

WWII: Hiroshima, Japan

by ReadWorks



World War II ended on May 17, 1945. On that day, Germany's Nazi forces finally surrendered to America and its allies. However, one of Germany's allies refused to stop fighting. Despite repeated demands that it surrender, Japan continued to battle America and its allies.

Harry S. Truman, America's president at the time, struggled with what to do. Japan was our enemy. It had attacked an American naval base at Pearl Harbor, which made Americans very angry. Many Americans felt the Japanese had to be stopped. Truman decided to do something drastic. He made one of the biggest decisions in history. He ordered the use of a new American weapon known as an atomic bomb. The bomb was the deadliest weapon ever made. It had been tested but never used. Scientists believed it could destroy an entire town and cause illness among survivors for years to come.

On August 6, 1945, an American airplane dropped the first atomic bomb used in warfare on an important Japanese military town named Hiroshima. A second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, Japan on August 9. Both Hiroshima and Nagasaki were devastated. The bombs killed from 110,000 to 140,000 people. They destroyed large areas of the two cities-about 2.5 square miles in Nagasaki and 5 square miles in Hiroshima. The bombs also released hazardous chemicals into the air, which remained in the atmosphere for some time. The air made people very sick. Thousands more died because of the exposure to these harmful, cancer-causing chemicals.

The terrible destruction caused by the bombs led Japan to surrender on September 2, 1945. Japan's surrender meant the war was over. Today in Hiroshima, Peace Memorial Park sits where the bomb was dropped. Every year on August 6, people come to the park to remember those who were lost and to pray for peace.