



STUDY GUIDE

No Past, No Future

KEY TERMS:

judgment
exceptional

social justice
liberal

context
subtleties

Detail Focus: Complete this section <u>during</u> the video.	Main Summary Focus: Complete this section <u>after</u> the video.
<p>1. What are statue destroyers, in effect, saying with their actions?</p> <p>2. The U.S. education system believes that the point of history is to judge it based on which ill-defined concepts?</p> <p>3. President Truman made a decision about dropping atomic weapons on Japan or not based on what?</p>	<p>1. Who is judging historical figures by today's standards?</p> <p>2. What are the consequences of judging historical figures by today's standards?</p>

Discussion & Review Questions

1. At the beginning of the video, Mr. Murray asks, “What kind of future do we have if we destroy our past?” What do you think Mr. Murray means, specifically, by the phrase ‘destroy our past?’ Explain. How would you answer his question? Explain.
2. Further along in the video, Mr. Murray explains that, “It [the condition of people believing that historical figures should have known what we know today] is the fruit of an education system that long ago prioritized ‘empathy’ over facts; that believes the ultimate point of history is not to learn lessons from it, but to judge it from the pre-ordained left-wing conclusions about such ill-defined concepts as social justice, equity and tolerance. Apart from breeding ignorance, this kind of education invites the student (the child, really) to be judge, jury and executioner over issues that they (and increasingly their teachers) know little or nothing about. Because no one has bothered to teach them the nuance, complexity and context that is history.” What do you think contributed to the switch from learning history as fact to learning history as an excuse for victimhood? Explain. Why do you think that schools don’t value teaching history anymore with the ‘nuance, complexity, and context’ that is so critical for properly understanding it and being able to relate it realistically to our current lives? Explain.
3. Mr. Murray later points out that, “A healthy, humane and, in the truest sense, liberal mind does not view history as a mere playpen for our moral judgment. It recognizes that people in the past acted on the information they had, just as we do today.” What do you think Mr. Murray means by the phrase ‘playpen for moral judgment?’ Explain. Why do you think that the Left presumes that historical figures of the past always could have and should have acted better than they did- i.e. why was doing the best with the information and circumstances they had at the time not good enough for the Left? Explain.
4. Later in the video, Mr. Murray notes that, “Today’s Left... doesn’t believe that we stand on anyone’s shoulders. It imagines that if we could only liberate ourselves from the dusty, misguided and misinformed ideas of the past then we might see further, fly still higher. This view is wrong. Divorced from our past we would be utterly lost. We would not rise, but plummet. We would be forced to start again with far less insight, and with far poorer examples as our guides.” What do you think Mr. Murray means when he states that we would be ‘lost’ without the past, that we would ‘plummet?’ Do you agree with Mr. Murray’s assertion? Why or why not?
5. Towards the beginning of the video, Mr. Murray states that, “The presumption that we can stand in perfect judgment over the lives of historical figures is not merely foolish and unfair, it’s dangerous,” then at the end of the video Mr. Murray concludes that, “Ironically, thanks to the statue destroyers, the great figures of the past have never looked greater.” What about judging historical figures is foolish, and how might it be dangerous? Explain. What do you think Mr. Murray means by his last line? Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

Extend the Learning:

Case Study President Truman and the atomic bomb

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Truman Was Right to Drop the Atomic Bomb,” then answer the questions that follow.

1. What was the name of the airplane that dropped the first atomic weapon on Japan? What was President Truman hoping would be the outcome of his decision? What did the Japanese ask the Soviet Union to communicate to the Allies? How many days did it take to get from the second atomic bomb being dropped to the complete and unconditional surrender of the Japanese? What were President Truman’s actual choices to attempt to end the war? What was Operation Olympic? What did every alternative to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have in common? Why did the Allies want to avoid invading Japan? Why did President Truman order a halt to the shipment of a third nuclear bomb? Under what conditions did Japan’s civilian government surrender? Why did conventional strategic bombing continue on August 14th, and what happened the next day?
2. How does the article characterize President Truman’s decision? How do you think the Leftist Progressives view President Truman’s decision to drop atomic weapons on Japan? Explain. How do you think one should go about figuring out an answer to the question of whether President Truman was right to drop atomic weapons on Japan or not? Explain. Do you think President Truman was right to drop the atomic weapons on Japan? Why or why not? What specific nuances, complexities, and context should one examine in this case before making any kind of judgment? Explain.
3. What is wrong with judging a historical figure based exclusively on one act or one belief alone, rather than on the whole of the person’s character, circumstances, body of work, and whole collective of decisions that the person made? What is wrong with judging a historical figure from a moral perspective exclusively? What might the short and long-term consequences be of teaching revisionist history from a single, political viewpoint rather than from a broad, fact-based perspective? What do you think can be done to have history taught properly again? Explain. Do you think that students are better served, in terms of learning, by being taught to critically examine facts and to draw their own conclusions through critical thinking or rather better served by being told to blindly accept political rhetoric? Explain.

<https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2018-08-07/truman-was-right-to-drop-the-atomic-bomb>

Commentary

Truman Was Right to Drop the Atomic Bomb

Dropping the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the war to a quick end.

By Peter D. Zimmerman Contributor Aug. 7, 2018, at 5:16 p.m.



The "Enola Gay" lands in the Northern Mariana Islands after the U.S. atomic bombing mission against the Japanese city of Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945.(Max Desfor/AP)

The clock was ticking that morning of August 6, 1945 as the Enola Gay struggled into the air with a full load of fuel and the massive Little Boy atomic bomb. President Harry Truman had rolled the dice hoping that the shock of seeing entire cities destroyed by single bombs would persuade the Japanese to call it quits. History records that the president guessed correctly. But every August there are services of mourning in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, filled with accusations that the United States is guilty of a war crime for the bombings. If history is a guide, there will also be assertions and articles to the effect that just a hint from President Truman that the Japanese emperor could stay on his throne would have brought the war to an end in a matter of days.

The butcher's bill for the war in the Pacific was totaled up on August 15, 1945, when Japan's surrender was announced. That's fact. Any suggestion that the Japanese might have surrendered in mid-August without either an invasion or the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the sixth and ninth is speculation.

What would have happened had the Allies meeting in Potsdam, Germany sent word to Japan that Hirohito would stay on the throne if the Japanese surrendered? The Japanese gave no hint they would go that far. Rather, they asked the Soviet Union, still officially neutral, to communicate to the Allies that Japan would accept the Potsdam Declaration under four conditions. The first was possible: the Imperial Institution would continue. The other conditions were intolerable: The Japanese army would not be disarmed by the Allied armies. Only Japanese courts and Japanese law would govern any war crimes trials. The final Japanese condition was that their country would not be occupied except for a token presence.

It took eight days and a second atomic bombing to get from bombing Hiroshima to surrender.

If those were the only terms on which Japan would accept the militarily inevitable, the war would need to continue long enough to convince even the die hards of the Army and Navy high commands that further resistance was suicide.

Truman's choice is often framed as "the Bomb or the Invasion," Operation Olympic/Coronet. Not so; the choice was between the bombs, which might force an end to the war in days, and all other scenarios. The other means to an end of the war were cruel. A blockade would starve the country. The Soviet invasion of Manchuria and Korea would result in Stalin's planned occupation of Hokkaido. U.S. conventional bombing of Japanese cities would continue until the Army Air Forces literally ran out of targets. The rail network used to distribute food would be further wrecked. And, of course, Operation Olympic, the invasion of Kyushu might actually be needed, putting millions of Japanese and Americans at risk.

What every alternative to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki has in common is the long time before its effects would crush Japan's will to continue the battle.

The maritime blockade of the home islands was in effect, and had cut the flow of food from farms in Korea, on Hokkaido, and in Northern Honshu to the Japanese people. Almost all stocks of fuel and minerals were sunk before they reached Japanese ports, leaving the Army and Navy at a standstill.

Food shortages were taking effect. When the U.S. occupation began, the Tokyo food ration was down to 900 calories a day, not quite the 600 calorie level in a Nazi concentration camp, but bad enough that the weak and elderly were already dying. Some in the Imperial government had predicted food riots and civil war by December. But not in August, or September.

B-29 bombing raids were destroying one Japanese city every week. Had the war gone on for another month, four or more cities would have been burned to the ground. Roughly one Hiroshima a week. But by August the Japanese population and government had become accustomed to relatively slow destruction; there was time to recover somewhat between raids, to

extinguish some fires, evacuate some people, and set up some kind of temporary shelter. This reprieve blunted the shock of the continuing raids.

As July turned into August, the situation required shock therapy. The slow decline of the Japanese fortunes had to be recast by a sudden and catastrophic event. Something was needed to change the perception in Tokyo that fighting on to satisfy some code of honor and loyalty to the emperor was preferable to peace.

The Allies desperately wanted to avoid invading Japan. Our anticipated death toll was north of 100,000 Allied soldiers and sailors, and in fact every Purple Heart medal actually awarded through the Persian Gulf War came from the never-needed stock ordered for the invasion of Kyushu. The battle for Okinawa showed the Allies that Japan would struggle until the last civilian was killed.

The destruction of Hiroshima should have brought an immediate Japanese surrender, but it did not. Three days later Nagasaki was obliterated. It was a strategic city, a major port and home to the great shipyard where the Musashi, one of the largest battleships in history, was built. It had other factories making steel, arms, ordnance and electrical equipment. As at Hiroshima, small machine shops essential to the large factories were embedded in the surrounding neighborhoods where the workers lived.

If the destruction of Nagasaki didn't end the war, a third atomic bomb was ready for shipment to the Pacific Theater for use on the nineteenth of August. Truman ordered a halt to the shipment, a hiatus to see what the Japanese would do. Conventional bombing was also interrupted. More nuclear weapons were being built at a rate of at least three bombs a month. If Olympic had faltered, several would have been available for use in November.

Nagasaki gave rise to urgent meetings with the emperor in attendance and, most extraordinarily, intervening. On the morning of August 10 Japan notified the Allied governments that it would accept the Potsdam terms with "the understanding that the said declaration does not comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler." After accepting additional points demanded by the West, in particular a requirement that the emperor be subordinate to General Douglas MacArthur, the Japanese civilian government surrendered.

But the Japanese military continued to fight, so conventional strategic bombing resumed on August 14. Still more meetings took place in the Imperial Palace. Late on the evening of the fourteenth a weeping Hirohito ordered an end. The next day, and despite threats of a coup by the Army, the Japanese people heard the voice of their emperor announcing the nation's capitulation. Hirohito explained that the "enemy has begun to employ a new and most cruel bomb." The Soviet invasion did not rate a mention.

The butcher's account was marked "Closed."

No more Americans, Britons or Japanese would lose their lives in a continuing battle. It took eight days and a second atomic bombing to get from bombing Hiroshima to surrender. How much longer would it have taken for a continuing conventional war to have convinced the

Japanese government to quit? We can never know, but we do know this: the Pacific war did not continue for an additional day or week or month.

From all the alternatives facing him, President Truman chose the right one.

A disclosure: my father was a U.S. Navy Seabee officer training for Operation Olympic. His orders were canceled.

Peter D. Zimmerman, Contributor



QUIZ

No Past, No Future

- 1. What are statue destroyers, in effect, saying with their actions?**
 - a. that the quality of the artwork is not good enough
 - b. that the inspiration worked, job done, we are ready to move on together
 - c. that people in history should have known what we know.
 - d. that there are better ways to honor great historical figures

- 2. The U.S. education system believes that the point of history is to judge it based on the ill-defined concept of _____.**
 - a. social justice
 - b. equity
 - c. tolerance
 - d. all of the above

- 3. The 1619 Project, started by The New York Times and now in schools everywhere, seeks to portray America as exceptional only in one respect: exceptionally bad.**
 - a. True
 - b. False

- 4. How does a healthy, humane, and truly liberal mind view history?**
 - a. as a playpen for moral judgment
 - b. as a reality that people in the past acted best on the information they had
 - c. as a never-ending dichotomy between oppressors and those being oppressed
 - d. as narrowly as possible

- 5. President Truman made a decision about dropping atomic weapons on Japan or not based on _____.**
 - a. pure bigotry
 - b. the information he had at the time
 - c. his narcissistic need to have history view him as a hero
 - d. white privilege



QUIZ: ANSWER KEY

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