The Atomic Bomb Exhibit: Fun at the Museum

Teaching Guide

Active Learning Initiative
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Purpose of the Game

The purpose of The Atomic Bomb Exhibit: Fun at the Museum is for students to explore historical memory and its use by the general public. Specifically, students will learn about the controversy surrounding the dropping of the Atomic Bomb on Japan in 1945 and how such a historical event can be used to achieve multiple purposes in the present.

Classroom Activities

The Dropping of the Atomic Bomb Exhibit requires a minimum of two class days to play. We will be playing the case study over 3 class periods, with a final reflective paper due the following week (from March 23 to April 17).

There are six roles in the case study that reflect a pro-atomic bomb stand to an anti-atomic bomb stand. Students work for a “boss” who has a particular goal for the exhibit.

Boss Profiles:

1. Mark Davis is the director of the Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum. He is a great historian, and his life revolves around his museum. His goal is to produce a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. He wants visitors to leave the exhibit thinking about the consequences that the atomic bomb left on Japan. However, he also wants this exhibit to please the United States veterans. Since Mark’s goal is to accommodate two opposing groups, he must create an unbiased exhibit.

2. John Allen is the executive director of the Air Force Association. He fought in the Vietnam War, but he is too young to have fought in World War II. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. He is well-educated in the facts that surround the use of atomic bombs and the consequences they had on Japan. However, his sole
objective is to create an exhibit that will shine light on the Air Force Association. For this reason, John will take a strong pro-atomic bomb stance.

3. Arthur Lemmings is a World War II veteran and the director of the American Legion, a patriotic veterans’ organization chartered by the U.S. Congress. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. The American Legion often works closely with members of the U.S. Congress, so Arthur has to be sure that his exhibit will please both the U.S. military and Congress. His exhibit will justify the use of the atomic bombs, but it should do so in a soft way as to not embarrass the U.S. Congress in any way. For these reasons, Arthur must create an exhibit that takes a pro-atomic bomb stance.

4. Takashi Mori is a museum curator in Nagasaki, Japan. He was only a small child when the atomic bomb hit his city, killing his father and sister. Throughout the years, Takashi has been collecting artifacts from Nagasaki and Hiroshima that relate to the atomic bombings. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. His goal is to produce an exhibit that shows how cruel and unjustified it is to use the atomic bombs. Therefore, Takashi must create an exhibit that takes a strong anti-atomic bomb stance.

5. Greg Thompson is a professor of U.S. military history at Yale University. He has never been a part of the U.S. military, but his father was a colonel in the Air Force. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II
exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. Greg has studied this topic for years, and he believes that the droppings of the atomic bombs were very unnecessary. As a professional historian, he wants his exhibit to present the facts, but he does not want to totally disgrace his country or his father. Therefore, Greg must construct and exhibit that takes an anti-atomic bomb stance.

6. Jack Connors graduated from the Air Force Academy and is currently a curator in charge of military aviation at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. Jack will have to deal with members of U.S. veterans groups, historians, Congress, media personnel, and citizens of both America and Japan. He will attempt to produce an exhibit that will satisfy as many groups as he can. Therefore, Jack must create an exhibit that takes a pro-atomic bomb stance but one that is also sympathetic to the Japanese.

Assign 2 to 3 students to each group profile.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class/Out of class activity</th>
<th>Instructor Tasks</th>
<th>Student In-class Activities</th>
<th>Students work outside of class</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Class #1</strong>&lt;br&gt;(week of March 23)</td>
<td>The instructor assigns the students to groups and explains the nature of the game. <strong>2 to 3 students per group.</strong></td>
<td>Instructor introduces the game and gives a brief 10 to 15 minute lecture about the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. The instructor assigns the students to a group. Instructor discusses the group’s objectives. Answers questions. &lt;br&gt;1. Must create an exhibit &lt;br&gt;2. Must write a justification of why item is included in exhibit for EVERY item. So if they include 9 items, they will have 9 item justifications. Need to put every group member’s name at the top of every item justification. &lt;br&gt;3. Need to turn in a sheet with the names of the group members and what role they played in preparing the exhibit and item justifications.</td>
<td>Students begin moving through the online game interface, preparing their exhibits. Due before the next class: 3 posts on the discussion board. Choose items you want the group to use and write a justification for the use of each item.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of Class</strong>&lt;br&gt;(during week of March 23)</td>
<td>Move students into the online discussion area. Place them in the correct roles online. Assist students; answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students work independently to prepare their exhibits.</td>
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<td><strong>Class #2</strong> (week of March 30)</td>
<td>Facilitate in-class group work and organization. Instructor gives students in-class time to organize and prepare their exhibits.</td>
<td>Students have in-class time to organize and outline their exhibit.</td>
<td>Students preparing their exhibits for in-class presentation during the next class period. Students must choose between 9 and 12 items to exhibit during the next class period. Should have a mix of video, images, and documents. May present them in any way that they want—hard copies, through powerpoint, or other electric media, etc. Due before next class period: Exhibit, plus a 250 word justification for each item included in the exhibit. Will turn in the justifications in-class as hard-copies.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Out-of-class (week of March 30)</td>
<td>Assist students; answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students preparing their exhibits (can be as creative as they would like) and writing their 250 word justifications (a 250 word justification for EACH item).</td>
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<td><strong>Class #3</strong></td>
<td>Student Exhibit. Instructor should encourage the class to ask questions of the exhibitors.</td>
<td>Student exhibit. Students ask questions of the exhibitors. Students turn in HARD-COPY of the item justifications. Should have between 9 to 12 item justifications.</td>
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<td>(week of April 6)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Out-of-class</strong></td>
<td>Assist students; answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Students complete final assignment: Write a 250 to 500 word reflective paper that describes their opinion on the dropping of the atomic bomb. Discuss how memory of past events—like the dropping of the bomb—can be used for specific agendas in the present.</td>
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<td><strong>Class #4</strong> (week of April 13)</td>
<td>Instructor takes back class. Holds postmortem. Class has discussion about what happened when the bombs were dropped. Discuss the ways in which historical memory can be used by different people and groups for different things.</td>
<td>Discuss the case with the instructor.</td>
<td>Final reflective papers due on Discussion board on April 13</td>
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   b. Each group member must post item choices, plus their justifications.
   c. Each person must post a minimum of 3 times in preparation for putting together your group’s exhibit.

2. To do during weeks of March 23 and March 30:
   a. Post your item choices/justifications online on the discussion board.
   b. Create your exhibit for showing in-class.
   c. Write the justifications to accompany each exhibit item.

3. Due at time of exhibit (Group A/D, April 6; Group B/E, April 8, Group C/F, April 10):
   a. Present your exhibit to the class.
   b. Turn in your item justifications. A justification must be written for each item included. Each item justification must be 250 words long, typed, and double-spaced. Turn this in as a hard-copy to your class facilitator. Please include the names of every group member on the top of the first justification—and include the name of your “boss.”

4. Due on the Discussion board (Group A/D, April 13, Group B/E, April 15, Group C/F, April 17):
   a. Write a 250 to 500 word reflective paper that describes your opinion on the dropping of the atomic bomb. Discuss how memory of past events—like the dropping of the bomb—can be used for specific agendas in the present.

Background Information (Lecture Material)

The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki represent the only nuclear attacks made thus far. The United States dropped the bombs against the Empire of Japan at the executive order of U.S. President Harry S. Truman on August 6 and 9, 1945. After six months of intense fire-bombing of 67 other Japanese cities, the nuclear weapon "Little Boy" was dropped on the city of Hiroshima on Monday, August 6, 1945, followed three days later by the detonation of the "Fat Man" on Nagasaki.
The bombs killed as many as 140,000 people in Hiroshima and 80,000 in Nagasaki by the end of 1945, roughly half of whom died on the days of the bombings. Since then, thousands more have died from injuries or illness attributed to exposure to radiation released by the bombs. In both cities, the overwhelming majority of the dead were civilians.

On August 15, six days after the detonation over Nagasaki, Japan surrendered to the Allied Powers, signing the Instrument of Surrender on September 2, officially ending the Pacific War and World War II.

Learn more about the bombings and see photographs at:
http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB162/index.htm

Excerpt about historical memory from the International Studies Association:

“History is our repository of information about the past, and, as such, offers explanations about the present. As a repository it has the special capacity to reveal the hidden facts of injustice. More indirectly, history is critical to the creation of ethnic groups and nations, given that shared past experience, or the perception of shared past experience, is the strongest rationale for the existence of the group. In addition, history texts, monuments, museums and other forms of public history provide a sense of stability and tradition that assist the legitimation of the existing regime. Beyond their role in group creation and legitimation, history and memory provide material for group myths that are a source of social cohesion because they supply operational codes and a system of ethics. Finally, history and memory are the containers for grievance. If grievances are not addressed, they can be a powerful tool of mobilization by political leaders.

The capacity of historical memory to coalesce politicized groups cannot be understood fully without recognizing that simultaneously, historical memories play several critical roles in the lives of individuals. History is a way of recording and remembering traumas of past generations that have an emotional or physiological impact, and possibly a material impact, on their descendants. Trauma that has affected groups is repeatedly relived by the group, contributing to group identity while creating an ongoing sense of victimization. Because of the individual’s biological dependence on the group that supports it, the individual will identify with the group in order to receive what is offered to group members, absorbing cultural elements and a shared sense of the past. In addition, in the process of developing a consistent sense of self, people use historical material to select mental constructs by which to connect inner and outer experience.

For all the above reasons, historical memories are deeply rooted in a society and are tenacious. Introducing a different history means challenging psychological and sociological patterns that are of long duration. The instrumental purposes historical memories serve society suggest that contentious history cannot be separated from politics and power relations. To the degree that the political life of a society remains contested, historical memory will be intertwined with that contestation. And yet the need to address the problem of contentious, chauvinist history is crucial for post-conflict reconstruction and the prevention of future conflict.
Devotion to “the truth” is a core aspect of a society’s dedication to justice, even if all acknowledge the difficulties in reaching “the truth”. Establishing a basis of historical truth in a society places some limit on the possibilities for chauvinist leaders to distort the truth for political ends. A culture of historical debate makes it more likely that past injustices will be brought to light and will be addressed. Acknowledgement of the traumas of the past are a first step in mourning and are essential for individuals and the society as a whole to find healing and move forward. All these processes will assist in the development of a new narrative. At the same time, a rethinking of the past can enable intercultural understanding by helping groups remove their negative stereotypes and accept the other.”

The Post-Mortem Class

During the final class period devoted to the Atomic Bomb case study, the instructor should resume control. A reflection session should follow where the instructor anchors the case in the historical context. This is an opportunity to talk about historical memory and how memory is manipulated by people in the present to serve present and future goals/needs. This conversation should guide students toward understanding the interpretive nature of history as a discipline and instill an awareness of historical causation and create greater empathy toward peoples of another time.

Students should be allowed time to discuss their roles during the reflective session and talk about how their personal beliefs may have conflicted with the objectives that they were asked to achieve within the case study.

The reflective session should be a casual time for students who will need to transition out of their roles.

Some Possible Topics to Discuss in the Post-Mortem Class

- The dropping of the atomic bombs
- The use of atomic weapons
- Historical memory
- The use of history to support current or future political and social agendas

The Facilitator’s Role

The facilitator will set-up the game by dividing the students into roles and providing a mini-lecture to ground the game in the historical period, providing background and context for the students.
The facilitator will establish the game rules (assignments, due dates, discussion boards) and assist the students in preparing for the in-class session. The instructor may also want to allow some in-class time for students to organize.

Once the exhibit has finished, the facilitator will need to hold a reflection session. During this time, the instructor will brief the students about what actually happened in the past and illustrate how the students’ decisions and arguments were different from the ones actually made. The instructor should encourage students to talk about their roles and the parts that they played, make the “larger” connections to the broad scope of United States History, and discuss how their engagement in the simulation illustrates the interpretive nature of the discipline. Most students find it difficult to understand that History is not a series of names, dates, or “right” answers. The reflective session provides a perfect opportunity for the instructor to get into this higher-order thinking element.

Additionally, the students will be more deeply engaged with this material than they would be in a lecture class. The instructor may find that students want to talk more outside of class or email more frequently. The instructor will likely not have the answer to all the questions posed and a simple “let’s find out” will prove educational for all involved.

Facilitators in the role-playing simulations are creating the space their students need to learn effectively. They should be reassuring and available to answer a variety of questions.
The Atomic Bomb Exhibit

Background

The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, bringing an end to World War II. The bomb droppings continue to be controversial. Some people believe that the United States should never have dropped the bombs while others argue that the U.S. government did the right thing in bringing the war to a rapid conclusion.

Your assignment

You are charged with creating an exhibit about the dropping of the atomic bomb for your boss. You have a specific agenda—a “story” about the dropping of the bomb—that you must achieve in creating this exhibit. The exhibit agenda must please your boss, your museum’s contributors, and your museum’s audience.

Your Boss/Exhibit Goal

Your boss is Mark Davis, Director of Smithsonian National Air & Space Museum. He is a great historian, and his life revolves around his museum. His goal is to produce a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. He wants visitors to leave the exhibit thinking about the consequences that the atomic bomb left on Japan, but he also wants this exhibit to please the United States veterans. Since Mark’s goal is to accommodate two opposing groups, he wants to create an unbiased exhibit.

Your Budget

- You have a budget of $2,500.
- You must include between 9 and 12 items in your exhibit
- You should include a mix of video, images, and documents
- You must justify the inclusion of each item. You have limited funds—what part of your goal does each item meet?
Online Interface

The online interface includes all the items that you can use to create your exhibit. You will need to purchase the items and download them to your desktop. Videos must be downloaded and unzipped.

Your Exhibit

You will present your exhibit to your class. The exhibit may take any form—constructed, electronic, etc. but will be determined by your goals and the items that you choose to tell your story.

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The online interface includes all the items that you can use to create your exhibit. You will need to purchase the items and download them to your desktop. Videos must be downloaded and unzipped.

Your Exhibit

You will present your exhibit to your class. The exhibit may take any form—constructed, electronic, etc. but will be determined by your goals and the items that you choose to tell your story.

Your Assignment

1. Due on the Discussion board (Group A/D, March 30; Group B/E, April 1; Group C/F, April 3):
   a. As a group, determine which items you will purchase to use in your exhibit. Each item must be justified.
   b. Each group member must post item choices, plus their justifications.
   c. Each person must post a minimum of 3 times in preparation for putting together your group’s exhibit.

2. To do during weeks of March 23 and March 30:
   a. Post your item choices/justifications online on the discussion board.
   b. Create your exhibit for showing in-class.
   c. Write the justifications to accompany each exhibit item.

3. Due at time of exhibit (Group A/D, April 6; Group B/E, April 8, Group C/F, April 10):
   a. Present your exhibit to the class.
   b. Turn in your item justifications. A justification must be written for each item included. Each item justification must be 250 words long, typed, and double-spaced. Turn this in as a hard-copy to your class facilitator. Please include the names of every group member on the top of the first justification—and include the name of your “boss.”

4. Due on the Discussion board (Group A/D, April 13, Group B/E, April 15, Group C/F, April 17):
   a. Write a 250 to 500 word reflective paper that describes your opinion on the dropping of the atomic bomb. Discuss how memory of past events—like the dropping of the bomb—can be used for specific agendas in the present.
The Atomic Bomb Exhibit

Background

The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan in August 1945, bringing an end to World War II. The bomb droppings continue to be controversial. Some people believe that the United States should never have dropped the bombs while others argue that the U.S. government did the right thing in bringing the war to a rapid conclusion.

Your assignment

You are charged with creating an exhibit about the dropping of the atomic bomb for your boss. You have a specific agenda—a “story” about the dropping of the bomb—that you must achieve in creating this exhibit. The exhibit agenda must please your boss, your museum’s contributors, and your museum’s audience.

Your Boss/Exhibit Goal

Your boss is Jack Connors, who graduated from the Air Force Academy and is currently a curator in charge of military aviation at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum. He has been asked by the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum to create a World War II exhibit that focuses on the use of the atomic bomb. Connors will have to deal with members of U.S. veterans groups, historians, Congress, media personnel, and citizens of both America and Japan. He will attempt to produce an exhibit that will satisfy as many groups as he can. Connors wants to create an exhibit that takes a pro-atomic bomb stance but one that is also sympathetic to the Japanese.

Your Budget

- You have a budget of $2,500.
- You must include between 9 and 12 items in your exhibit
- You should include a mix of video, images, and documents
- You must justify the inclusion of each item. You have limited funds—what part of your goal does each item meet?
Online Interface

The online interface includes all the items that you can use to create your exhibit. You will need to purchase the items and download them to your desktop. Videos must be downloaded and unzipped.

Your Exhibit

You will present your exhibit to your class. The exhibit may take any form—constructed, electronic, etc. but will be determined by your goals and the items that you choose to tell your story.

Your Assignment

1. **Due on the Discussion board (Group A/D, March 30; Group B/E, April 1; Group C/F, April 3):**
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