# United States History

Primary Source: Dropping the Atomic Bomb SET A

*Source 1:* Statement of President Harry Truman, August 6, 1945

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima, an important Japanese army base. That bomb had more than 20,000 tons of T.N.T. It had more than two thousand times the blast power of the British “Grand Slam,” which is the largest bomb ever yet used in the history of warfare.

The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold. And the end is not yet. With this bomb we have now added a new and revolutionary increase in destruction to supplement the growing power of our armed forces. In their present form these bombs are now in production and even more powerful forms are in development.

It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East....

We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war.

It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they can expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth.

*Source 2:* President Truman’s “Radio Report to the American People on the Potsdam Conference,” August 9, 1945

Having found the atomic bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense 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.

*Source 3:* Karl Compton, “If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Used,” *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1946

Was the use of the atomic bomb inhuman? All war is inhuman. Here are some comparisons of the atomic bombing with conventional bombing. At Hiroshima the atomic bomb killed about 80,000 people, pulverized about five square miles, and wrecked an additional ten square miles of the city, with decreasing damage out to seven or eight miles from the center. At Nagasaki the fatal casualties were 45,000 and the area wrecked was considerably smaller than at Hiroshima because of the configuration of the city. Compare this with the results of two B-29 incendiary raids over Tokyo. One of these raids killed about 125,000 people, the other nearly 100,000.

General MacArthur's staff anticipated about 50,000 American casualties and several times that number of Japanese casualties in the November 1 operation to establish the initial beachheads on Kyushu. After that they expected a far more costly struggle before the Japanese homeland was subdued. There was every reason to think that the Japanese would defend their homeland with even greater fanaticism than when they fought to the death on Iwo Jima and Okinawa. No American soldier who survived the bloody struggles on these islands has much sympathy with the view that battle with the Japanese was over as soon as it was clear that their ultimate situation was hopeless. No, there was every reason to expect a terrible struggle long after the point at which some people can now look back and say, "Japan was already beaten."

# United States History

Primary Source: Dropping the Atomic Bomb SET B

*Source 1:* The Bombing of Hiroshima from the Diary of Michiko Hachiya (1955)

The hour was early; the morning still, warm, and beautiful. Suddenly, a strong flash of light startled me - and then another. Garden shadows disappeared. The view where a moment before had been so bright and sunny was now dark and hazy. Through swirling dust I could barely discern a wooden column that had supported one comer of my house. It was leaning crazily and the roof sagged dangerously.

In time I came to an open space where the houses had been removed to make a fire lane. Through the dim light I could make out ahead of me the hazy outlines of the Communications Bureau's big concrete building, and beyond it the hospital. My spirits rose because I knew that now someone would find me; and if I should die, at least my body would be found. I paused to rest. Gradually things around me came into focus. There were the shadowy forms of people, some of whom looked like walking ghosts. Others moved as though in pain, like scarecrows, their arms held out from their bodies with forearms and hands dangling. These people puzzled me until I suddenly realized that they had been burned and were holding their arms out to prevent the painful friction of raw surfaces rubbing together. A naked woman carrying a naked baby came into view. I averted my gaze. Perhaps they had been in the bath. But then I saw a naked man, and it occurred to me that, like myself, some strange thing had deprived them of their clothes. An old woman lay near me with an expression of suffering on her face; but she made no sound. Indeed, one thing was common to everyone I saw - complete silence.

*Source 2:* Editorial, *Nippon Times*, Tokyo, August 10, 1945

In the air attack on Hiroshima Monday morning, the enemy used a new type of bomb of unprecedented power. Not only has the greater part of the city been wiped out, but an extraordinary proportion of the inhabitants have been either killed or wounded....This was no mere excess committed in the heat of battle. It was an act of premeditated wholesale murder, the deliberate snuffing out of the lives of tens of thousand of innocent civilians who had no chance of protecting themselves in the slightest degree.

*Source 3:* A Child’s View of the Bomb

We heard a voice saying, “Air Raid Alarm.”

I hurried home and was playing. This is because I was used to this sort of thing. Then the alert ended and I went back to school. Pretty soon we heard a hum and saw a little aeroplane in the sky to the south-east. Then suddenly a thing like a white parachute came falling. Five or six seconds later everything turned yellow in one instant. A second or two later, CRASH!, there was a tremendous noise. Everything became dark and stones and roof tiles came pouring down on our heads. For a while I was unconscious. I came with the pain. I quickly crawled outside. There were lots of people lying around there; the faces of most of them were charred. I got out the street and just as I heaved a sigh of relief my right hand suddenly began to hurt. When I looked closely at it I found that the skin of my right arm was peeled off from my elbow to my fingers and it was all red.

....Father was pulling off the roof and trying to get something out. But then he seemed to give up and he came toward us [the boy’s sister had joined him].

When I asked, “Mother?” he said tiredly, “She’s dead.”

I felt as though someone had knocked me on the head. Everything went blank and I couldn’t think of anything.

After a while Father said, “What happened to your head?”

When I touched it, it was all gritty. When I put my hand on the back of my head, my hand was all stained red with blood. Mother got a five inch nail stuck in her head and died instantly.