



Closing Activity: Dropping the Atomic Bomb

Directions: Read the following excerpts from a letter written by President Truman to Professor James Cate defending his decision to drop the bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. On a separate sheet of paper write a letter to President Truman that either supports or defends his decision to use the atomic bomb.



THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington

January 12, 1953

I called a meeting of the Secretary of State, Mr. Byrnes, the Secretary of War, Mr. Stimson, Admiral Leahy, General Marshall, General Eisenhower, Admiral King and some others, to discuss what should be done with this awful weapon.

I asked General Marshall what it would cost in lives to land on the Tokyo plain and other places in Japan. It was his opinion that such an invasion would cost at a minimum one quarter of a million casualties, and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy. The other military and naval men present agreed. I asked Secretary Stimson which sites in Japan were devoted to war production. He promptly named Hiroshima and Nagasaki, among others. We sent an ultimatum to Japan. It was rejected.

I ordered atomic bombs dropped on the two cities named on the way back from Potsdam, when we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

Dropping the bombs ended the war, saved lives, and gave the free nations a chance to face the facts. When it looked as if Japan would quit, Russia hurried into the fray less than a week before the surrender, so as to be in at the settlement. No military contribution was made by the Russians toward victory over Japan. Prisoners were surrendered and Manchuria occupied by the Soviets, as was Korea, North of the 38th parallel.

Sincerely,

(The letter was signed by Harry Truman.)

<http://www.atomicarchive.com/Docs/Hiroshima/Truman.shtml>