

***THE WORLD AFTER THE ATOMIC BOMB***  
***A PRIMARY SOURCE EXERCISE***



*Nagasaki after an atomic bomb was dropped on the city by U.S. forces on August 9, 1945.*

**DUE DATE:** Monday, December 10—hard-copy printout to be handed to me at the beginning of class. Papers will *not* be accepted by email. A printout of the newspaper/magazine piece you have selected should be stapled to your paper.

**LENGTH:** Roughly four or five double-spaced pages, Times New Roman twelve-point font with one-inch margins

**THE ASSIGNMENT:** In the fall of 1945, the world was coming to grips not only with the end of World War II, but also with the introduction of a frightening new weapon that seemed to upend older ideas about international relations and the “balance of power.” In addition, that fall, the victorious Allies were coming together to create a new global organization, the United Nations, that they hoped would foster international cooperation with issues like international law and security, human rights, economic development, social progress, and world peace. But how might the development and use of the atomic bomb have shaped the emerging new world order? Should the U.S. and the Allies have shared their atomic secrets for the sake of world peace? What were people’s thoughts and ideas about how international relations might look like during the atomic era? Your task is to do a bit of “micro-history,” recovering a small shard of what people were thinking in the anxious but cautiously hopeful days of the fall and early winter of 1945. You will do so by finding an opinion or editorial piece that airs concerns about the future of the atomic world, and then you will contextualize and analyze it in a brief essay.

**PART ONE: FINDING AN OP-ED PIECE**

Find an opinion or editorial piece published in a newspaper between September 1 and December 31, 1945 that discusses the implications of the atomic bomb on the international relations. Please note that an opinion

or editorial is different from a straightforward reporting of the news. An editorial expresses the opinion of the newspaper's editors, while an opinion piece conveys the opinion of an individual or group of authors. If you are having trouble distinguishing between an op/ed and regular newspaper piece, than please consult with the instructor before making your final choice.

There are several historical newspaper databases that you might use that are available through the Brooklyn College Library database page, which you can find here: {HYPERLINK "http://library.brooklyn.cuny.edu/resources/?view=databases"}

For most of these, you will need your Brooklyn College email log-in to access them off campus. Some of the newspaper and magazines I'd suggest looking at are as follows:

- *Nation* Archive – *The Nation* is a progressive magazine that is still published today.
- *New Republic* Archive – *The New Republic* is a center/liberal magazine that is still published as well.
- *New York Times Historical Edition* – I know a lot of you will use this as it is the easiest, so those who go out of there way to use something different might get a small grade boost!
- *NewspaperArchive.com* – Gives access to smaller, local newspapers across the U.S. (I don't like the interface, though).

The time parameters you need to enter into your database before you hit "search" are 9/1/1945 to 12/31/1945. (You often need to hit "advanced search" to enter your own date parameters for a search). Search with the phrase "atomic bomb" as the word "nuclear" was not in widespread use at this time. You CANNOT use any article that was published AFTER DECEMBER 31, 1945.

Note: Unfortunately the "America's Historical Newspapers" and "Early American Newspaper" databases only goes up to 1920, the *New York Tribune* ends in 1922, and the old *Brooklyn Eagle* database only goes to 1902. The "Popular Magazines" database starts in 1980, and the Wall Street Journal database only begins in 1984. None of these databases can be used.

## **PART TWO: THE ESSAY**

After picking your piece, begin to formulate an idea for a brief essay--no more than about four or five double-spaced pages—which will have three parts:

1) **SUMMARY/CONTEXT:** In this section, you will summarize what the article is saying, and also provide any relevant context that might help us understand possible biases or underlying ideologies of the author. If there is a byline, can you find out any information about the author? Can you find any information on the newspaper or magazine? Who owned it and what were its politics in 1945?

2) **ANALYSIS:** Answer the following kinds of questions about the opinion/editorial piece that you have selected: What is the author's main argument or message? Is the message entirely explicit, or is there some implicit message that is meant to be "read between the lines"? What methods does the author use to convey his or her message? What does this piece reveal about the general arguments that are being made on this subject at this time? Is there an explicit ideological perspective being expressed? Is the author expressing an opinion that is "mainstream," "radical," or "conservative"? What are the limitations of this piece in helping us to understand the debate of the time?

3) **CONCLUSION:** What do you think about this author's opinions and ideas? Do you find them helpful in understanding what people were thinking in fall of 1945? From what you know of the Cold War that began to develop, did this author have a realistic idea of what the future might bring? Does this author think there were alternative paths to what actually happened?

### **PART THREE: HOW YOUR ESSAY WILL BE EVALUATED**

- **Clarity and Organization:** I will evaluate the clarity and organization of the paper. Concise, strong sentences are obviously preferred over long and convoluted ones in which the meaning gets lost or muddled.
- **Use of Evidence:** The appropriateness of the evidence that you choose in your answers will be a significant point of evaluation, as will the way you use it. For example, using a piece of evidence that seems only tangentially related to the point that you are trying to make obviously will count against you.
- **Originality of Analysis:** While it is difficult to bring a truly original analysis to the table, you will be given considerable credit for ideas about the reasons for Roosevelt's decision in a particularly thoughtful or innovative way.
- **Citations:** You will need to provide formal *Chicago Manual of Style* footnotes for the sources that you use that are outside of the PDF source document. Your use of these citations will be assessed in your grade. You can find a quick guide on *Chicago* style here: {HYPERLINK "http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\_citationguide.html"}

#### **General Guidelines**

- **Avoiding Plagiarism:** “General knowledge” information—such as dates or well-known facts—do not need to be cited. But if you use a specific idea (for example, an interpretation of a particular historian) or quotation from the textbook or another source, please provide a formal citation. Note that if you use web sources, make sure that they are reliable and trustworthy ones! If you choose to use unreliable sources, it will be reflected in your grade.
- **Writing Style Counts:** Make sure that you write complete, clear, and coherent sentences. Don't overreach in your writing: avoid overly long and convoluted sentences, pretentious language, or words or phrases with ambiguous meanings. Be clear and concise.
- **Spelling Counts:** Note that the spell-check function can sometimes be wrong.