

# Nuclear proportions

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A young girl wakes up early in the morning to get breakfast. Her exhausted body drags towards the table, still recovering from the warning sirens blaring the night before.

But that is normal. Her siblings remain asleep in their beds as she finds her way towards the kitchen. Slowly clambering along she is almost to her destination when she sees a flash of light fly across the horizon. The white light is almost blinding as it traces across the sky, like a setting sun moving across the horizon. She hears her mother calling her name frantically so she turns her face away from the blinding light in search of her mother. It was then that the ceiling began to fall.

At first it was small pieces, tiles, shelves, cabinets, but then the whole roof of the house caved in and the house collapsed. Suddenly she is trapped under the rubble and debris from her childhood home and cries for help.

Impatiently she waits, the time moving slower and slower the longer she stays ensnared by the wreckage. No one comes. Her screams get louder and more helpless. There has always been someone there to save her when something goes wrong; after all she is only a little girl.

Where are her brothers? Her mother? Her neighbors? Her friends? Everyone is gone. No one comes. Suddenly the temperature around her drastically changes. She begins sweating profusely from the heat radiating underneath her. A panic sweeps through her when she realizes what is happening. The rubble is on fire.

After much struggle she eventually reaches the top and climbs out from under the wreckage, but no one is there. Everywhere she looks is flat. The

once beautiful city is now a collection of leveled buildings, many of which are now catching fire. She calls out desperately for any sort of reply. No one answers.

After hours of searching she finally gives up and begins to walk towards the edge of the city, where she hopes that there might be safety. Her family is gone, along with neighbors and friends. She will never find out what happened to them. This devastation was not caused by a natural disaster, it was man made. The result of a deadly war, this new toy served as the final ending for the fighting.

The United States dropped the first atomic bomb. Unbeknownst to the world, scientists in Germany, the Soviet Union, and the United States had been rapidly working to perfect the action of splitting an atom and studying nuclear physics. A committee of scientists in the United States began a secret project to create and test the possibility of a bomb made from splitting atoms. Sworn to secrecy, even some of the highest leaders of the country did not know about this development, the so called Manhattan Project. President Truman states that he had “ no knowledge of the development of the nuclear program until after he was serving as president” (“ Manhattan”).

The secrecy behind this organization led to a tense atmosphere influenced by a select few. Without the general knowledge of the public on the debate over using such devastating war technology, the decision was left to a small number of officials that had no previous nuclear experience to draw from. Another issue with the secrecy is that other countries without this technology

were blind sighted to its development and therefore had no chance of creating a defense program against it. This further served to expand the amount of devastation it would cause to the victim of the bombing. The predicted devastation was so high that “ Most of the members of the Manhattan Project were against using the weapon, even if it meant shortening the war” (“ Manhattan”). However, the decision was ultimately left up to President Truman who decided it would be best for the American people to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in order to end the war.

However many question if it was worth the lives of so many Japanese citizens to save the lives of American soldiers. Based on the estimates that Truman was given by his advisers “ 100, 000 American soldiers would die if we invaded Japan” and that “ Japan would never willingly surrender unless forced to” Truman deemed it appropriate to use a weapon of mass destruction to end the war (“ Truman”). Many historians however claim that there may have been other alternative motives for dropping the atomic bomb such as the United States showing its military power to Russia, or just merely wanting to test out a new military toy. The fact of the matter is that Truman chose to save 100, 000 American soldiers by killing “ 232, 000 Japanese civilians and soldiers alike” (May). For the Japanese, the bomb was the most devastating thing that had ever happened to their country. Two cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, were completely leveled by the bombs dropped on them, “ 90% of standing buildings in Hiroshima collapsed after the bomb was dropped” (Cheek).

Piled on top of this already unprecedented disaster was the fact that the Japanese had no warning of such a powerful weapon in existence. They were completely unprepared in dealing with the aftermath of the bombings. In fact, when the giant mushroom cloud rose into the sky, many thought it was a strange thunderstorm (Fig. 1). Fig 1: The mushroom cloud rising over Nagasaki. (“Mushroom”).

Underneath this giant cloud were thousands of people injured to the point that they could not even move, much less find a way out of the area that was saturated with radiation poisoning (though no one knew at the time). A staggering “1,654 out of 1,780 nurses in the city had died”, this left no one to offer health care or assistance to those in need (Hersey 33). It became an “every man for himself” war in the aftermath of the bombing. Dead bodies mingled with the living as people sought refuge in parks and rural areas. Food and water were scarce to non-existent, so people began to drink the contaminated water of the rivers and lakes.

Everywhere one looked they saw people dying, whether it be from radiation poisoning, burns, or an unknown cause, there was nothing the doctors could do to help. The most common description of this unknown cause of death is that someone would “get really cold and then they were gone” (Hersey 35). People began to pile on blankets onto their already burned bodies to avoid getting cold, but that only served to further worsen their condition by raising their body temperatures when many of them were running fevers already. Thousands of children were orphaned and the majority of people never discovered what happened to their family members, neighbors, and friends. Although Truman successfully avoided invading Japan, and many credit him <https://assignbuster.com/nuclear-proportions/>

with saving so many American lives; he succeeded in ruining over 200, 000 Japanese lives.

Even with the extreme biases existing at the time of World War II against the Japanese because of Pearl Harbor, is one American life really equivalent to two Japanese lives? Is it that little girls fault for what the officials of her country have chosen to do? The same way that Americans hate it when people assume they all have the same opinions and stances that their government takes, that is essentially what Truman did when he bombed Japan. He punished the civilians for what their government chose to do. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, or in this case one of our lives in exchange for two of theirs. For a nation that prides themselves as a savior to the lesser countries of the world, the United States sure does a lot of destroying of others for their own gain. Works Cited “ Atomic Bomb: Why did President Harry S. Truman Order the Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki?” History in Dispute.

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