

- 0. WHY? - Story Preface
- 1. EINSTEIN'S LETTER
- 2. NUCLEAR ENERGY - SIMPLY SPEAKING
- 3. RADIATION SICKNESS
- 4. A CHANGE IN LEADERS
- 5. THE TRINITY TEST
- 6. DECISION TO BOMB
- 7. BOMBING OF HIROSHIMA
- 8. BOMBING OF NAGASAKI
- 9. WHY?**
- 10. THE FUTURE



This image of shelters in Nagasaki appears at page 40 of *The Effects of Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, United States Strategic Bombing Survey* (published, in 1946, by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC). The picture has this description: "Tunnel shelters in the hillside, such as the ones pictured (very close to ground zero), protected the few occupants from blast, heat, and radiation."

Harry Truman had pondered whether he should use the atomic bomb. It was a decision, in the end, only he could make.

Knowing he would face criticism for using a weapon of such terrible mass destruction, Harry Truman did not flinch. His main objective was saving American lives.

Plans to invade the Japanese home islands (dubbed "Operation Downfall") were well underway by August of 1945. Initial landings, in Kyushu, would have occurred during the fall and winter of 1945-1946.

After the war, U.S. policymakers learned that the Japanese had correctly surmised where the invasion would have begun. No one knows how many lives would have been lost, but more than 3.5 million military men would have participated in the invasion.

The President's decision was supported by the men who faced death had they been told to invade the Japanese home islands. As Professor Paul Fussell, a former U.S. Army infantryman in Europe, said in his essay Thank God for the Atom Bomb:

When the atom bombs were dropped and the news began to circulate that we would not be obligated in a few months to rush up the beaches near Tokyo assault-firing while being machine-gunned, mortared and shelled we broke down and cried with relief and joy. We were going to live. We were going to grow to adulthood after all.

Some historians agree that Truman's decision, in the end, saved more lives than would have been lost (on both sides) during an invasion. Others disagree, arguing Japan would have likely surrendered had more time passed.

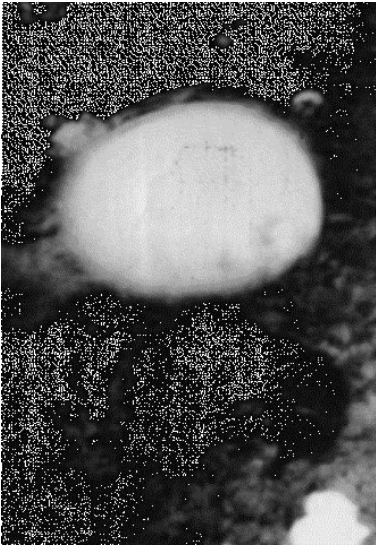
In the end, whether it was wise to use the bomb remains one of the most controversial issues in American 20th-century history. Even if President Roosevelt had read Einstein's 1945 letter, and had a chance to consider warnings from scientists like Leo Szilard, who can say whether the U.S. government would have taken a different path?

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/WHY-Einstein-s-Letter>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/WHY-Einstein-s-Letter>



Fat Man - Animation of Bomb Over Nagasaki

From the U.S. Dept of Energy, Office of History and Heritage Resources.

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View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Fat-Man-Animation-of-Bomb-Over-Nagasaki>



Devastation in Nagasaki

U.S. National Archives, image 127-N-136176.

From the Department of Defense "War and Conflict Collection ((HD-SN-99-02900).

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Mass Destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki

Produced by: US Army Signal Corps, Pictorial Service

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