

NAME _____

SCHOOL _____

DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION

This question is based on the accompanying documents. The question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the purposes of this question. As you analyze the documents, take into account the *source* of each document and any *point of view* that may be presented in the document. Keep in mind that the language used in a document may reflect the historical context of the time in which it was written.

Historical Context: World War II & the atomic bomb

The US decision to drop atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 has generated much controversy over the years. Some argue that the bombing was necessary to end World War II, while others believed that more than 200,000 civilians died in vain.

Task:

Using the information from the eight documents in part A and your knowledge of US history, write an essay in Part B in which you

- **Discuss** the different perspectives on the US decision to drop the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II.
 - **Explain** the arguments of those in support of using the atomic bomb
 - **Explain** the arguments of those against using the atomic bomb

- **discuss** means “to make observations about something using facts, reasoning, and argument; to present in some detail”
- **explain** means “to make plain or understandable; to give reasons for or causes of; to show the logical development or relationships of”

Part A | Short Answer Questions | *Directions:* Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow in the space provided.

Document 1:

....I had then set up a committee of top men and had asked them study with great care the implications the new weapons might have for us. It was their recommendation that the bomb be used against the enemy as soon as it could be done. They recommended that it should be used without specific warning and against a target that would clearly show its devastating strength. I had realized, of course, that an atomic bomb explosion would inflict damage and casualties beyond imagination. On the other hand, the scientific advisers of the committee reported, "We can propose no technical demonstration likely to bring an end to the war; we see no acceptable alternative to direct military use." It was their conclusion that no technical demonstration they might propose, such as over a deserted island, would be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target.

... I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisers to the President recommended its use, and when I talked to Churchill he unhesitatingly told me that he favored the use of the atomic bomb if it might aid to end the war.

Source: Harry Truman *Memoirs* 1955 pages 419 - 423 | [original source](#)

- 1) Why did the committee advising President Truman recommend that bomb should not be demonstrated and instead should be used against the enemy?

- 2) Why did Churchill favor the use of the atomic bomb?

Document 2:

The use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender. . . .

In being the first to use it, we . . . adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion, and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children.

It is my opinion at the present time that a surrender of Japan can be arranged with terms that can be accepted by Japan and that will make fully satisfactory provisions for America's defense against future trans-Pacific aggression.

Source: Admiral William E. Leahy, Chief of Staff for President Harry Truman, *I Was There* 1950 | [Source](#)

1) Why did Admiral Leahy feel the use of the bomb on Japan was unnecessary?

2) Why did Admiral Leahy feel the use of the bomb was ethically and morally incorrect?

Document 3:

The face of war is the face of death; death is an inevitable part of every order that a wartime leader gives. The decision to use the atomic bomb was a decision that brought death to over a hundred thousand Japanese. No explanation can change that fact and I do not wish to gloss it over. But this deliberate, premeditated destruction was our least abhorrent [horrid] choice. The destruction of

Hiroshima and Nagasaki put an end to the Japanese war. It stopped the fire raids and the strangling blockade; it ended the ghastly specter of a clash of great land armies.

Source: Secretary of War, Harry Stimson, *The Decision to use the Atomic Bomb*, Harpers Magazine 1950 | [Source](#)

- 1) What is the argument in support of using the bomb that Secretary Stimson is making when he writes: *“The face of war is the face of death; death is an inevitable part of every order that a wartime leader gives”* ?

- 2) Why does Secretary Stimson think that the use of the bomb was the right choice?

Document 4:

"How can a human being with any claim to a sense of moral responsibility deliberately let loose an instrument of destruction which can at one stroke annihilate an appalling segment of mankind? This is not war: this is not even murder; this is purely a crime. This is a crime against God and humanity which strikes at the very basis of moral existence. What meaning is there in any international law, in any rule of human conduct, in any concept of right and wrong, if the very foundations of morality are to be overthrown as the use of this instrument of total destruction threatens to do?"

- 1) According to this source, why shouldn't the United States have used the atomic bomb?

Document 5:

"The view where a moment before all had been so bright and sunny was now dark and hazy... What had happened? All over the right side of my body I was bleeding... My private nurse set about examining my wounds without speaking a word. No one spoke... Why was everyone so quiet? The heat finally became too intense to endure... Those who could fled; those who could not perished... Hiroshima was no longer a city but a burned-over prairie. To the east and to the west everything was flattened. The distant mountains seemed nearer than I could ever remember... How small Hiroshima was with its houses gone."

Source: Michihiko Hachiya, *Hiroshima Diary: The Journal of a Japanese Physician* August 6 - September 30, 1945

- 1) What observations did the doctor make about the effects of the bombing on Hiroshima?

Document 6:

We were on garrison duty in France for about a month, and in August, we got great news: we weren't going to the Pacific. The U.S. dropped a bomb on Hiroshima, the Japanese surrendered, and the war was over. We were so relieved. It was the greatest thing that could have happened. Somebody once said to me that the bomb was the worst thing that ever happened, that the U.S. could have found other ways. I said, "Yeah, like what? Me and all my buddies jumping in Tokyo, and the Allied forces going in, and all of us getting killed? Millions more Allied soldiers getting killed?" When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor were they concerned about how many lives they took? We should have dropped eighteen bombs as far as I'm concerned. The Japanese should have stayed out of it if they didn't want bombs dropped. The end of the war was good news to us. We knew we were going home soon.

Source: Stephen Ambrose - *Band of Brothers* (the Book) 2001 - Interview with Soldier William "Wild Bill" Guarnere | [Source](#)

1) Why was this soldier in support of the use of the atomic bomb?

<p>Why the bomb was needed or justified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Japanese had demonstrated near-fanatical resistance, fighting to almost the last man on Pacific islands, committing mass suicide on Saipan and unleashing kamikaze attacks at Okinawa. Fire bombing had killed 100,000 in Tokyo with no discernible political effect. ● With only two bombs ready (and a third on the way by late August 1945) it was too risky to "waste" one in a demonstration over an unpopulated area such as Tokyo's harbor. Only the atomic bomb could jolt Japan's leadership to surrender. ● An invasion of Japan would have caused casualties on both sides that could easily have exceeded the toll at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. ● Immediate use of the bomb convinced the world of its horror and prevented future use when nuclear stockpiles were far larger. 	<p>Why the bomb was not needed, or unjustified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Japan was ready to call it quits anyway. More than 60 of its cities had been destroyed by conventional bombing, the home islands were being blockaded by the American Navy, and the Soviet Union entered the war by attacking Japanese troops in Manchuria. ● American refusal to modify its "unconditional surrender" demand to allow the Japanese to keep their emperor needlessly prolonged Japan's resistance. ● A demonstration explosion over Tokyo harbor would have convinced Japan's leaders to quit without killing many people. ● The bomb was used partly to justify the \$2 billion spent on its development.
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Source: Bill Dietrich: Seattle Times Reporter 1995 | [Source](#)

1) According to this table, what were the arguments for and against a demonstration of the bomb in Tokyo Harbor?

Document 8:



1) Describe the effects of the bombing, as seen in these photographs.

Part B:

Historical Context: World War II & the atomic bomb

The US decision to drop the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945 has generated much controversy over the years. Some argue that the bombing was necessary to end World War II, while others believed that more than 200,000 civilians died in vain.

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Guidelines:

In your essay, be sure to:

- Develop all aspects of the task
- Incorporate information from at least **four** documents
- Incorporate relevant outside information
- Support the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details
- Use a logical and clear plan of organization, including an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme