

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title – Truman’s Decision to Drop the Atomic Bomb from Kevin Mariano

Grade - 11

Length of class period – 45 minutes (X2), or one 84 minute block

Inquiry – Should Truman have dropped the Atomic bombs to end WWII?

Objectives (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

Students will validate the credibility of the sources

Students will read and discuss various perspectives on the issue

Students will write a persuasive essay, citing a minimum of four sources

Materials

Prior knowledge of World War II, including major events/battles in the War in the Pacific

Attached packets of sources

Activities

1. Begin the class by asking, “If you wanted to know about the history of Plainfield, Connecticut, who might you ask?” → Guide students to say a historian or librarian who is familiar or a resident of Plainfield. Then ask, “If you wanted to describe the typical day for a deli worker at the local Big Y, who would you ask?” → Guide students to say that they would interview a deli worker at Big Y. Then ask, “If I asked Principal _____ what the typical day for a deli worker at the local Big Y was, do you think that he’d be the best person to ask? Why/why not?” → Guide students to say that the school principal would not be a credible source in these circumstances. Inform students that when researching, the credibility of the source is more important than the content put forth, for if the source is not credible, the information is meaningless.

2. Recall the battles in the Pacific and cite the demeanor of US – Japanese relations by 1945(recall Japanese Internment, Pop Culture Propaganda songs like, “We’re Gonna Have to Slap...”). Hand out the packet of the seven sources to the students. Direct students to open to a new page in their notebooks, title it “Should Truman have dropped the Atomic bombs to end WWII?”, and below the title, create a T Chart with the headings: “Yes, drop the bomb” and “No, do not drop the bomb.”

3. Inform students that their mission will be to write a persuasive essay citing a minimum of four sources. The essay will be in MLA format. It will be due on _____. Have students peruse through the packet as the teacher guides, “Notice that there are seven sources. The first source gives an overview and alludes to the relevance of the atomic bomb issue in today’s world. Below this article is a list of the seven sources. Besides the ‘Overview,’ the remaining six articles are split evenly according to bias: three are for dropping the bomb and three are against dropping the bomb.”

4. Read Article 1 as a class and briefly discuss.

5. Divide the class into four groups. Each group's task is to read one of the following articles (Article: 2,3,4,and 7), and give a summary of: who the author is, why they are a credible source for this topic, describe what the article is about, and evaluate the purpose of the article [what is the core/central issue at stake?]. Students should be given a time limit of eight minutes to complete the whole task as the articles are fairly short.
6. Have each group give an overview of their summary (from the above mentioned questions). **All students are held accountable for taking their own notes and adding to their T Chart.**
7. Once all the groups have presented, instruct the students to turn to Articles 5 and 6. Inform the students that these are Secondary sources (ask why) and that in the collegial/professional world, experts publish their research and react and counter other experts' research to justify their own (in a battle of wit, so to speak). In this case, students will read excerpts from Paul Fussler and Michael Walzer's essays.
8. As a whole class, read the Fussler essay and discuss pros/cons. Add to the T Chart. Then, read Walzer's essay, discuss pro/cons, and add to the T Chart.
9. If time allows, split the students into two sides of the room and hold an informal debate of the issue which may assist students who remain on the fence to choose one side or the other.

Assessment:

Students will write a persuasive essay, citing a minimum of four sources. The essay will be in MLA format.

Connecticut Framework Performance Standards:

- Cite evidence from a source to determine an author's purpose and intended audience
- Choose valid sources and provide evidence to answer a history/social studies question
- Evaluate primary and secondary interpretations of a historical event