

World War II: The Holocaust and Hiroshima

What you will do

- Examine one of two central issues from World War II that challenge our view of human nature and our expectations of the future: the Holocaust and the use of nuclear weapons in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.
- Compose a series of free-response journal entries that reflect on the moral and historical issues.

What you will need

Textbooks and other available research material

Web Sites:

Note: some links direct you to external web sites. These sites and their content are not controlled by SAS.

The Holocaust:

The Holocaust Resource Center

(http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/index.asp)

Includes photos, maps, exhibits, and other information from Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust Memorial.

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (<https://www.ushmm.org/learn>)

Presents online exhibits and searchable archives of documents and photos.

Auschwitz-Birkenau (<http://auschwitz.org/en/history/>)

Describes, in text and photography, the horror of the largest concentration camp.

Fortunoff Video Archive (<https://fortunoff.library.yale.edu/archive/overview/>)

Provides excerpts from video testimonies of witnesses and survivors.

KZ Mauthausen-GUSEN Info-Pages (<http://www.gusen.org/>)

Provides extensive details about an extermination camp in Austria.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki:

The Manhattan Project (<http://www.ushistory.org/us/51f.asp>)

Provides information on the Manhattan Project and the scientists who participated in it.

The Decision to Drop the Bomb (<http://www.dannen.com/decision/index.html>)

Provides an in-depth analysis of the U.S. decision to use atomic weapons in World War II.

Nagasaki Journey (<http://www.exploratorium.edu/nagasaki/mainn.html>)

Contains "The Photographs of Yosuke Yamhata," a powerful photo essay taken only a day or two after the devastation caused by the bombing.

Trinity Atomic Web Site (<http://www.abomb1.org/>)

Provides information about nuclear testing and events leading up to the use of the atomic bomb in 1945.

How you will do it

1. Focus your research on either the legacy of the Holocaust or the U.S. decision to drop nuclear bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Complete extensive research on the broad topic using the suggested web resources as well as

other relevant materials.

2. Consider the impact that the chosen topic has had on our view of human nature and expectations about the future.
3. After organizing your thoughts, prepare to write your journal entries by creating three questions on the topic. The questions and the journal entries should reflect your insights into the topic and conclusions about its historical impact.
4. For the Holocaust issue, you might ask, "To what extent are the German people to blame for the Nazi government's atrocities?" or "How does the experience of the Holocaust change my understanding of the human capacity to commit premeditated atrocities?" or "How does knowledge of the Holocaust affect my hope and faith in the future?"
5. For the atomic weapons issue, you might ask, "If I were President Truman, would I have decided to use atomic weapons in order to defeat Japan?" ("Why or why not?") Or you might ask, "How has the reality of nuclear weapons changed the course of history and warfare?" or "As an American citizen, what would I say about the bombings to a Japanese survivor of Hiroshima or Nagasaki?"
6. Submit your questions and journal entries to your teacher.
7. All thoughtful people still struggle with these questions. Be prepared to discuss how the Holocaust and the use of atomic weapons against Japan in World War II relate to the future and to current events.

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