## **DUE April 14 (10 pts) Instructions:** Read the following documents about the dropping of the atomic bombs on Japan during WWII. Write a ½ to 1 page essay discussing the use of the Bomb to end WWII. Who presents the most convincing argument? You can reference more than 1 document if you feel that they support one another’s arguments. See Chapter 35 in *The American Pageant* for WWII content.

**Document 1**

**Harry S. Truman on the Bombing of Hiroshima, 1945**

From Harry S. Truman, Memoirs. Garden City, New York,: Doubleday, 1955, 419-423.

A month before the test explosion of the atomic bomb the serve Secretaries and the Joint Chiefs of Staff had laid their detailed plans for the defeat of Japan before me for approval….

The Army plan envisaged an amphibious landing in the fall of 1945 on the island of Kyusha, the southernmost of the Japanese home islands….

The first landing would then be followed approximately four months later by a second great invasion, which would be carried out by our Eighth and Tenth Armies, followed by the First Army transferred from Europe, all of which would go ashore in the Kanto plans area near Tokyo. In all, it had been estimated that it would require until the late fall of 1946 to bring Japan to her knees.

This was a formidable conception, and all of us realized fully that the fighting would be fierce and the losses heavy….

It was their [the advisory committee] 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 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 committees 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 proposes, such as over a deserted island, could be likely to bring the war to an end. It had to be used against an enemy target.

The final decision of where and when to use the atomic bomb was up to me. Let there be no mistake about it. I regarded the bomb as a military weapon and never had any doubt that it should be used. The top military advisors 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.

In deciding to use this bomb I wanted to make sure that it would be used as a weapon of war in the manner prescribed by the laws of war. That meant that I wanted it dropped as nearly as possibly upon a war production center of prime military importance.

Stimson’s staff had prepared a list of cities in Japan that might serve as targets. Kyoto, though favored by General Arnold as a center of military activity, was eliminated when Secretary [of War Henry] Stimson pointed out that it was a cultural and religious shrine of the Japanese.

Four cities were finally recommended as targets: Hiroshima, Kokura, Niigata, and Nagasaki. They were listed in that order as targets for the first attack. The order of selection was in accordance with the military importance of these cities, but allowance would be given for weather conditions at the time of the bombing….

My statements on the atomic bomb, which had been released in Washington by Stimson, read in part as follows:

“We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war…”

**Document 2**

**Thank God for the Atom Bomb**

Excerpt from a 1981 essay by Paul Fussell (WWII veteran) in *A Historical Reader: The Atomic Bomb*

Writing on the forty-second anniversary of the atom-bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, I want to consider something suggested by the long debate the ethics, if any, of that ghastly affair. Namely, the importance of experience, sheer vulgar experience, in influencing, in not determining, one’s views about use of the atom bomb.

The experience I’m talking about is having to come to grips, face to face, with an enemy who designs your death. The experience is common to those in the marines and the infantry and even the line navy, to those, in short, who fought the Second World War mindful always that their mission was, as they were repeatedly assured, “to close with the enemy and destroy him.” *Destroy,* notice: not hurt, frighten, drive away, or capture. I think there’s something to be learned about that war, as well as about tendency of historical memory unwittingly to resolve ambiguity and generally clean up the premises, by considering the way testimonies emanating from real war experience tend to complicate attitudes about the most cruel ending of that cruel war….

Former Pfc. E.B. Sledge, author of the splendid memoir *With the Old Breed of Peleliu and Okinawa*, noticed at the time that the fighting grew “more vicious the closer we got to Japan,” with the carnage of Iwo Jima and Okinawa worse than what had gone before. He points out that

What we had experienced in fighting the Japs (pardon the expression) on Peleliu and Okinawa caused us to formulate some very definite opinions that the invasion… would be a ghastly bloodletting…. It would shock the American public and the world. [Every Japanese] soldier, civilian, woman, and child would fight to the death with whatever weapons they had, rifle, grenade, or bamboo spear.

The Japanese pre-invasion patriotic song, “One Hundred Million Souls for the Emperor,” says Sledge, “meant just that.” Universal national kamikaze was the point…. The marines were told, [Sledge] recalls, that

due to the strong beach defenses, caves, tunnels, and numerous Jap suicide torpedo boats and manned mines, few Marines in the first five assault waves would get ashore alive….We viewed the invasion with complete resignation that we would be killed—either on the beach or inland.

…When the *Enola Gay* dropped its package, “There were cheers,” says John Toland…. Down on the ground the reaction of Sledge’s marine buddies when they heard the news was more solemn and complicated. They heard about the end of the war

With quiet disbelief coupled with an indescribable sense of relief. We though the Japanese would never surrender. Many refused to believe it… Sitting in stunned silence we remembered our dead. So many dead. So many maimed.

**Document 3**

**A Petition to the President of the United States**

By The Atomic Scientists (1945) to President Truman

…Until recently we have had to feat that the United States might be attacked by atomic bombs during this war and that her only defense might line in a counterattack by the same means. Today, with the defeat of German, this danger is averted and we feel impelled to what follows:

The war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified, at least not until the terms which will be imposed after the war on Japan were made public in detail and Japan were given an opportunity to surrender.

…if Japan still refused to surrender our nation might then, in certain circumstances, find itself forced to resort to the use of atomic bombs. Such a step… ought not be made at any times without seriously considering the moral responsibilities which are involved.

…a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for the purposes of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

**Document 4**

**Hiroshima: Historians Reassess**

By Gar Alperovitz in *A Historical Reader: The Atomic Bomb*

Whether the use of the atomic bomb was in fact necessary is, of course, a different question from whether it was believed to be necessary at the time. [J. Samuel Walker, chief historian of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission] summary of the expert literature is important because it underscores the availability of the alternatives to using the bomb, and because it documents that “Truman and his advisers knew” of the alternatives.

Several major strands of evidence have pushed many specialists in the direction of this startling conclusion. The United States had long since broken the enemy codes, and the president was informed of all important Japanese cable traffic. A critical message of July 12, 1945—just before Potsdam—showed that the Japanese emperor himself had decided to intervene to attempt to end the war. In his private journal, Truman bluntly characterized this message as the “telegram from [the] Jap Emperor asking for peace.”

Other intercepted messages suggested that the main obstacle to peace was the continued Allied demand for unconditional surrender….

The [Joint Intelligence Committee] pointed out …that a Soviet decision to join with the United States and Great Britain would have enormous force and would dramatically alter the equation: “The entry of the USSR into the war would, together with the foregoing factors, convince most Japanese at once of the inevitability of complete defeat.”

By mid-June, Marshall advised, Truman directly that “the impact of Russian entry [into the war] of the already hopeless Japanese may well be the decisive action levering them into capitulation at the time of shortly thereafter if we land in Japan.”…

It is… obvious that is assurances for the emperor [safety] were put forward together with the Soviet attack, the likelihood of an early Japanese surrender would be even greater…. Once “the Japanese people, as well as their leaders, were persuaded both that absolute defeat was inevitable and that unconditional surrender did not imply national annihilation, surrender might follow fairly quickly.”