

Timothy Ryan
AP Euro
Period C
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Historical Essay Analysis

Title: Dropping the Bomb

Author: G. Pascal Zachary

Author's thesis: The US is the only nation to have used atomic weapons in war, despite being unnecessary for victory and antithetical to American democracy and morality.

Author's evidence:

- a) The bomb cannot be defended against the alternative means of victory available
- b) Hiroshima marked the opening of the Cold War, leading to a nuclear arms race
- c) There was no "secret" to the atom bomb, and many nations soon followed suit
- d) A rise of a secret government of experts since the Manhattan Project has occurred
- e) The project could not be stopped, even when alternative means were available
- f) The supposed higher standard of morality Americans had in war vanished
- g) If the US vows never to use atom weapons, it would set international precedent

Author's conclusion of the topic's significance:

The use of the atomic bomb in World War II set off many terrible precedents for the next half century. It began the Cold War, the international nuclear arms race, and destroyed any higher sense of morality Americans had about the war. Nuclear weaponry is still a threat we must face today.

What questions you have about the reading:

1. What were our alternatives to the atomic bomb?
2. Why couldn't the Manhattan Project be stopped?
3. Is there any way to eliminate nuclear weapons entirely?

To what extent does your knowledge of the period support or conflict the author's thesis?

My knowledge of the period of World War II supports the author's thesis, that the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima had lasting effects on Western history and on American warfare. Had it not occurred, nuclear weaponry may not remain the threat it is today.

Explain the gist of the article, the nature of the evidence, and the significance of the topic:

The nuclear bomb that the US used against Hiroshima is today considered to have been completely unnecessary, an unwarranted show of power that only led to a nuclear arms race and the deterioration of American democracy and morality in war. Had it not occurred, the Cold War would not have begun to the extent it did, the nuclear arms race would not remain the threat that it does today, and WWII may have been won with a fewer number of lives. As it stands, if the US were to vow never to use nuclear weapons again, it may be possible that other nations will follow suit.