

**TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT**  
***Lesson Title - Potsdam Declaration***  
***From Lisa Bastien***

**Grade:** 9-12

**Length of class period:** 86 minute block period

**Inquiry:** (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

Why would the terms of the Potsdam Declaration deter the Japanese from giving an unconditional surrender?

**Objectives:** (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)  
Students will be able to:

- explain the events leading up to the dropping of the atomic bombs
- provide examples as to why Japan refused to except the unconditional surrender presented to them prior to the use of the atomic bombs

Students will:

- analyze a primary source to use as support in response to a given question

**Materials:** (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)

Potsdam Declaration (see attached)

**Activities:** (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

- Start class by doing a class lecture/discussion on the war in the Pacific (WWII) including specifics on: the Philippines, the battle of Midway, Island Hopping, Guadalcanal, Kamikazes, Iwo Jima, Okinawa and ultimately the Manhattan Project.
- Ask the class "what are some ways the US could have warned the Japanese of the nuclear bomb and/or it's affects without dropping it on a city?" (students may make many suggestions including staging a demonstration so that Japan could understand what the bomb was capable of doing.)
- Discuss with the students that staging a demonstration was a consideration that was made. Have them analyze through discussion why it was decided against.
- Hand out a copy of the Potsdam Declaration to each student. Explain that although the US did not stage a demonstration they did give a written warning and opportunity to submit to an unconditional surrender. (Be sure to address that Potsdam was a city in defeated Germany where Truman met with Churchill and Stalin to discuss how to handle Germany.)
- Ask students to read through the declaration and consider why the declaration

would not have convinced the Japanese to give in to an unconditional surrender. (This is the first step to having the students do a Think, Pair, Write and Share activity.)

- Next have the students pair with another student to discuss their thoughts
- During the third step the students will write their answer to the question: Why did the Potsdam Declaration not convince the Japanese to give an unconditional surrender? Using at least 4 specific excerpts from the document to support their reasoning combined with at least 2 facts from the class discussion on the war in the Pacific and any prior knowledge.
- With the remaining time close with a whole discussion having each group to contribute their thoughts on the question. Additionally they should discuss whether they think the Potsdam Declaration was enough of a "warning" of what was to come.

### **How will you assess what students learned during this lesson?**

Written responses the Potsdam Declaration question

Participation in class discussions

Participation in all aspects of the TPWS activity

### **Connecticut Framework Performance Standards:**

1.1 Trace the changing role of US participation and influence in world affairs

1.3 Provide examples of conflict and cooperation in world affairs

1.3 Analyze nationalism's impact on world events

3.1 Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event

# Potsdam Declaration

**Issued, at Potsdam, July 26, 1945**

The text of the Potsdam Declaration was as follows:

(1) We-the President of the United States, the President of the National Government of the Republic of China, and the Prime Minister of Great Britain, representing the hundreds of millions of our countrymen, have conferred and agree that Japan shall be given an opportunity to end this war.

(2) The prodigious land, sea and air forces of the United States, the British Empire and of China, many times reinforced by their armies and air fleets from the west, are poised to strike the final blows upon Japan. This military power is sustained and inspired by the determination of all the Allied Nations to prosecute the war against Japan until she ceases to resist.

(3) The result of the futile and senseless German resistance to the might of the aroused free peoples of the world stands forth in awful clarity as an example to the people of Japan. The might that now converges on Japan is immeasurably greater than that which, when applied to the resisting Nazis, necessarily laid waste to the lands, the industry and the method of life of the whole German people. The full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of the Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland.

(4) The time has come for Japan to decide whether she will continue to be controlled by those self-willed militaristic advisers whose unintelligent calculations have brought the Empire of Japan to the threshold of annihilation, or whether she will follow the path of reason.

(5) Following are our terms. We will not deviate from them. There are no alternatives. We shall brook no delay.

(6) There must be eliminated for all time the authority and influence of those who have deceived and misled the people of Japan into embarking on world conquest, for we insist that a new order of peace, security and justice will be impossible until irresponsible militarism is driven from the world.

(7) Until such a new order is established and until there is convincing proof that Japan's war-making power is destroyed, points in Japanese territory to be

designated by the Allies shall be occupied to secure the achievement of the basic objectives we are here setting forth.

(8) The terms of the Cairo Declaration shall be carried out and Japanese sovereignty shall be limited to the islands of Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, Shikoku and such minor islands as we determine.

(9) The Japanese military forces, after being completely disarmed, shall be permitted to return to their homes with the opportunity to lead peaceful and productive lives.

(10) We do not intend that the Japanese shall be enslaved as a race or destroyed as a nation, but stern justice shall be meted out to all war criminals including those who have visited cruelties upon our prisoners. The Japanese Government shall remove all obstacles to the revival and strengthening of democratic tendencies among the Japanese people. Freedom of speech, of religion, and of thought, as well as respect for the fundamental human rights shall be established.

(11) Japan shall be permitted to maintain such industries as will sustain her economy and permit the exaction of just reparations in kind, but not those which would enable her to re-arm for war. To this end, access to, as distinguished from control of, raw materials shall be permitted. Eventual Japanese participation in world trade relations shall be permitted.

(12) The occupying forces of the Allies shall be withdrawn from Japan as soon as these objectives have been accomplished and there has been established in accordance with the freely expressed will of the Japanese people a peacefully inclined and responsible government.

(13) We call upon the government of Japan to proclaim now the unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces, and to provide proper and adequate assurances of their good faith in such action. The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction.