British leader Winston Churchill. Churchill felt the bomb should be used to shorten the war. The military leaders were divided and many of the scientists who developed the bomb also felt that it was wrong to use it. In the end, Truman did decide to use it, and even said later in his life that the decision was easy.

It's worth knowing that..

As well as the 72 000 killed directly by the bomb at Hiroshima many thousands more died from radiation poisoning in the period after the attack.

The USA dropped another atom bomb on the city of Nagasaki on August 9th 1945. The results were just as devastating.

How will you use this source?

1. Were the people of Hiroshima ready for the attack?
2. What were the effects of the attack on the city and its people?
3. Do you find the images shocking?
4. How would you describe the tone of the commentary in this programme?
5. Which parts of the film or the commentary do you think will be useful in preparing for the TV debate?

Use this table to help you plan your work.