**Atomic Bomb Debate: the decision to drop the bomb**

Vice President Harry S. Truman became president after Roosevelt unexpectedly died in April 1945. While attending an allied conference in Potsdam, Germany, three months later Truman received a telegram stating that the test of the atomic bomb had been successful. By this time in the war, Germany had been utterly defeated. However, Japan had vowed to fight on, despite the Allies’ demand at Potsdam for an unconditional surrender. The Japanese felt an unconditional surrender would jeopardize the position of their emperor, whom they considered divine. In addition, the Japanese military viewed surrender as dishonorable. They fought with fanatic resistance and believed it was more honorable to commit suicide than to surrender to enemy forces. In this vein, Japanese *kamikaze* pilots strapped themselves into planes loaded with explosives and crashed them into American naval vessels. They managed to destroy 53 ships and damage 158 others.

Despite these desperate attacks, the Japanese were close to defeat by July 1945. Three factors were working against them. First, Allied bombing runs over the Japanese home islands were killing tens of thousands of civilians and military personnel. Second, an Allied naval blockade made it impossible for Japan to import goods necessary to continue fighting and prevented one million Japanese troops in China from returning to their homeland. Third, the massive Soviet Red Army was poised to enter the war and assist the United States.

The United States had hoped to end the Pacific War by invading the home islands of Japan. However, in the face of Japanese fanaticism, Truman was deeply concerned that such an invasion would cost tens of thousands of American lives. In light of this concern, some of Truman’s advisors recommended that he end the war quickly by dropping a bomb without warning on a large Japanese city. The undersecretary of the navy, Ralph Bard, disagreed and told Truman that dropping the bomb without a specific warning would jeopardize “the position of the United States as a great humanitarian nation.” A group of scientists from the bomb project suggested that the United States drop the bomb in a remote, unpopulated location to show the bomb’s power and convince Japan to surrender

**Critical Thinking:** The following pages will list the 5 options for the US concerning use of the Atomic Bomb. For each option, and using the information in the primary source packet, you will produce the following:

* *3 or more supporting arguments for the option.*
* *3 or more counter arguments for the option*
* *3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option*

During the first part of the debate you will have to argue in support of an option that will be randomly selected for you prior to the debate, so come prepared.

**Options #1: Without warning. Drop an atomic bomb on a Japanese city as soon as possible.**

*3 or more supporting arguments for the option*:

*3 or more counter arguments for the option*

*3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option*

**Options #2: Drop the bomb on an unpopulated area to demonstrate its destructive capabilities.**

*3 or more supporting arguments for the option*:

*3 or more counter arguments for the option:*

*3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option:*

**Options #3: Warn the Japanese that the US possesses atomic weapons and is willing to use them if they don’t surrender in a specific time. If they don’t surrender, the drop the bomb.**

*3 or more supporting arguments for the option*:

*3 or more counter arguments for the option:*

*3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option:*

**Options #4: Reject the use of the atomic weapons, and continue the naval blockade and conventional bombing. If the measures do not produce a Japanese surrender then invade.**

*3 or more supporting arguments for the option*:

*3 or more counter arguments for the option:*

*3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option:*

**Options #5: Reject the use of atomic weapons and negotiate an end to World War II, allowing the Japanese to surrender with their emperor as a part of the post war government.**

*3 or more supporting arguments for the option*:

*3 or more counter arguments for the option:*

*3 relevant questions to support or challenge the option:*