

Lesson Overview

How many days are needed to teach this lesson?	3
Grade Level(s)	6-8
Subject(s)	Social Studies, ELA
Lesson Summary	Students examine a global and local news story about the atomic bomb and create a documentary poem synthesizing them and demonstrating how additional sources deepen the understanding of an event.
Standards	<p>WV.SS.8.25: Demonstrate an understanding of West Virginia's development during the mid-20th century.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summarize the significant aspects of the economic and industrial growth experienced by West Virginia during World War II (e.g., chemical industry, steel industry, and coal industry).
Focus Pulitzer Center news story/stories	<p>“What Japan’s Atom Bomb Survivors Have Taught Us About the Dangers of Nuclear War,” from <i>Children of the Atomic Bomb</i> by Scott Michels for <i>Retro Report</i></p>
Content Advisory	This lesson contains graphic descriptions of violence.
Notes on Context	This lesson was originally created for an 8th grade West Virginia Studies class. The news story from WBOY was included because it specifically discussed West Virginia’s involvement in the production of the atomic bomb. If the lesson is being delivered to students in other states or territories, it could be beneficial to research your own local connection to the atomic bomb and incorporate that history into the lesson accordingly.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)

- How do additional sources of information help us understand a historical event?
- What were some of the social, political, and economic impacts of the United States’ creation of the atomic bomb?

Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories

“[What Japan’s Atom Bomb Survivors Have Taught Us About the Dangers of Nuclear War](#)” by Scott Michels

Other Reporting:

“[How West Virginia helped make the first atomic bombs \(WBOY\)](#)” by Sam Gorski for WBOY-TV

Introducing the Lesson

How do additional sources of information help us understand a historical event? Many students often learn about the past from a secondary source like an article or textbook. This lesson encourages students to go deeper and consider other sources and perspectives when learning about the past.

In this lesson, students will read a news article to learn about West Virginia’s role in developing the atomic bomb. Students will then watch a video from the Pulitzer Center to learn how Japanese individuals were affected by the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. By comparing the two sources, students will better understand that seeking out additional sources of information can deepen their understanding about a topic and provide a more well-rounded picture of the past.

Warm-up/Opening

1. Have students discuss what they know about World War II and the United States’ use of the atomic bomb to help end the war.
 - a. Ask students to discuss how they have learned about World War II, or history in general. Did they typically learn from history textbooks, reading articles, or watching videos?
 - b. Do students think that sources like textbooks provide the whole story when it comes to an event?
2. Explain that students will soon explore two separate stories about the atomic bomb and they should consider how the contrasting perspectives in each story gives a fuller, more well-rounded version of what happened in the past.

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

1. Have students create Cornell notes as they explore the resources in this lesson.

- a. Before looking at the resources, distribute the Cornell notes [worksheets](#) to students and review with students the process for creating Cornell notes.
- b. Explain that in the right-side column, as students explore a resource, they will jot down notes about what they learn, such as interesting or surprising facts, dates, names of places, and important terms or quotes. After students finish exploring each resource, they will complete the left-side column by reviewing their notes and writing questions that can be answered by their notes. Students will then review their notes and questions and write a short, paragraph-length summary of each resource in the bottom section of the page.

Exploring the Resource(s)

1. Have students read the WBOY story “How West Virginia helped make the first atomic bombs” by Sam Gorski.
 - a. As students read the story, they should complete a set of Cornell notes about the story. Some possible notes students record for the story might relate to Morgantown Ordnance Works, heavy water, P-9 Project, Manhattan Project, Little Boy and Fat Man, and plutonium.
2. Have students watch the Pulitzer Center story “What Japan’s Atom Bomb Survivors Have Taught Us About the Dangers of Nuclear War” by Scott Michels.
 - a. Some possible notes students record for the story might relate to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, radiation, stigmatization, and hibakusha.

Processing the Resource(s)

1. After exploring the resources, have students complete the questions and summary sections of their Cornell notes worksheets.
2. Have students use their notes to help them discuss in small groups how the stories differed in their reporting about the atomic bomb. Have students discuss the following questions: What was the main idea of each story? What were interesting facts or supporting details from each story? What perspectives were included in each story? How do the two stories together provide a fuller picture of the past?
3. As a whole class, create a Venn diagram that compares and contrasts the two stories.

Performance Task(s)

Documentary poetry often draws upon and weaves together sources to create a poem. Students will use their Cornell notes and what they learned from the resources to create their own documentary poem about the impact of the atomic bomb.

Assessment

Observation during class discussion and a checklist [rubric](#) for the performance task will be used to assess student learning.