

Rob Fetters  
Social Studies Teacher  
Mount Vernon High School  
[rfetters@mt-vernon.k12.oh.us](mailto:rfetters@mt-vernon.k12.oh.us)

Purpose:

Students will be able to understand the experiences of people in Hiroshima, Japan, as a result of the US bombing.

Essential Questions:

1. What happened to the people of Hiroshima?
2. What is the difference between soldiers and civilians?
3. Does this difference impact our perception of the bombing? How? Why or why not?

Rationale:

This lesson exposes students to the impact of bombing on Japanese people.

Materials:

*Hiroshima* by John Hersey (1946).

See also: *Hiroshima Surgeon* by Tomin Harada (1983).

*The Fate of the Earth* by Jonathan Schell (1982).

*Black Rain* by Masuji Ibuse (1969).

*One Thousand Paper Cranes* by Takayuki Ishii (1997).

*Sadako* by Eleanor Coerr (1977).

*Shin's Tricycle* by Tatsuharu Kodama (1992).

Activities: (high school social studies target)

Have students read and highlight pages 34 - 45 in John Hersey's *Hiroshima* for homework. Divide students into six groups (of four or five students per group) at random as they enter the room. Another option is to place them in groups in advance with consideration of multiple intelligences, gender, and cultural diversity within each group and show this on an overhead as students enter the classroom. Assign each group two specific pages to list who (people) and what (verbs) appear on those pages.

For example, the first group's "who" list might begin on page 34 with "families, people, schoolgirls, Dr. Sasaki, wounded, Miss Sasaki" and their "what" list could include "vomiting, crept, trampling, suffocating, wept, cried, wounded, begged, wiping, daubing, winding, lay unconscious, pain." After groups have created their lists, ask students to participate in a five minute sustained silent writing (SSW): "Pick a person from your 'who list' and step into their footprints. Become them. Write down what you see, hear, taste, smell, and feel (physical or emotional). Use ideas from your 'what list' to help you. You are not limited by this list. Be creative and school appropriate." Then students share with others in their group by either summarizing or reading what they wrote. Together they will create a diary entry of one person combining ideas from each SSW experience. Write these neatly and sizably on a poster or butcher paper to put up in the hall.

For homework, find or draw school appropriate pictures related to what people experienced at Hiroshima to put in the hall with the group's diary entry.

The next day's SSW is "What is the difference between civilians and soldiers? Does this difference impact our perception of the bombing? How? Why or why not?" The discussion following the SSW can examine why the United States bombed Hiroshima and whether the United States should be praised or condemned for doing it. Expect students to mention events such as Pearl Harbor and September 11<sup>th</sup>, as well as Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

#### Assessment:

Grade the poster and SSWs based upon completeness, neatness, creativity, and understanding of the reading.

#### Grade Adaptation:

The target participants of this lesson are high school social studies students. For elementary and middle school students, consider using a children's literature book to discuss the bombing of Japan instead of Hersey's. These could include *Sadako* or *One Thousand Paper Cranes* or *Shin's Tricycle*. Another possible children's book about consequences of bombing in Japan is *Faithful Elephants*. Although not about Hiroshima, this book examines the consequences of the war on zoo animals. Younger students could incorporate more art and less writing.