

Lesson Three: Religious Education (Just War theory)

Lesson plan

Learning objectives

By the end of the lesson students will:

- Know that people have formed theories to try and justify and/or limit war.
- Understand the concept of Just War theory.
- Be able to form an opinion as to whether they think Hiroshima and Nagasaki fit with Just War theory.

Overview

The class will explore the concept of a Just War and apply their knowledge and opinions to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Equipment needed

You will need:

- PowerPoint downloadable from: www.cnduk.org/information/item/2008
- Rules of war sheets (p 88)
- Just War worksheets (p 89)
- Teacher's notes sheet (p 90)

Starter (15 minutes)

- If the class hasn't done any lessons from this pack, go quickly through the overview of the bombings (Lesson One PowerPoint)
- From the Just War PowerPoint, students discuss in pairs: What is war? Is war ever acceptable? If so, when should you go to war? Is there anything you shouldn't be able to do in war?

Just War (30-35 minutes)

- On the PowerPoint, go through the possible causes of war, and certain scenarios that may happen in war. Ask the students to raise their hands for 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'. Ask some of them to say why they think this. [Alternative – you can ask them to stand on one side of the room for 'acceptable' and the other for 'unacceptable', with a middle space for the unsure].
- Then hand students the sheet with suggested rules of war on it. Some of these are based on Just War theory. There are also blank boxes so students can write their own ideas if they think the list is missing something.
- Students choose 6 rules to make their own Just War theory. This can be done in pairs or small groups, or as an individual task.
- Feedback to the class. What did the students pick and why? What made some more important than others? Did they write any of their own?
- On the PowerPoint, introduce the Just War theory. Are these the same conditions as the students chose? If not, what do they feel is missing from the theory?
- Go through some of the questions on the PowerPoint to understand the Just War criteria in more detail.
- Hand each student the sheet with Just War conditions compared to the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Do the bombings meet the criteria of an act of Just War? Why/why not? (This could also be done in pairs/small groups). NB: It could be argued both ways – see the teacher's notes sheet.
- Feedback to the class. Do people have different opinions on whether or not the bombings meet Just War theory? If so, why?

Plenary (10-15 minutes)

Would Hiroshima and Nagasaki fit into the students' Just War conditions, chosen earlier in the lesson? Why do people have different ideas about what is just? Is Just War theory reliable if it can be interpreted in such different ways?

Differentiation

Higher ability:

- The starter discussion could be nuanced by a discussion of the differences between a country vs country war, civil war, asymmetric warfare (eg the war on terror), drone warfare, cyber warfare etc.
- In addition, the worksheet activity could include exploration of the historical sources from Lesson One.

Possible rules for war: choose your six

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| Animals should not be harmed in the war, nor should the environment be damaged. | It must have a good chance of being successful and bringing about peace. |
| Must be in proportion (it should not kill too many people, especially if they are not involved in the fighting). | No-one who is under 21 years old should be involved in the fighting. |
| Weapons that cause lasting damage such as nuclear, biological or chemical weapons should not be used. | It should be the last resort (everything else should have been tried first). |
| People should not make money from the war. | The war must be declared by the government of a country. |
| Women should not be involved in the fighting. | It should have a just <i>intention</i> |
| It must have a just cause. (e.g. to defend against invasion, or to stop major human rights violations) | Sources of food, drink and medicine should not be destroyed. |

| Just War theory requirement | Do the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki meet this? |
|---|---|
| 1. The war must be declared by the government of a country. | Circle: Yes / No Why? |
| 2. It must have a just cause. (e.g. to defend against invasion, or to stop major human rights violations) | Circle: Yes / No Why? |
| 3. It must have a good chance of being successful and bringing about peace. | Circle: Yes / No Why? |
| 4. Must be in proportion (it should not kill too many people, especially if they are not involved in the fighting). | Circle: Yes / No Why? |
| 5. It should be the last resort (everything else should have been tried first). | Circle: Yes / No Why? |
| 6. It should have a just <i>intention</i> | Circle: Yes / No Why? |

| Just War theory requirement | Do the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki meet this? | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. The war must be declared by the government of a country. | Yes It was part of WWII | No N/A |
| 2. It must have a just cause. (e.g. to defend against invasion, or to stop major human rights violations) | Yes The Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour and also tortured PoWs. | No The innocent civilians in the cities should not have paid for their government's/armed forces' actions. |
| 3. It must have a good chance of being successful and bringing about peace. | Yes Many – including Truman – argue that it made Japan surrender and it ended WWII. | No Others argue that Japan would have surrendered soon anyway, and that it was actually the invasion of Japanese-occupied territory by the USSR that made them surrender. |
| 4. Must be in proportion (it should not kill too many people, especially if they are not involved in the fighting). | Yes It saved lives on both sides as the USA did not have to invade Japan by land. It also killed fewer people than the firebombing of Tokyo. | No The vast majority of those killed and injured were civilians. Others argue that Japan would have surrendered soon anyway. |
| 5. It should be the last resort (everything else should have been tried first). | Yes Many would argue that there was no way Japan would have surrendered otherwise; Japan had rejected the Potsdam Declaration, and 'conventional' bombing hadn't made them surrender. | No Others argue that Japan would have surrendered soon without the bombings; Truman himself wrote in his diary that the USSR's invasion would ensure this. |
| 6. It should have a just <i>intention</i> . | Yes Many – including Truman – would argue that it was done to end the war as quickly as possible, and thus save lives on both sides overall by avoiding a land invasion. | No Others argue that it was done to test the bomb and as a show of strength to the world (and especially the USSR). They say Japan would have surrendered soon anyway. |