**(6-14) Middle School Documents: World at War**

Before and during U.S. entry into World War 1, a number of prominent Americans spoke out against involvement in the war. Read the statements by these Americans and then answer the questions.

1. Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin: “This war is being forced upon our people without their knowing why and without their approval.”
2. Senator George Norris, Republican from Nebraska: “We ought to have maintained from the beginning the strictest neutrality. If we had done this I do not believe we would have been on the verge of war at the present time . . . We are going into war upon the command of gold. We are going to run the risk of sacrificing millions of our countrymen's lives in order that other countrymen may coin their lifeblood into money.”
3. Eugene V. Debs, Union leader and Socialist candidate for President of the United States: “War does not come by chance. War is not the result of an accident...In all these nations, the great industries are owned by a relatively small class. They are operated for the profit of that class...The master class has always brought a war and the subject class has fought the battle. . . Years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth . . .I have not a drop of blood to shed for the oppressors of the working class and the robbers of the poor.”

**Questions**

1) Senators LaFollette and Norris oppose U.S. entry into World War 1?

2) Why does Eugene Debs say he would not support U.S. entry into the war?

3) Should people have the right to make these statements before U.S. entry into the war?

4) Should people have the right to make these statements after U.S. entry into the war?

5) Eugene Debs was sent to jail for opposing the war after the U.S. entered. In your opinion, did this violate his freedom of speech? Why?

**FDR's War Message to Congress**

“Yesterday, December 7, 1941 - a date which will live in infamy - the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by naval forces of the Empire of Japan. The United States was at peace with that nation, and, at the request of Japan, as still in conversation with its Government and its Emperor looking toward the maintenance of peace in the Pacific.

Yesterday the Japanese Government also launched an attack against Malaya. Last night Japanese forces attacked Hong Kong. Last night Japanese forces attacked Guam. Last night Japanese forces attacked the Philippine Islands. Last night the Japanese attacked Wake Island. This morning the Japanese attacked Midway Island. I ask that the Congress declare that since the unprovoked and dastardly attacked by Japan on Sunday, December 7th, a state of war has existed between the United States and the Japanese Empire.”

**Should the United States have dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?**

A. President Harry Truman, August 6, 1945.

Source: http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\_collections/bomb/small/mb10.htm

Sixteen hours ago an American airplane dropped one bomb on Hiroshima and destroyed its usefulness to the enemy. It is an atomic bomb. It is a harnessing of the basic power of the universe. The force from which the sun draws its power has been loosed against those who brought war to the Far East. We are now prepared to obliterate more rapidly and completely every productive enterprise the Japanese have above ground in any city. We shall destroy their docks, their factories, and their communications. Let there be no mistake; we shall completely destroy Japan’s power to make war. It was to spare the Japanese people from utter destruction that the ultimatum of July 26 was issued at Potsdam. Their leaders promptly rejected that ultimatum. If they do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth. Behind this air attack will follow sea and land forces in such number that and power as they have not yet seen and with the fighting skill of which they are already well aware.

**Questions**

1. What is the purpose of President Truman’s statement?

2. Why does the President refer to the rejection of the Potsdam ultimatum in this statement?

3. What does Truman mean when he says the Japanese can expect a “rain of ruin from the air?”

B. Petition to the President of the United States signed by 67 atomic scientists, signed in July 1945 and released to the public on August 17, 1945.

Source: http://www.dannen.com/decision/45-07-17.html

This war has to be brought speedily to a successful conclusion and attacks by atomic bombs may very well be an effective method of warfare. We feel, however, that such attacks on Japan could not be justified. The development of atomic power will provide the nations with new means of destruction. Thus a nation which sets the precedent of using these newly liberated forces of nature for purpose of destruction may have to bear the responsibility of opening the door to an era of devastation on an unimaginable scale.

**Questions**

1. What is the position of the atomic scientists on the use of a nuclear weapon?

2. Why do you think scientists who developed this capability would take this position?

Real Warriors Are Not Always Pro-War

“Man is stumbling blindly through a spiritual darkness while toying with the precarious secrets of life and death. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. We know more about war than we know about peace, more about killing than we know about living.” - General Omar Bradley, 1948

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.” - President Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1953

“In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military- industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defense with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together.” - President Dwight Eisenhower, 1961

**Not In Our Son’s Name**

The son of Phyllis and Orlando Rodriguez was a World Trade Center victim. They distributed this letter on September 15, 2001 before the start of the bombing of Afghanistan.

**Source:** Zinn and Arnove, eds. (2009). *Voices of a People’s History, 2nd edition* (NY: Seven Stories Press), p. 603.

“Our son Greg is among the many missing from the World Trade Center attack. Since we first heard the news, we have shared moments of grief, comfort, hope, despair, fond memories with his wife, the two families, our friends and neighbors, his loving colleagues . . . and all the grieving families that daily meet at the Pierre Hotel. We see our hurt and anger reflected among everybody we meet. We cannot pay attention to the daily flow of news about this disaster. But we read enough of the news to sense that our government is heading in the direction of violent revenge, with the prospect of sons, daughters, parents, friends in distant lands, dying, suffering, and nursing further grievances against us. It is not the way to go. It will not avenge our son's death. Not in our son's name. Our son died a victim of an inhuman ideology. Our actions should not serve the same purpose. Let us grieve. Let us reflect and pray. Let us think about a rational response that brings real peace and justice to our world. But let us not as a nation add to the inhumanity of our times.”

**Questions**

1. Who was Greg Rodriguez?

2. Why did his parents write this letter?