

# Card sort and assessment: Was America right to drop the atomic bomb?

## Card sort

### Seeking peace

Dropping the bomb was the only way the USA could end the war against Japan. It ended 6 long years of the death and destruction caused by WW2 and prevented further loss of life.

Paul Tibbets, pilot of the Enola Gay, said:

*'Any weapon that would bring an end to the war and save a million lives was justified.'*

### Alternative weapons

The atomic bomb was not the only way to end WW2. America could have launched an invasion of Japan in order to defeat them. Dropping the atomic bomb was not necessary for the Japanese to surrender.

### Revenge

The Japanese attacked the US fleet at Pearl Harbour in 1941, killing over 2,400 Americans.

### New weapon

The atomic bomb had never been used before. No one knew exactly what impact it would have or quite how devastating the damage would be.

### Never surrender

The Americans believed the Japanese would never surrender. Emperor Hirohito had called upon his people to act as a 'human shield' and encouraged pilots to use kamikaze tactics.

### Loss of life

The atomic bombs are estimated to have killed a total of over 200,000 Japanese people. Tens of thousands were made homeless and thousands of children became orphans as a result of the bombs.

### Saving lives

Dropping the bombs saved the lives of many Americans. It was estimated that an invasion of Japan (the alternative course of action) would have resulted in up to 100,000 US casualties.

### Civilian life

Civilian lives should never be sacrificed, no matter what the goal. It is morally wrong and inhumane to kill innocent men, women and children.

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### Prevent loss of life

If war had continued and the US had launched an invasion of Japan, thousands more Japanese civilians would have been killed than were killed by the nuclear bombs.

### Effects of the bomb

Atomic weapons are far worse than conventional bombs. Radiation poisoning killed people for years after the bombs were dropped. Many who survived suffered the long-term effects of exposure to radiation.

### Trial new weapons

America had spent a huge amount of time and money developing the atomic bomb. It demonstrated their superiority over the USSR, a growing threat. They needed a reason to use it in the context of an emerging Cold War.

### Already losing

Japan was already losing in 1945. It was only a matter of time before they lost the war.

### Diplomacy

The Americans didn't do enough to negotiate a Japanese surrender. Truman insisted their surrender must be unconditional which was unrealistic.



Assessment writing frame

Was the dropping of the atomic bombs necessary?

**Background to the bombing**

- Germany had surrendered but Japan continued to fight the war. It was against their culture to surrender – it was considered honourable to die in battle.
- On 6 August 1945, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
- 60,000-80,000 people died as a direct result of the initial blast.
- About 100 square miles of the city was completely destroyed.
- Over the next 10 years, 40,000 people died as a result of injuries from the bomb or radiation poisoning.
- On 7 August 1945, the U.S. demanded Japan surrender immediately.
- On 9 August 1945, the U.S. dropped a second Atomic bomb on Nagasaki.
- Japan surrendered to the Allies on 14 August 1945.

**Introduction**

This is where you tell the reader about the topic you will be discussing. You must explain about the background of the dropping of the atomic bomb and list a few key reasons why the Americans decided to carry out the bombing, for example:

‘In this essay, I am going to argue that the dropping of the atomic bombs was / was not necessary. The atomic bomb (give a brief description of the event) ... There were many reasons for the dropping of the bomb and these included, ..... and ..... .

**Paragraph 1:**

Here tell the reader all about the first reason why the bombing was/wasn't necessary, for example:

I think the most important one is .....  
.....  
because .....  
and the evidence I can use to back this up is .....  
.....