

Lesson Plan for Teaching the Atomic Bomb
(Japan Lesson Plan)

Danielle Filas
Department Chair, Language Arts
Village Academy Schools, Powell, OH
filasd@villageacademy.org
NCTA Delaware, OH 2013

SUBJECT AREA: Language Arts

GRADE LEVEL: 11th grade

TIME: At least three 50 minute periods, plus prior prep work.

LESSON OBJECTIVE: Creating a lesson/unit plan to address the complexities involved with the decision to utilize atomic weapons and the aftermath created by the deployment of the bombs may not be truly possible. It seems vital, to me at least, that my World Literature students recognize and grapple with the East Asian perspective of this watershed moment in global history. Because I teach both Western and East Asian students, I feel compelled to make sure students become immersed and familiar with the perceptions, assumptions, and objectives that guided both the decision to utilize the weapons and the decision by the Japanese government to stand strong against the American and Allied forces in the face of almost certain defeat. Then, students will be able to examine the post-WWII literature in order to appreciate the impact of this intensely catalytic event on the fabric of life in Japan and throughout Eastern Asia.

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1a Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1b Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1c Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1d Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse

formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

1. What evidence to primary source documents from the era provide as to the reasons for the US decision to deploy two nuclear weapons on Japanese soil?
2. What does prior knowledge about Japanese culture provide as to the reasons for Japan's refusal to surrender prior to the nuclear attack?
3. What are some ways the decision to drop the bombs affect the East Asia region?

PREPARATION PRIOR TO THIS LESSON PLAN: Teacher and students should read excerpts from *Analects of Confucius*, *Lotus Sutra*, *Tao Te Ching*, *Peony Pavilion*, *Kokoru*, "Diary of a Madman", *Blue Stocking*, "Lifeblood", and relevant selections from Ebrey's *East Asia* text. Students must gain an understanding of the hierarchical structures, the power of family and government, and the sense of honor endemic to Japan.

Students will also need to research the Western literature of the time so as to grasp the realities, perceptions, and misperceptions that lead to the decision to drop the bombs where and when they were eventually dropped. Google News Archive allows students to search for and find primary source documents (news articles), Google Scholar allows students to research and examine the scholarly articles on atomic weaponry and its effects. Setting the stage in this way allows me to guide the students toward a critical analysis of how the world conversation changed after the bombing and how the American conversation tended to whitewash the issue.

REQUIRED STUDENT MATERIALS:

- Works/notes from works listed above
- Computers/laptops/tablets/digital devices with internet access.

ACTIVITIES:

1. (1st class period) Students role play as American leaders discussing the possibility of using atomic bombs in order to end the war. Teacher serves in-role to address the students as US government officials called to this important policy-decision meeting. In the allotted time, students must weigh the casualties and described the Japanese resolve to never stop fighting until every last man, woman, and child has fallen in battle. The students will be reminded of "current" estimates of how long the war is expected to last, how much it will cost, and how many American soldiers' lives will likely be lost. We then presented the student council with information about the newly created atomic weapon, one which would show an awesome and unbelievable force that just might frighten the Japanese forces into submission. Students will refer to their "current" research and must

ignore knowledge that is now common, but would then have been unknown. They will compare the atomic option, its cost, and its projected destruction of civilian targets. They will need to come to a consensus a) whether or not to drop a bomb (or two, as Japan refuses to surrender after the first); b) if so, where to drop the bombs; and c) how to announce it to the world.

2. (2nd class period) the students to then switch roles and play the part of the Japanese leadership and to discuss how they would respond to the US demand for “unconditional surrender,” as they examine the Potsdam Declaration and read the text closely, guided not by Western ideals and historical precedence, but with the Eastern Asian sensibilities established in the reading of the earlier literature. Together, students must make the decision to surrender or to continue with the war after the Hiroshima bomb, after the Soviet declaration of war, and after the second bomb is dropped over Nagasaki.
3. (3rd class period) Watch *White Light, Black Rain* in class. Homework: Write a 3 paragraph response to the film.