

Lesson Two: Truman on Trial (alternative version for higher ability groups) Lesson plan

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will:

- Know that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were controversial with many arguments for and against
- Understand arguments on both sides of the debate and the basics of criminal trials
- Be able to form an opinion on the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Overview

The class will put President Truman on trial to decide if the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were justified. The class will be split in half: a prosecution team and a defence team. Two barristers will lead each team and the rest of the class will be split into 'witness' groups, representing someone with a key view on the bombings. You are the judge, overseeing proceedings. At the end, the class acts as the jury to try and decide whether the bombings were justified.

Equipment needed

You will need:

- PowerPoint downloadable from www.cnduk.org/education
- Video of Truman's announcement www.youtube.com/watch?v=e3lb4wTq0jY
- Barrister role sheets and evidence collection forms (pp 3-8)
- Witness sheets (including sheets to fill in before and during the trial) (pp 9-22)
- 1 homework sheet for each student (p23)
- Paper and pens
- A selection of primary sources from Lesson One of the pack for the barristers to potentially use as additional evidence to support their arguments.
- (Optional) Judge's gavel and judge/barrister wigs!

Starter (10-15 minutes)

- If you have done Lesson One, recap. If not, go through that PowerPoint.
- The Lesson Two PowerPoint will show some images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and also introduce the class to the six witnesses who some of the students will take the roles of. Clarify what we mean by 'justified' and 'unjustified' regarding the bombings.
- Ask if anyone knows how a criminal trial works, including what the different roles are. Fill in any gaps in their knowledge (eg the difference between direct examination and cross examination).
- For context, ask the students if they have heard of the Nuremberg Trials and/or the Tokyo Trials. Ensure that they understand that the former tried 22 Nazi leaders for their involvement in the Holocaust (sentencing 12 to death), that the latter tried 25 prominent Japanese (sentencing 6 to death) for war crimes including ordering inhumane treatment of prisoners of war, and that there were no equivalent trials of anyone from the Western Allies.
- Students watch the video of Truman's announcement.

Trial preparation (15 minutes)

- On the PowerPoint, put up the statement 'It was unjustified to bomb Hiroshima and Nagasaki', with the photograph of Harry Truman.
- Select four students who you think will have the ability to be good barristers. Two will be for the prosecution, two will be for the defence. You will be the judge, facilitating the proceedings.
- Split the rest of the class into six groups – three will be arguing for the bombings (in defence of Truman's decision) and the other half will be arguing against (that it wasn't justified). Each group will play the role of one of the six witnesses.
- After reading through their three sheets, the barristers will gather evidence from the three witness groups 'on their side', using the 'go and ask the groups' sheet. One of the barristers interviews the witness groups and the other looks through the historical sources, highlighting any that could add to their arguments. The barristers will then come up with an opening speech and decide in which order to call up the witnesses. If time, they will also think of questions for both their own witnesses and the opposing team. If not, they will have to improvise these questions.
- Whilst this is going on, the six small groups will be given a witness statement. They must study this, and work out why their witness is for or against the bombings, and make notes on the template sheet. Their barristers will then interview them. Clarify with them that their barristers will ask them these questions during the trial and that the opposing barristers will cross-examine them.
- In your role as judge you can help people out! (The barristers in particular may need support).

The trial (30 minutes)

- The prosecution barristers will make a short (one minute max) opening speech to introduce the summary of their argument and mention the witnesses.
- They will then call up their three witnesses (groups), one by one. Each group will be asked questions by their own barrister (1 min for each witness).
- After each group has been directly-examined, the defence barristers have 30 seconds to ask one or two cross examination questions (if there is more time, the other students could make suggestions for these questions).
- The defence barristers then make their short opening speech and steps 2 and 3 are repeated with the defence directly examining their witnesses first and the prosecution then cross-examining, based on suggestions from their witnesses.
- After all this, the barristers do a short summing up to remind everyone of the key arguments (1 min each).

Lesson Two: Truman on Trial

Lesson plan (continued)

The jury decides (5-10 minutes)

- The class is split into groups of 12 or so. The groups must try and make a unanimous decision as to whether Truman was justified or not in bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki, based on the evidence they've heard in the trial. If unanimity is not reached, take a majority decision.
- Make it clear to the students that they will now be exploring their own views (not those of the barristers/witnesses) and that the groups are not competing.
- The groups feed back on their decisions via a spokesperson, and a plenary discussion of the reasons for the decision is held, if time.
- Homework suggestion: Students write their own verdict using homework sheet.

Differentiation

- Challenge one student by asking them to take on the role of judge.

Alternative versions of the trial: Contemporary scenario

(Especially relevant to Citizenship) Stage the trial with the same format but with an alternative defendant, based on a hypothetical contemporary nuclear attack. This could be a US attack on North Korea, a North Korean attack on South Korea or the US, a British attack on Russia (or vice-versa), etc. The students would need to decide who the defendant would be, and conduct research to come up with credible witnesses (CND Peace Education could give suggestions – just get in touch).

Extension activities

- *(Especially for Citizenship)* If the class decides that Truman was unjustified, have them discuss what a fair response to him would be if he were still alive, and whether anyone else should also be held responsible. To inform the discussion, they could first learn about the International Criminal Court, and famous war crime cases such as that of Radovan Karadzic.
- *(Especially for History)* Tell the students that Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister for most of the War (he was replaced by Attlee on 26th July 1945), played a significant role in the decision to drop the bombs. The Manhattan Project research started in Britain, and agreements between the US and Britain stated that the atomic bomb was not to be used without British consent. Divide the class into three groups, and give each group copies of the Churchill sources from Lesson One to read through and discuss. Each group then presents their source (and what they think about it) to the others, and takes questions. Finish with a plenary debate on whether Churchill was justified or unjustified in consenting to the bomb being used.
- *(Especially for History)* Homework: Find – and evaluate – real witness testimonies online (eg from one of the plane crew, from a survivor, from a Manhattan Project worker etc).

Enrichment

- *(Especially for Citizenship and English)* Assign one or two students to take photos of the mock trial, and do a short write-up of it, for the school newsletter. This could also be sent to local media.
- *(Especially for Citizenship)* Get students to contact the Japanese and US embassies in London for a statement on the bombings, or even for an interview. The students could then write an essay on whether or not they agree with the Embassy's point of view.
- *(Especially for History)* Visit the Imperial War Museum North in Manchester to explore their Technology and War, Second World War, and Cold War displays; the Imperial War Museum London to explore their 'Turning Points: 1934–1945' and 'Peace and Security 1945–2014' exhibitions; or Bradford Peace Museum to explore their Sadako Sasaki exhibition.



North Korean missile
Credit: Stefan Krasowski:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>



US nuclear submarine
Credit: Public domain / National
Museum of the US Navy



The Barrister's Role (Prosecution)

You are **against** the bombings

Your role is:

- You will be arguing at the trial that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were **not justified**, and that as Truman was responsible for that decision, he should be convicted. It's your job to get the information out of the witnesses to prove that the bombings were not justified.
- You will collect evidence for the case by visiting groups A, B and C to find out about their witnesses. Fill in the 'go and ask the groups' sheet – this will be your script in the trial!
- At the beginning of the trial, you will give a **short speech** (1 minute) to introduce your argument and your three witnesses. Use the 'your opening speech' sheet to plan this.
- You will have 1 minute to ask each witness questions in front of the Court. Then it is the turn of the **defence** team to ask them some questions to try and make their evidence look weaker.
- After the defence barristers have questioned each of *their* three witnesses, *you* can ask them questions to try and pick holes in their argument! If there is time your witness groups will suggest questions you could ask. The three witnesses for the defence are: US citizen whose sons were killed by the Japanese; an advisor to President Truman; the pilot of Enola Gay. You can ask leading questions eg 'Is it right to murder thousands of innocent civilians including children?'
- At the end you will quickly sum up your key points. Use the bottom of the 'your opening speech' sheet to help you.
- The judge (your teacher!) will help you in your role if you need!

Go and ask the groups:



Group A: Army General

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Group B: Bombing survivor

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Group C: Nuclear scientist

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Your opening speech

Your punchy first line

(Suggestion) Imagine you are just 10 years old and have lost all your family in an instant...

Your view

We think the bombing was unjustified because ...

Your witnesses

To give evidence we will be calling...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Finish your speech!

(You want people to sympathise with your arguments. Say something to make them sit up and listen!)

Your closing speech

At the end:

- Remind them who your three witnesses were.
- Wrap up the argument: 'We think Truman's decision was unjustified because...'
- Appeal to the class to take your side!



The Barrister's role (Defence)

You are **for** the bombings

Your role is:

- You will be arguing at the trial that the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were **justified**, and Truman should not be convicted. It's your job to get the information out of the witnesses to prove that the bombings were justified.
- You will collect evidence for the case by visiting groups D, E and F to find out about their witnesses. Fill in the 'go and ask the groups' sheet – this will be your script in the trial!
- At the beginning of the trial, you will give a **short speech** (1 minute) to introduce your argument and your three witnesses. Use the 'your opening speech' sheet to plan this.
- You will have 1 minute to ask each witness questions in front of the Court. Then it is the turn of the **prosecution** team to ask them some questions to try and make their evidence look weaker.
- After the prosecution barristers have questioned each of *their* three witnesses, *you* can ask them questions to try and pick holes in their argument! If there is time your witness groups will suggest questions you could ask. The three witnesses for the prosecution are: a Japanese army general; a survivor of the Nagasaki bombing; a US nuclear scientist. You can ask leading questions eg 'What about the thousands of Americans and Japanese who would have died if the war had continued?'
- At the end you will quickly sum up your key points. Use the bottom of the 'your opening speech' sheet to help you.
- The judge (your teacher!) will help you in your role if you need!

Go and ask the groups:



Group D: U.S. Civilian

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Group E: Truman's Advisor

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Group F: Pilot who dropped the bomb

What is your name?

What is your view?

Why?

(Optional) Something else to ask them about in the trial:



Your opening speech

You are **for** the bombings

Your punchy first line

(Suggestion) Imagine your two sons were killed at Pearl Harbour...

Your view

We think the bombing was justified because ...

Your witnesses

To give evidence we will be calling...

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Finish your speech!

(You want people to sympathise with your arguments. Say something to make them sit up and listen!)

Your closing speech

At the end:

- Remind them who your three witnesses were.
- Wrap up the argument: 'We think Truman's decision was justified because...'
- Appeal to the class to take your side!

NB: The witnesses are all fictitious. Any close resemblance to real individuals is coincidental.

My name is General Sato. I was a military advisor to Japan's Emperor Hirohito during World War Two.

Around 70 of our cities had already been hit heavily by American firebombing. Many were in ruins. The deadliest bombing made, on Tokyo on 10th March 1945, is estimated to have killed over 100,000 people. Our armed forces couldn't go on.

The United States did not need to drop the atomic bombs. We would have surrendered soon anyway, but the US did not want to negotiate with us. Their Potsdam Declaration demanded a complete and unconditional surrender. We were willing to surrender, but we wanted our Emperor to remain in place.

After we did surrender, the US let us keep the Emperor anyway! He just had to deny his divine status. I think their true motive was to test their atomic bombs, and display their dominance to the Soviets before the Soviets invaded Japan. The US did not want to co-occupy Japan with the Soviets, as this would have reduced their influence in the region.

**Group A
Witness Statement**

Japanese Army General





I am **for/against** the bombing (*circle*)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

My name is Sakura Tanaka. I was living in Nagasaki with my husband, our son and his family when the bomb was dropped. Our home was destroyed and I was badly burnt.

My son had gone to work in the centre of Nagasaki. I never saw him again. He died right away.

I, my husband, our daughter-in-law, and her daughter – our grandchild – were in the house, and miraculously we survived, despite the house being badly damaged.

After the explosion, Nagasaki was a wasteland. There were dead bodies everywhere. I saw people with their skin hanging off and glass stuck in them.

It is not right to kill so many ordinary people. The bomb could not tell the difference between family homes, ordinary workplaces and military buildings. The Americans did not wait to see if Japan would surrender after they bombed Hiroshima. I think they really just wanted to test both bombs, as the Nagasaki bomb was a different design to the Hiroshima bomb.

The effects go on too long. My fourteen-year-old granddaughter developed leukaemia a year later because of the bomb. She only lived for six months after that. Recently, I have been diagnosed with breast cancer. I am convinced that this too was caused by the radiation from the bomb.

**Group B
Witness Statement**

Survivor of the bombing





I am **for/against** the bombing (circle)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

My name is Edith Waltman and I worked on the Manhattan Project, which was the secret US project to build the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I knew we were working on a secret weapon and we were told it would be vital for the war. Most of the people on the project did not know the full details of what they were working on.

We tested the bomb in the desert of New Mexico, USA. It was so powerful that it turned the sand around the test site into glass. The effect the bombs had on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki was devastating and I was shocked and felt guilty due to my part in building them.

I believe that Japan could not have continued much longer with the war. I do not think the bombs were necessary and the USA had ulterior motives for dropping the bomb.

I believe that they partly wanted to test them out. They hadn't used them on real cities before. Hiroshima and Nagasaki had been untouched by normal bombs. The atomic bombs were also built to two different designs, so Truman probably wanted to see the different impact of each.

I also think that they wanted to send a message to the world (and the USSR particularly) about how powerful they were. The USA didn't want the USSR trying to occupy Japan too. They wanted to be the most powerful country after the war.

Group C
Witness Statement

Manhattan Project Scientist





I am **for/against** the bombing (circle)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

My name is Mary Beale and I'm from New Hampshire, USA. I used to have two sons, but now I have none. Both of my sons were killed by the Japanese in the war.

My younger son, Ron, was on a battleship in Pearl Harbour when the Japanese attacked in December, 1941. His ship sunk and he drowned. He was only 22. This attack was very shocking to the American people and led to the United States joining World War Two.

My other son, Bob, was a Prisoner of War (PoW) and was kept in a camp in Japan. He was captured when his plane crashed in the Pacific Ocean near Japan. He was forced to do hard labour and was not given adequate food or drinking water. He starved to death. He was 26. I didn't get to bury either of my sons.

I am glad that we dropped those bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The Japanese were so cruel and needed to pay for what they had done.

I think Truman did the right thing. No-one will want to mess with America now. The war finished when those bombs were dropped. The bombs brought about peace. Bob had a daughter, Sally. I want the world to be peaceful for her sake. I hope she never loses her children to war.

Group D
Witness Statement

U.S. civilian





I am **for/against** the bombing (circle one)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

My name is Fred Pilkington. My job was to advise President Truman when he was making decisions about how to proceed in the war.

I advised Truman that dropping the atomic bombs was the only way to end the war, an opinion I still hold.

Japan wasn't going to surrender. Japanese citizens were trained how to fight as part of a civilian army. They were even training schoolchildren to fight invaders with bamboo spears. The Emperor of Japan, Hirohito was viewed as a god; the majority of Japanese people would have fought to the death to protect him.

We gave Japan a chance. We issued a statement, known as the Potsdam Declaration on 26th July 1945, which warned Japan if they didn't surrender they would face 'prompt and utter destruction'. They responded to this with what they called 'mokusatsu' which translates as 'silent contempt'. They ignored it.

Seeing as Japan didn't surrender until we had dropped the bombs, this proves that they were necessary and that they ended the war. We did this for the good of the world.

Some people say we should have dropped them on an unpopulated area to show how powerful the bombs were first. But we decided against this, for several reasons.

Group E
Witness Statement

Truman's Advisor





I am **for/against** the bombing (circle)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

My name is Richard Vancetti, but my friends call me Rocky. I was the pilot on board the Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. The bomb was nicknamed 'Little Boy', and I was proud to carry it in my plane.

I have never regretted what I did and I feel no guilt. I think it was the right thing to do and we did the best job we could. It ended the war much quicker this way.

If the war hadn't ended when it did, we would have had to invade Japan by land. Operation Olympic was planned to take place on 1st November 1945 if the bombs had not been dropped. This would have killed many thousands of young Americans who would have taken part. It would have killed thousands of Japanese people too. Fewer people died this way. The bombing saved lives.

We had firebombed many Japanese cities with normal bombs throughout the war. I helped drop bombs on the capital, Tokyo. That didn't convince them so we had to try something new.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki might have been firebombed anyway if the war had continued. If the war had continued, I might not be here today.

Group F
Witness Statement

**Pilot of the plane that dropped the
bomb on Hiroshima**





I am **for/against** the bombing (circle)

The key points of my argument are:

1.

2.

3.

Witnesses sheet: for all students except barristers to fill in during the trial



Army General

Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

What would you like to ask this witness?



Bombing survivor

Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

What would you like to ask this witness?



Nuclear scientist

Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

What would you like to ask this witness?

Witnesses sheet: for all students except barristers to fill in during the trial



Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

U.S. civilian

What would you like to ask this witness?



Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

Truman's Advisor

What would you like to ask this witness?



Name

Do they think the bombings were justified or unjustified? (circle)

What is their key argument?

I think this argument is

Bomber pilot

What would you like to ask this witness?

Homework: My own verdict

My jury group thought the bombings were **justified/unjustified** (circle)

The class decided the bombings were **justified/unjustified** (circle)

I think that the bombings were **justified/unjustified** (circle)

This is because:

1.

2.

3.

However, counter arguments might be

1.

2.

3.

My response to these counter arguments would be:

1.

2.

3.