

Americans in World War II

LITERATURE READING

A City and Its People Destroyed

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, in an effort to end World War II in the Pacific. Through the testimony of witnesses and survivors, John Hersey provides a graphic report of the destruction and aftermath in Hiroshima. The following selection describes some of the observations and rescue efforts of a community leader, Mr. Tanimoto.

Hiroshima

After the storm, Mr. Tanimoto began ferrying people again . . .

Late in the afternoon, when he went ashore for awhile, Mr. Tanimoto, upon whose energy and initiative many had come to depend, heard people begging for food. He consulted Father Kleinsorge [a German missionary], and they decided to go back into town to get some rice from Mr. Tanimoto's Neighborhood Association shelter and from the mission shelter.

. . . the change was too sudden, from a busy city of two hundred and forty-five thousand that morning to a mere pattern of residue in the afternoon. The asphalt of the streets was still so soft and hot from the fires that walking was uncomfortable. They encountered only one person, a woman, who said to them as they passed, "My husband is in those ashes."

. . . they heard weak cries for help. A woman's voice stood out especially: "There are people here about to be drowned! Help us! The water is rising!" The sounds came from one of the sandpits, and those in the punt [boat] could see, in the reflected light of the still-burning fires, a number of wounded people lying at the edge of the river, already partly covered by the flooding tide.

As Mr. Tanimoto stepped up the dark bank, he tripped over someone, and someone else said angrily, "Look out! That's my hand." Mr. Tanimoto, ashamed of hurting wounded people, embarrassed at being able to walk upright, suddenly thought of the naval hospital ship, which had not come (it never did), and he had for a moment a feeling of blind, murderous rage at the crew of the ship, and then at all doctors. Why didn't they come to help these people?

Early that day, August 7th, the Japanese radio broadcast for the first time a succinct announcement that very few, if any, of the people most concerned with its content, the survivors in Hiroshima, happened to hear: "Hiroshima suffered considerable damage as the result of an attack by a few B-29s. It is believed that a new type of bomb was used. The details are being investigated."

Those victims who were able to worry at all about what happened thought of it and discussed it in more primitive, childish terms—gasoline sprinkled from an airplane, maybe, or some combustible gas, or a big cluster of incendiaries, or the work of parachutists . . .

Mr. Tanimoto . . . crossed the river, . . . and walked to the East Parade Ground. . . . he thought he would find an aid station there. He did find one, operated by an Army medical unit, but he also saw that its doctors were hopelessly overburdened, with thousands of patients sprawled among corpses across the field in front of it. Nevertheless, he went up to one of the Army doctors and said, as reproachfully [disapprovingly] as he could, "Why have you not come to Asano Park? You are badly needed there."

"The first duty," the doctor said, "is to take care of the slightly wounded."

"Why—when there are many who are heavily wounded on the riverbank?"

The doctor moved to another patient. “In an emergency like this,” he said, as if he were reciting from a manual, “the first task is to help as many people as possible—to save as many lives as possible. There is no hope for the heavily wounded. They will die. We can’t bother with them.”

“That may be right from a medical standpoint—” Mr. Tanimoto began, but then he looked out across the field, where the many dead lay close and intimate with those who were still living, and he turned away without finishing his

sentence, angry now with himself. He didn’t know what to do; he had promised some of the dying people in the park that he would bring them medical aid. They might die feeling cheated. He saw a ration stand at one end of the field, and he went to it and begged some rice cakes and biscuits, and he took them back, in lieu of doctors, to the people in the park.

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UNDERSTANDING WHAT YOU READ After you have finished reading the selection, answer the following questions in the space provided.

1. How many people lived in the city of Hiroshima before the bomb was dropped?

2. How was Mr. Tanimoto attempting to transport the wounded?

3. What immediate factor was threatening the victims’ survival, besides their original injuries?

4. Where was Mr. Tanimoto’s anger primarily directed, and why?

5. How did Mr. Tanimoto’s anger shift, and why? Support your answer.

ACTIVITY

Imagine that you are one of the injured soldiers that Tanimoto was trying so hard to assist. Write a thank-you letter to him, expressing your appreciation for his efforts and explaining how you managed to survive, against all odds.

flesh make entrance wounds. Bullets that penetrate through the flesh and come out the other side make exit wounds. But the poet is also making a statement about the wounds to the psyche that war inflicts upon soldiers.

2. The only “healthy” way to die was in battle.
3. Answers will vary. One answer might be that soldiers were so awed by the possibility of their lives ending at any given moment that they became focused on the physical aspects of romance and the sentimentality of their situation.
4. God became a curse word they used when they could not access the things they wanted and needed, such as wine, meat, and warmth, as well as someone to whom they could plead for comfort.
5. Graves seems to be saying that it is impossible to remember with absolute clarity the horrors of war. Instead, the human impulse is to remember war as more romantic or at least less horrific than it actually is.

ACTIVITY

Encourage students to give feedback about their classmates’ readings. As a group, vote on which pair of students gave the best reading, and analyze the factors that made that reading stand out from the others.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. Germany, the United States, Belgium, France, Great Britain, India, Italy, Japan, Poland, Czechoslovakia
2. “as long as may be necessary for adherence by all the other Powers of the world”
3. Answers will vary but possible answers may include that people had had enough of war. Many had lost loved ones and friends in World War I. They knew that bigger and more advanced weapons were being built. A document to end all wars must have sounded great to them.
4. The treaty stated that the countries that signed the pact would solve future disagreements in peaceful ways, and that these countries hoped other countries

would take part as well. Their intention was to end all war for all people.

5. Answers will vary. Most students will see that the pact is too general; there were no methods put into place to make the treaty work. The various countries were simply supposed to be reasonable and get along. History does not show this to be an easy thing to do.
6. Most students will feel that such a pact is as impossible today as it was more than 70 years ago. They may mention the many differences of opinion various nations exhibit.

ACTIVITY

Student-written pacts will vary greatly. Accept any document that shows students have applied time and thought.

BIOGRAPHY

1. Answers should include racial justice, child labor reform, better working conditions for women, challenges of immigration, and pacifism.
2. She founded the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, developed peace proposals, and served as a congressional delegate.
3. She was outspoken and campaigned actively to keep the United States out of World War I.
4. She adjusted her staunch pacifist position in light of the human rights violations that were taking place in Nazi Germany.

ACTIVITY

Students’ letters should indicate an understanding of the complex issues that swayed Balch concerning the conflict between her outspoken pacifism and the United States’s need for her to be equally outspoken against the atrocities that were taking place under Hitler’s regime.

CHAPTER 27

LITERATURE

1. 245,000
2. ferrying a punt [boat] down the river

3. the rising tides of the river, drowning them
4. He was angry at the doctors and crew of the naval hospital ship because it was not coming to help the victims. He was also angry at the doctors at the Army medical unit because they would not come to Asano Park and the riverbank to help the dying people.
5. Mr. Tanimoto became angry at himself. Answers should explain that he had promised people he would bring medical help, and “They might die feeling cheated.” He came to realize that the number of injured people and limited medical help would not allow him to keep his promise.

ACTIVITY

Students’ letters will vary but should draw upon the information in the selection.

PRIMARY SOURCE

1. Peggy Terry and her husband were living day to day, moving around and working wherever they could find work.
2. She had money to buy shoes and a dress, and to pay rent and put food on the table.
3. She had only vague knowledge, and did not really think about it. This was just after the depression, and she lived in a poor, rural area. She was focused on just “stayin’ alive” and being happy to have work.
4. He fought in France, North Africa, and Germany, as a paratrooper.
5. He had started having nightmares, and shaking at the thought or sight of shooting.
6. Answers will vary but should explain how Terry came to see and understand the bigger picture, that many people died in the war and that both she and her husband played a role in that.

ACTIVITY

Students’ charts should reflect an understanding of the various roles of these women in building weapons to supply the fighting, as workers versus managers, as the primary breadwinners, and as responsible for the home and children. Comparisons to women’s

roles today could include military service, business/management, child care and custody, and changes in family dynamics.

BIOGRAPHY

1. Fermi and his fellow researchers inadvertently split the atom, which led the way to future atomic fission technology.
2. He was totally against the development of the hydrogen bomb because he saw its destructive power as virtually absolute. Students’ reactions will vary.
3. Students’ speculations will vary, but should suggest that Italy would have been extremely powerful if that were the case.
4. Answers will vary but should demonstrate an understanding that some scientific information can be helpful as well as detrimental.

ACTIVITY

Students’ articles should demonstrate an understanding of the awesome power demonstrated by Fermi’s research. The interview should reflect both Fermi’s accomplishments and his misgivings concerning what might happen if a more powerful bomb could be built.

CHAPTER 28

LITERATURE

1. He doesn’t remember if he felt anything at all; he just remembers being cold and sleepy.
2. Crispus Attucks and other African Americans who had fought in wars and fought for the right to fight for freedom and democracy in America
3. to forget about patriotism and stick together and stay alert
4. The “realities of war” were that African Americans were fighting for their lives, not for “liberty, justice, and freedom for all.”

ACTIVITY

Students’ magazine articles should explain what war the person they interviewed fought in, what that person felt about fighting from that person’s point of view.