**US History**

**Measurement Topic 6: America’s participation in WW2**

**Level 3: Learn it, study it**, and then test it

Learning Target #4: Explain why the USA decided to drop the atomic bomb.

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the United States began to aggressively seek ways to attack Japan. The USA began a strategy of island hopping. Island hopping was the idea of taking over various islands in the pacific to get closer to Japan. This was needed because Japan is located 3, 800 miles from Pearl Harbor, (6,000 miles from California) way too far for airplanes to go bomb and return, therefore the United States needed to have islands to fly to in order to get fuel. Many of the islands in the Pacific Ocean had been taken over by Japan so the United States was faced with a fierce battle of taking over many islands from the Japanese while also maintaining control of the islands they had already taken over.

Another issue the United States had to deal with were coral reefs, sandbars and low water levels around the islands all three which made it impossible for ships to dock near the islands that the Japanese control. Soldiers would have to jump into the ocean and walk/swim to shore while being shot at. This **caused extremely high numbers of casualties** to the US military. The United States was losing more soldiers then the Japanese. With the invention of a new water craft called the gator, the United States was able to get more soldiers on land, which lead to more victories for the United States. Many islands still were not easy to conquer due to how fiercely they were guarded by the Japanese troops, who would rather die than surrender to America. One of the most aggressive island battles between the USA and Japan was over the island of Iwo Jima. The capture of Iwo Jima would provide an emergency landing strip for crippled B-29s returning from bombing runs. The seizure of Iwo would allow for sea and air blockades, the ability to conduct intensive air bombardment and to destroy the enemy's air and naval capabilities. The total battle to gain the island lasted over three months. This battle revealed to the USA, that it would have many casualties before Japan would surrender. Once the USA secured the island of Iwo Jima, and in August of 1944, the USA began bombing Japan with firebombs. Firebombs would hit, then spread out and create multiple mini fires. Even though Japan was bombarded with firebombs, as of April 1945, they showed no sign of surrendering.

While WW2 was taking place in Europe and the Pacific Ocean, the United States had a secret weapon being built. This secret weapon came to be known as the Manhattan project. This project led to the creation of an atomic bomb. Over the course of six years, from 1939 to 1945, more than $2 billion was spent during the history of the Manhattan Project. The formulas for refining uranium created two atomic bombs and on July 16, 1945 the world’s first atomic bomb was tested in New Mexico, USA. After the first testing, many of the scientists who had helped build the bomb felt it should never be used because of its mass destruction potential. Military leaders did not agree, they felt it should be used to make Japan surrender. They advised the President Truman, who took over after Roosevelt passed away, that if he did not use the atomic bomb on Japan, that **American causalities would be** enormous and that Truman should use the atomic bomb to save American lives. The final decision was left up to President Truman, who agreed to use the bombs on Japan to force them to surrender.

A uranium bomb nicknamed "Little Boy" (despite weighing in at over four and a half tons) was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan August 6, 1945 at 8:16 am. In an instant, 66,000 people were killed and 69,000 injured by a 10-kiloton atomic explosion. On August 9, 1945, Nagasaki, Japan fell to the same treatment. This time a Plutonium bomb nicknamed "Fat Man" was dropped on the city. Nagasaki's population dropped from 422,000 to 383,000. Over 25,000 people were injured. Japan offered to surrender on August 10, 1945.

While the explosion from the atomic bombs was deadly enough, its destructive ability didn’t stop there. Atomic bombs created other issues. The rain that followed the atomic detonation was laden/loaded with radioactive particles, and many survivors of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki blasts succumbed to radiation poisoning. The atomic bomb detonation also had other hidden lethal surprise that affected the future generations of those who lived through it. Leukemia (cancer) is among the greatest of afflictions that are passed on to the offspring of survivors.

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences.**

1. Why did the USA practice the military strategy of island hopping?
2. Why were islands difficult to capture from the Japanese?
3. What were the results from island hopping?
4. What was the Manhattan project?
5. How did the scientist who created the atomic bomb feel after testing the first atomic bomb?
6. Why did president Truman decided to use the atomic bomb?
7. Which Japanese cities did the USA use the Atomic bomb on?
8. What were the immediate and long term effects of the Atomic bombings?

Explain why the USA felt they needed to use the Atomic bomb to end the war with Japan. Include effects of island hopping, and possible effects if the bomb was not used as well as the ultimate consequences from the use of the atomic bomb.

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