

The manhattan project and the bombings of hiroshima nagasaki assignment

[History](#)



The Manhattan Project and the Bombings of Hiroshima/Nagasaki When people hear the word nuclear bomb, the image of a towering mushroom cloud of destruction instantly comes to mind. This device, capable of inflicting an unimaginable amount of damage in a split second, is the culmination of the human quest for bigger and better weaponry. On August 6th an earth-shattering event happened that would change the course of the world. As a result of President Truman's decision, the first fission bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy", was dropped on the unsuspecting Japanese city of Hiroshima.

This act signified the largest number of people to die in a single instant in all of modern history. The ethics of this act are very questionable, and the decision should be criticized severely, because the consequences of this action stretch far beyond anything that was ever expected. On August 2, 1939, just before the beginning of World War II, Albert Einstein wrote to then President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Einstein and several other scientists told Roosevelt of efforts in Nazi Germany to purify uranium-235, which could be used to build an atomic bomb. It was shortly thereafter that the

United States Government began the serious undertaking known then only as "The Manhattan Project." From an office at the federal building at 90 Church Street in Manhattan, to a basement underneath Stagg Field at the University of Chicago, to the secret Los Alamos Facility in New Mexico the Manhattan Project grew to eventually employ more than 130,000 people and cost nearly \$2 billion. It was from this program that the first two atomic bombs were produced, Fat Man and Little Boy. At 8:15 local time, a B52 bomber named Enola Gay released the Little Boy bomb on Hiroshima.
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The city was an important military center, containing about 43, 000 soldiers. As many as 400, 000 civilians also lived and worked in the city and outlying areas. This is a source of great controversy, that a purely military target was not chosen. Almost 4 times as many civilians as soldiers died in the attack. Another bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki 3 days later, killing more than 75, 000. Finally on August 10th, 1945, after the invasion of Manchuria by the Soviet Union and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan's leaders conceded to the unconditional terms of the Potsdam Declaration. An editorialist wrote in the Japanese Nippon Times, " This is not war, this is not even murder, this is pure nihilism... a crime against God which strikes at the very basis of moral existence. " (Out of Many 669)

Truman stated in his memoirs that he gave the order with the expectation of saving " a half a million lives" in ground combat, yet no such official estimate exists (Out of Many 669). To some this justifies the fact. But does it?

Was not Japan on the verge of defeat? Some sources' estimates of projected U. S. casualties were significantly lower??? perhaps as low as 50, 000 men. It is also not entirely clear that an unconditional Japanese surrender was impossible, especially if Russia had entered the war before the bombing

There were other motivating reasons for the use of nuclear bomb. " Russia might be more manageable if impressed by American military might, and that a demonstration of the bomb might impress Russia. " (Spencer Weart and Gertrud Szilard, Leo Szilard: His version of the

Facts, pg. 184). The decision to drop the bomb on Japan leans dangerously close towards the logic of the end justifying the means. This slippery slope

could spell disaster when dealing with weapons of such power and magnitude. The atomic bomb has changed world politics forever. We live under the menacing shadow of missiles that could obliterate the earth 10 times over. It's impossible to say what would have happened had Truman not decided to use nuclear weapons. All we can hope for is the fact that they will never again be used on earth.