

PACIFIC WAR: ESSAY PROMPTS

1. In 1945, with the war ending, President Truman faced an awful dilemma: Japan refused to surrender even though there was no hope for a Japanese victory. Hoping to bring about a swift end to the war, Truman authorized the use of atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These terrible weapons killed between 100,000 and 200,000 people- mostly civilians. However, Truman's other option, an invasion of mainland Japan, was forecast to cost as many as a million casualties, which would have been primarily military. Was President Truman justified in his use of the atomic bombs? Why or why not?
2. Before the Japanese Attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt had sanctioned the Japanese Empire, withdrawing their access to American oil, steel, rubber, and other materials crucial to their war effort in China. These sanctions, levied after Japanese atrocities and advancements into French Indochina, are often cited by historians as the spark that lit the fuse of Japanese expansion from 1941-1942. Should President Roosevelt have sanctioned the Japanese Empire? If yes, did the impact of those sanctions outweigh the resulting war with Japan? If no, how should the United States have responded to Japanese aggression and war crimes?
3. Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States launched unrestricted submarine warfare against the Japanese. Only 24 years earlier the United States had entered the First World War on the side of the Allies, citing Germany's use of unrestricted submarine warfare on the Americans. What changed between the World Wars that made the American people so willing to use these tactics against the Japanese? Was the United States justified in their use of these tactics?
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