Name: _____ Period: _____ Date: _____

U.S. History & Government 11R Mr. Gallucci

THE DECISION TO DROP THE BOMB

Directions: *Read the following quotations viewing the bombing of Hiroshima from various perspectives. Then read the historical account of the bombing that follows the quotations.*

> *"Everything in sight which can be called a building is crushed to the ground and sending out flames. People who are burned so badly that the skin of their bodies is peeling off in red strips are raising shrieking cries that sound as though the victims would die the next minute. There are even some people who are already dead. The street is so covered with dead people and burned people stretched out and groaning, and with fallen houses and things, that we can't get through."*
>
> - From a school composition written by a Japanese boy who lived through the Hiroshima blast

> *"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."*
>
> - Excerpted from Memoirs by Harry S Truman: Years of Decision

> *"My own feeling was that in being the first to use it, we had adopted an ethical standard common to the barbarians of the Dark Ages. I was not taught to make war in that fashion and wars cannot be won by destroying women and children."*
>
> - Admiral William D. Leahy, Chief of Staff, to President Harry S Truman

> *"Listen Tom, if I'm going to kill 100,000 people, I'm not going to do it on verbal orders. I want a piece of paper."*
>
> - General Carl Spaatz to Acting Chief of Staff General Thomas T. Handy, July 1945

> *"Thank you for being upset about me. I am spending very miserable days since the beginning of January. I feel as if my whole body is rotting away from my internal organs. As time goes by, I feel weaker and weaker. I feel as if I am being cooked alive. My condition is becoming worse day by day and I'm unable to work….To suffer with a disease which has no cure is like drinking poison every day and waiting for my life to end."*
>
> - Fumio Nakamura, a Hiroshima survivor in a letter written before his death in 1958

When President Franklin Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, Germany was close to defeat but Japan was still offering strong resistance to American forces in the Pacific Ocean. Germany surrendered unconditionally four weeks later, while President Harry Truman was informed for the first time that the United States was on the verge of producing a new weapon of unprecedented destructive force-the world's first atomic bomb. An interim Committee of American officials and scientists unanimously recommended on June 1 that this bomb be used against Japan as soon as possible.

It was estimated that an invasion of Japan would have cost around a million American casualties. Japan still possessed an army of two million, and the recent American invasion of Okinawa had resulted in an unusually high casualty rate of 35 percent, caused in part by the new Japanese tactic of using kamikaze, or suicide, planes. Then too, American bombing raids such as the one on Tokyo March 9-10 were creating firestorms costing upwards of one hundred thousand lives.

On the other hand, many American scientists were still uneasy about the morality of actually using this terrible new power. Besides the immediate loss of tens of thousands of lives, there would be largely unpredictable side effects caused by radiation. Some believed that a warning or a demonstration should precede the actual use of the weapon. Others thought that the bomb was really being used in order to advance America's position against Russia in the postwar world.

During the Potsdam Conference with other Allied leaders in Germany, Truman was informed that the atomic bomb had been successfully tested in New Mexico on July 16.

Acting with the leaders of Britain and China, he issued a formal demand that Japan surrender unconditionally, but made no mention of the new weapon. This Potsdam declaration was formally rejected by Japan three days later.

1) Was President Truman justified in setting the precedent of using atomic weapons in order to hasten the end of World War II? Explain your answer thoroughly.

2) Rank order the following interests which should have had a stake in Truman's decision to drop the atomic bomb. Mark as "1" the one that Truman should have given the most weight in making his choice and the others in descending order of importance from 2-7.

_____ Japanese civilians

_____ American allies

_____ American soldiers

_____ American scientists

_____ Pentagon officials

_____ State Department

_____ Future generations

3) Based on your rankings, did your answer to question 1 change? Explain your answer.