

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum World War II: The Pacific

Curriculum Focus

World History, U.S. History

Grade level

10-12

Duration

One or two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- research in depth the key events of World War II in the Pacific; and
- debate whether dropping the nuclear bomb was the best way to end the war.

Materials

- Paper and pencils
- Computer with Internet access
- Print resources about World War II in the Pacific (helpful, but not required)

Procedures

1. Find out what students know about World War II in the Pacific. Ask if they have any relatives who fought in the Pacific. If so, ask them to recount any relevant stories they may have heard. After a brief discussion, tell students that the fighting in the Pacific was very brutal and difficult for the United States and its Allies.
2. Show a few segments from the videotape. Watching scenes from pivotal battles and listening to the American veterans speak will help students begin to understand how difficult an experience this part of World War II was.
3. Ask students if they know how the war in the Pacific ended. Then tell them that the United States dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Explain to students that they are going to debate whether the bombing was necessary and the best way to end the war.
4. Divide students into two groups. One group will take the position that dropping the bomb was the best way to end the war. The second group will take the opposing position.
5. Give students enough time in class to learn more about the war in the Pacific. The Web sites below have information about key battles, as well as the thoughts of respected Americans. Students should consider the world view of the Japanese (they thought of themselves as samurai, or warriors), the Battle in Malaya and

the Death March of Bataan, as well as the internment of Japanese-Americans and the Battle of Midway. As students do their research, tell them that the debate question is difficult and has no clear-cut answers. Remind them to read all material critically and thoughtfully.

<http://www.powtaiwan.org/singapore.html>

<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/Quarters/6991/usmc.htm>

http://home.pacbell.net/fbaldie/In_Retrospect.html

<http://www.doug-long.com/hiroshim.htm>

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/macarthur/sfeature/bataan_capture.html

http://www.britain-at-war.org.uk/Malaya_and_Singapore/body_index.htm

6. After students have completed their research, schedule a time to hold the debate. Make sure each side has written an opening argument and is prepared to ask the opponents questions, and to give a rebuttal at the end.
7. Following the debate, discuss with students their thoughts about the event. Did most students think that dropping the bomb was the best solution? If so, why? How do they feel about the fallout the Japanese suffered? Do they believe that there are times when the ends justify the means? Conclude by telling students that these are important questions they will have to consider as they assume leadership roles as adults.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students completed their research carefully and thoroughly, actively participated in the debate, and actively engaged in a meaningful discussion about the moral implications of this issue.

2 points: Students completed their research, participated somewhat in the debate, and engaged in a meaningful discussion about the moral implications of this issue.

1 point: Students did not complete their research, participated minimally in the debate, and did not engage in a meaningful discussion about the moral implications of this issue.

Vocabulary

Bataan Death March

Definition: After a major battle between the Allies and the Japanese that took place in the Philippines in May 1942, the Allies surrendered and were made to march five to ten days, or about 100 kilometers.

Context: The Bataan Death March and the imprisonment of the soldiers at Camp O'Donnell resulted in 3,000 American deaths.

Battle of Malaya

Definition: A battle that took place in Singapore in February 1942 and resulted in a major defeat for the British army

Context: The British defeat at the Battle of Malaya was due to a shortage of ammunition, food, and supplies, as well as inadequate air support.

Battle of Midway

Definition: A major victory for the Allies that took place on Midway Island June 4-6, 1942

Context: By cracking Japan's naval code and learning about the planned invasion of Midway Island, the Allies achieved their first victory over Japan.

Guadalcanal

Definition: A six-month campaign on the island of Guadalcanal in the South Pacific that was an attempt to stop Japanese expansion in the South Pacific

Context: The Guadalcanal campaign lasted from November 1943 to March 1944 and resulted in the defeat of the Japanese.

Hiroshima

Definition: The site of the first nuclear attack in the history of warfare; an atomic bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945.

Context: The Allies demanded unconditional surrender on the part of the Japanese, who refused, so the Americans dropped a nuclear bomb on the city of Hiroshima.

Nagasaki

Definition: The site of the second nuclear attack on Japan, on August 9, 1945.

Context: While War Minister Anami refused to surrender, Emperor Hirohito did so after the attack on Nagasaki.

Academic Standards

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- VI. Power, Authority, and Governance
- IX. Global Connections
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Credit

Marilyn Fenichel, education writer and editor