

Structured Academic Controversy: The U.S. Should Not Have Used Atomic Warfare Against the Japanese During WW2

Overview:

This structured academic controversy lesson is designed to teach students both sides of the debate surrounding the use of the Atomic bomb at the end of World War II and to complicate their understanding of atomic weaponry and nuclear power. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were the catalysts that caused the end of World War II and are the only two times that a nuclear weapon has been used in war. It is important that students learn about the circumstances leading to their use and understand the controversy that surrounds those events. It is also important for students to understand the magnitude and significant destruction caused by atomic weapons so that they can be informed participants in today's world. The purpose of this lesson is to present students with arguments from both sides of the debate so that they may draw their own conclusions regarding the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and critically consider the human impact of war.

Students will begin the lesson by building upon their understanding of the historical events that led up to the use of the atomic bomb. Then they will be divided into groups of four with two students presenting arguments for the side in favor of bombing and two students presenting arguments for the side against bombing. Each side will be given time to present while the other side listens quietly. Then the side that listened will have an opportunity to ask clarifying questions. The arguing and listening roles will then be reversed and the process repeated. After the initial round of exchanges students will switch positions on the issue and have to present arguments for the side opposite of which they initially argued. The presentation and listening process is repeated. Finally, the whole class comes together for a final discussion and consensus building.

Designed for a 6th grade social science class, the structured academic controversy lesson format was selected because it allows students to practice and develop important discussion skills while exploring the arguments surrounding this controversial issue.

Objectives:

1. Students will be able to explain why Japan surrendered unconditionally by writing a brief paragraph explaining their position on the use of the atomic bomb.
2. Students will be able to identify the dropping of the Atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as a significant event of World War II by writing their opinion on the bombing.
3. Students will be able to explain the questions raised by the prospective use of a new technology by charting the arguments for and against the use of the atomic bomb.

4. Students will be able to discuss controversial issues in a polite manner by participating in group discussion during the course of the lesson.

Assessment:

Students will demonstrate understanding of the two sides on the issue by developing evidence-based arguments for and against the use of the atomic bomb by the US at the end of World War II. Students will also write a brief paragraph explaining their own perspective on the issue. The teacher will also monitor student participation and activity during the lesson.

Content and Instructional Strategies:

I. **Hook / Controversy Background**

Gallery Walk using images/audio/film from the Hiroshima Memorial Museum. Students will investigate the newspaper coverage of the Japanese during this time to deepen their understanding of the cultural psyche at this time. Students will use the jigsaw protocol in order to focus on these different perspectives. The whole class will then discuss student responses. Students will read this sheet and adjust any misconceptions that they had regarding the lead up to the use of the bomb.

II. **Organization**

Students will be divided into groups of four with two students. Each group will receive a collection of articles that are unique to their side of the controversy they are exploring. Students will need to carefully read and annotate their articles and then complete the evidence organizer graphic organizer. Two group members will be given the first "For Bombing" graphic organizer and asked to evaluate the arguments framed by their articles and then explain these arguments to the other people in the group. The other two group members will be given the first "Against Bombing" graphic organizer and asked to evaluate arguments and be prepared to explain them to the other people in the group. Remind students they will need to take active notes on what they are about to hear from their other group members so they can ask good questions and be prepared to complete the homework.

III. **Round I Positions**

Ask the "Against" students to present to the other students first. Remind the "For" students that their role is to listen. Once the four minutes for the "Against" students is up, the "For" students will have two minutes to ask clarifying questions. Model some clarifying questions to the students. Then reverse the situation, giving the "For" students two minutes to present their best arguments and then another two minutes for the "Against" students to

ask clarifying questions. Time may be adjusted as necessary so that the students have a sufficient amount of time to present and ask questions.

IV. **Round 2 Positions**

Next, hand out the second "For bombing" sheet to the original "Against Bombing" students and the second "Against Bombing" sheet to the original "For bombing" students. Ask students to repeat the process of identifying important arguments to share with the other half of the group. Give the new "For Bombing" students four minutes to present while the new "Against Bombing" students listen. Then give the "Against Bombing" students two minutes to ask clarifying questions. Repeat this process with the new "Against Bombing" students presenting and the new "For bombing" student getting a minute to ask clarifying questions.

V. **Discussion and Consensus**

In groups, students will each share their own opinion on whether using the atomic bomb was justified. The group will attempt to reach some kind of consensus regarding the information presented. Afterwards, each group will then share their consensus decisions.

Differentiation:

This lesson can easily be differentiated by adjusting the level of the material presented. Use of opinion news pieces might also help to increase the difficulty of this exercise. If necessary, students could also be given a graphic organizer which would assist them with organizing their thoughts for their presentations to the other members of their group.

Articles that Support the Position:

The U.S. Should Not Have Dropped the Bomb on Japan

Article 1: [Op-Ed: US didn't have to drop atomic bombs on Japan to win war](#)

Article 2: [Bombing Hiroshima By Craig Nelson](#)

Article 3: [If the Atomic Bomb Had Not Been Used](#)

Article 4: [Charles Loeb: The Black Reporter Who Exposed an Atomic Bomb Lie - The New York Times](#)

Article 5: [The Racist Foundation of Nuclear Architecture - Boston Review](#)

Articles that Support the Position:

The U.S. Should Have Dropped the Bomb on Japan

Article 1: [Truman Was Right to Drop the Atomic Bomb | National News](#)

Article 2: [Nanking Massacre](#)

Article 3: [Background Essay on Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb](#)

Article 4: [Primary & Secondary Sources - President Truman](#)

Article 5: [The Path to Pearl Harbor](#)

Article 6: ["To Bear the Unbearable": Japan's Surrender, Part I | The National WWII Museum | New Orleans](#)