ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The development of this teacher’s guide would not have been possible without the support of the following individuals and organizations:

Filmmakers
Sachiko Kato, Director
Junichiro Okada, Producer
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Funding for the Development of the Teacher’s Guide
The Japan Fund, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies

Design and Graphics
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Stanford University
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Introduction

On August 6, 1945, the world changed forever when the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Within a year of the bombing, approximately 140,000 people died as a result. It is a little-known fact, however, that 12 American prisoners of war (POWs) were among the casualties, and that the people of Hiroshima buried them with honor.

Japanese director Sachiko Kato and Hiroshima Television Corporation tell this story through the documentary film, *U.S. POWs and the A-Bomb*. The film features Shigeaki Mori, a Japanese atomic bomb survivor from Hiroshima who spent four decades searching for the identities of the 12 American prisoners of war who were killed in the bombing. Through reaching out to their families, Mori helped them bring closure on their tragedies. *U.S. POWs and the A-Bomb* is also a tale of reconciliation between the former enemies of World War II—the United States and Japan—as it follows Mr. Mori accompanying U.S. POW family members visiting Hiroshima, and also Ms. Kato visiting family members of the U.S. POWs in the United States.

Through an exploration of empathy, this film and accompanying teacher’s guide not only educate viewers about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and its enduring legacy, but also help emphasize the dangers of nuclear war and how our shared humanity can transcend borders.

Grade Level and Subjects

This teacher’s guide is recommended for the following secondary and community college classes:
- Contemporary Issues
- Debate
- Global/International Issues
- Government
- Law
- Political Science
- Social Studies
- U.S. History
- World Cultures
- World History

Connections to Curriculum Standards

This lesson has been designed to meet certain national history and social studies, geography, and common core standards as defined by the National Center for History in the Schools and the National Council for the Social Studies. The standards for the lesson are listed here.

National History Standards (from the National Center for History in the Schools)

U.S. History

https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/united-states-history-content-standards/
- Era 8, Standard 3B, Grades 7–12: Evaluate the decision to employ nuclear weapons against Japan and assess later controversies over the decision. [Evaluate major debates among historians]

- Era 8, Standard 3B, Grades 5–12: Explain the financial, material, and human costs of the war and analyze its economic consequences for the Allies and the Axis powers. [Utilize visual and quantitative data]

- Era 8, Standard 3B, Grades 7–12: Describe military experiences and explain how they fostered American identity and interactions among people of diverse backgrounds. [Utilize literary sources including oral testimony]

- Era 8, Standard 3C, Grades 9–12: Evaluate how Americans viewed their achievements and global responsibilities at war’s end. [Interrogate historical data]

**World History**

[https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/world-history-content-standards/](https://phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/world-history-content-standards/)

- Era 8, Standard 4B, Grades 9–12: Assess the consequences of World War II as a total war. [Formulate historical questions]

- Era 8, Standard 5A, Grades 5–12: Explain how new technologies and scientific breakthroughs both benefited and imperiled humankind. [Formulate historical questions]

- Era 8, Standard 5A, Grades 7–12: Identify patterns of social and cultural continuity in various societies, and analyze ways in which peoples maintained traditions, sustained basic loyalties, and resisted external challenges in this era of recurrent world crises. [Explain historical continuity and change]

**National Social Studies Standards (from the National Council for the Social Studies)**

- Culture; Thematic Strand I: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

- Time, Continuity, and Change; Thematic Strand II: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

- People, Places, and Environments; Thematic Strand III: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

- Individual Development and Identity; Thematic Strand IV: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions; Thematic Strand V: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.
• Power, Authority, and Governance; Thematic Strand 6: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

• Global Connections; Thematic Strand IX: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.

**Essential Questions**

- Who were the people who died in the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima?
- What are the three types of empathy?
- How do people in the documentary film show empathy toward each other?
- Who were the U.S. POWs in Hiroshima at the time of the atomic bombing?
- How were the U.S. POWs treated in Japan?
- Who is Shigeaki Mori and what did he do for the U.S. POWs and their families?
- How did the families of the U.S. POWs react to learning the fate of their relatives killed in the atomic bombing of Hiroshima?
- How can the lessons presented in this film be applied to our everyday lives?

**Objectives**

Through viewing the documentary film, *U.S. POWs and the A-bomb*, and the activities outlined in this teacher’s guide, students will:

- learn about the atomic bombing of Hiroshima;
- explore the meaning of empathy and how it is practiced;
- appreciate the experiences of Hiroshima’s atomic bomb survivors;
- gain awareness of the enduring legacies of the atomic bombing;
- evaluate the decision to employ nuclear weapons against Japan and assess later controversies over the decision;
- understand the financial, material, and human costs of the war and analyze its consequences;
- consider multiple perspectives; and
- appreciate the shared experiences of both Japanese and U.S. victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

**Materials**

*U.S. POWs and the A-bomb* documentary film (approximately 45 minutes), available at https://youtu.be/T3fqKCoXb7UI

Handout 1, *Types of Empathy* (30 copies)

Handout 2, *Note-taking Sheet* (30 copies)

Handout 3, *Extension Activity* (optional, 30 copies)

Answer Key and Discussion Guide, *Note-taking Sheet*
Equipment
- Computer projector and screen
- Computer speakers (optional)
- Whiteboard and markers

Teacher Preparation
Instructions and materials are based on a class size of 30 students. Adjust accordingly for different class sizes.

1. Familiarize yourself with the documentary, handouts, and answer key.
2. Set up and test computer, projector, and speakers. Confirm ability to play video and project sound audibly to students.
3. Make the appropriate number of copies of handouts.

Time
One to two 50-minute class periods

Procedures
1. Begin the lesson by informing students they will be learning about a little-known aspect of the U.S. atomic bombing of Japan through the concept of empathy. To provide a context for this examination of empathy, engage students in a discussion by asking the following:
   - What do you believe empathy is?
   - When have you felt empathy toward others?
   - How have you showed empathy toward others?
2. Distribute one copy of Handout 1, *Types of Empathy*, to each student. Allow students time to read the handout to themselves and answer the questions at the end.
3. Once students have finished, review the answers to the questions, included below for your reference:
   1. What are the three types of empathy? Include a brief description for each
      - **Sharing** (experience sharing, emotional empathy, personal distress)—vicariously taking on the emotions we observe in others; responding to each other’s pain and pleasure as though we were experiencing those states ourselves
      - **Thinking about** (mentalizing, cognitive empathy, theory of mind)—explicitly thinking about or considering someone else’s perspective
      - **Caring** (empathic concern, motivational empathy, compassion)—being motivated to actually improve someone else’s well-being.
   2. What are some examples given for the three types of empathy?
      - **Sharing**—tearing up, frowning, or feeling your mood plummet when a friend hears bad news
      - **Thinking about**—gathering evidence like a detective. In poker or boxing, thinking about what your opponent might know, or what their next move might be
      - **Caring**—hatching a plan to make someone feel better. Emergency room physician expressing concern for their patients
3. Write your own examples of the three types of empathy.  
   **Student answers will vary, but some additional examples are listed below:**
   - **Sharing**—a loved one cries, and you start to feel sad, too
   - **Thinking about**—putting yourself in someone else’s shoes; thinking about another person’s perspective
   - **Caring**—parents seeing their toddler have a meltdown and taking measures to help them feel better; helping someone pay rent when seeing them distressed about money

4. Inform students they will watch a documentary film called *U.S. POWs and the A-bomb*, which was produced by the Hiroshima Television Corporation and directed by a Japanese woman named Sachiko Kato.

5. Distribute one copy of Handout 2, *Note-taking Sheet*, to each student. Review the directions on the handout with the students and instruct them to complete the questions while watching the film.

6. Show *U.S. POWs and the A-bomb* to the class. The film may need to be shown over two class periods. Stop the film when necessary if students need time to write down their responses to the handout.


**Extension Activity (Optional)**

1. Revisit the comment made by an audience member after she viewed the documentary *Paper Lanterns*: “It was surprising, but compared to the number of Japanese who died in that incident, it was obviously very small. So, I think we have to reflect on what the impact of war is.”

2. Inform students that in the following activity, they will research the experiences of others affected by the atomic bombings.

3. Distribute one copy of Handout 3, *Extension Activity*, to each student. Review the instructions as a class.

4. Allow students time to complete the activity in class or as homework.

5. Ask for student volunteers to share their findings.

6. Collect the assignment for assessment.

**Assessment**

The following are suggestions for assessing student work in this lesson:


3. Assess student participation in group and class discussions, evaluating students’ ability to:
• clearly state their opinions, questions, and/or answers;
• provide thoughtful answers;
• exhibit sensitivity toward different cultures and ideas;
• respect and acknowledge other students’ comments; and
• ask relevant and insightful questions.
Types of Empathy

Directions: Read the following handout and answer the questions at the end.

Most of us think we know what “empathy” is, yet we often mean different things when we use it. Psychologists have debated its definitions for decades. But most empathy researchers agree on the big picture. In particular, empathy is not really one thing at all. It’s an umbrella term that describes multiple ways people respond to one another, including sharing, thinking about, and caring about others’ feelings. These pieces, in turn, go by several names:

- **Sharing**
  - Experience Sharing
  - Emotional Empathy
  - Personal Distress

- **Thinking About**
  - Mentalizing
  - Cognitive Empathy
  - Theory of Mind

- **Caring About**
  - Empathic Concern
  - Motivational Empathy
  - Compassion

Let’s tackle these one at a time. To do so, imagine you’re a high school senior, walking with a close friend who is waiting to hear whether he’s gained admittance to the college of his dreams. He takes out his phone, then freezes before he checks. “This is it,” he says. You know what he means. You’ve seen him work relentlessly throughout high school toward this goal. He’s talked with you maybe 30 times since applying, alternately anxious, hopeful, or both. He logs into the portal. His face contorts, and you lean forward, for a moment not knowing whether he’s happy or upset. It becomes clear that he’s not crying happy tears.

**SHARING**

As your friend collapses into a heap, you might frown, slump, and even tear up yourself. Your mood will probably **plummet**. This is what empathy researchers call *experience sharing*: **vicariously** taking on the emotions we observe in others. Experience sharing is widespread—people “catch” one another’s facial expressions, bodily stress, and moods, both negative and positive. Our brains respond to each other’s pain and pleasure as though we were experiencing those states ourselves. Seeing your friend **grimace**, you might mimic his face in a fraction of a second, and parts of your brain associated with feeling pain might come online just as quickly.

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1. Excerpted and adapted with permission from Appendix A (pp. 178–81) in *The War for Kindness* by Professor Jamil Zaki
THINKING
As you share your friend’s pain, you also create a picture of his inner life. How upset is he? What is he thinking about? What will he do now? To answer these questions, you think like a detective, gathering evidence about his behavior and situation to deduce how he feels. This cognitive piece of empathy is referred to as “mentalizing,” or explicitly considering someone else’s perspective. Mentalizing, an everyday form of mind reading, is more sophisticated than experience sharing. It requires cognitive firepower that most animals didn’t have, and thus arrived later in evolution. And though children pick up experience sharing early, it takes them longer to sharpen their mentalizing skills.

CARING ABOUT (CONCERN)
If while your friend weeps, all you do is sit back, feel bad, and think about him, you’re a less-than-stellar pal. Instead, you might also wish for him to feel better and hatch a plan for how you can get him there. This is what researchers call “empathic concern,” or a motivation to improve someone else’s well-being. This is the piece of empathy that most reliably sparks kind action.

SPLITS AND CONNECTIONS
Experience sharing, mentalizing, and concern split apart in all sorts of interesting ways. For instance, mentalizing is most useful when we don’t share another’s experiences. To know why a fan of a team you don’t follow just climbed a signpost, you must understand differences between their emotional landscape and yours. When we fail to understand each other, it’s often because we falsely assume our own knowledge or priorities will map onto someone else’s.

Poker and boxing require keen mentalizing—What does your opponent know? What is her next move?—but are ill-served by concern. Parenting can be the opposite: You might never understand why your toddler is mid-meltdown, but you must still do what you can to help her. People also differ in their empathic landscapes. For instance, an emergency room physician likely feels great concern for her patients, but she cannot do her job if also taking on their pain.

Sharing someone else’s emotion draws our attention to what they feel, and thinking about them reliably increases our concern for their well-being. All three empathic processes promote kindness, albeit in distinct ways.
Directions: Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper and be prepared to discuss them with the class.

1. What are the three types of empathy? Include a brief description for each.

2. What are some examples given for the three types of empathy?

3. Write your own examples of the three types of empathy.
NOTE-TAKING SHEET

Directions: Answer the questions in the space provided as your teacher plays the documentary film, *U.S. POWs and the A-bomb*. Use the Discussion Guide at the end to further debrief the film.

1. What did Rokuro Kubosaki do when he saw the U.S. soldier?

2. Who is Normand Brissette, and what is Susan Archinski’s connection to him?

3. Why were there POWs in Hiroshima at the time the atomic bomb was dropped?

4. What happened to these POWs?

5. Who is Shigeaki Mori and what did he do once he learned that a U.S. soldier had died near his elementary school?

6. Who is Nobuichi Fukui and how was he connected to Normand Brissette?

7. Who is Connie Provenchar?

8. What kind of person was Normand Brissette?

9. What happened to the bodies of Normand and the other POW who died at the same time as him?
10. Why was there conflict within Normand’s surviving family over his memory?

11. Who is Barry Frechette, and what is his connection with Normand’s family?

12. Who are the two Ralph Neals?
   • Ralph Neal (elder)
   • Ralph Neal (59 years old at the time the documentary was filmed)

13. How did the surviving Ralph Neal react when he saw the photo of his uncle’s grave and heard that he was treated with respect after he died?

14. When did the U.S. government officially inform Ralph Neal’s mother that he had passed away as a result of the atomic bombing?

15. Who is Takeyoshi Kondo?

16. What did Kondo and Neal agree on when they met?

17. Within a year of the atomic bombing, how many people had died as a result?

18. What types of questions did Barry Frechette say he’s often asked?
EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Directions: Read about the experiences of other people affected by the atomic bombings of Japan. Complete the tasks at the end of the assignment and be prepared to share your work with the class.

Radiation survivors
When the atomic bomb was first dropped on Hiroshima, it resulted in a combination of intense heat, shock wave, blast wind, and deadly radiation. Approximately 140,000 people in Hiroshima died as a result of the bombing. While a majority of the deaths were the result of burns or other injuries caused by the blasts at the time of the bombings or by the end of 1945, many fatalities were the result of radiation sickness. Bomb survivors continued to die from bomb-related injuries or illnesses for decades afterwards.

Sadako Sasaki
Sadako Sasaki was two years old at the time the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. Fortunately, her family survived. Sadako, for all accounts and purposes, was healthy and happy; she loved both her studies and sports in school. When she was 12, however, Sadako developed leukemia due to her exposure to the radiation from the bomb. During her hospital stay, Sadako’s father told her about a legend that stated her wish for recovery and good health could come true if she could fold 1,000 paper cranes. She began the process of folding the paper cranes, using whatever paper was available. For instance, she used wrapping paper from get-well gifts as well as medicine bottle wrappers. Although Sadako folded more than one thousand origami cranes, she succumbed to her illness on October 25, 1955. Sadako’s classmates then helped raise funds to create a memorial to her and to all of the other children who died as a result of the bombing.

Koreans in Japan
During the period from 1910 to 1945, more than two million Koreans were either forcibly sent to Japan as workers and soldiers or left their villages following Japan’s colonial takeover of the Korean Peninsula in 1910. When the United States dropped the atomic bombs on Japan, approximately 50,000 Koreans lived in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and there were at least 20,000 to 30,000 Korean victims. In the past, most official declarations, either by the Japanese federal or Hiroshima and Nagasaki city governments, never referred to the Korean atomic bomb victims. For many years, the only visible reminder of these victims was in the form of a small memorial located in an isolated area to the west of the main section of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park. In July 1999, after a long history of controversy, the memorial was relocated to the main section of the park.

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Americans of Japanese descent

Japanese immigrants to the United States often sent their U.S. citizen children to Japan to visit relatives and receive a Japanese education. As a result, thousands of Japanese Americans were stranded in Japan when war broke out in 1941. Since more pre-war Japanese immigrants came from Hiroshima than from any other prefecture, thousands of Americans of Japanese descent were living in Hiroshima on the day of the atomic bombing. Many of those who survived returned to the United States after the war. Unlike in Japan, where the government began to provide medical treatment and monetary support for hibakusha (atomic bomb survivors) in the 1950s and 1960s, neither the United States nor the Japanese government recognized the Japanese American survivors of the atomic bombing.

Tasks

1. Choose one of the above topics to explore further. Find at least three sources to base your research on.

2. Write at least two additional paragraphs regarding your topic of choice. There should be at least 3–5 sentences in each paragraph.

3. After your paragraphs, make sure to list the sources that you used.

4. Answer the following questions and include your answers after your paragraphs.
   - Think about the three types of empathy described in Handout 1. In your research, did you find examples of people practicing empathy? If so, what were they?
   - Did you find yourself experiencing any forms of empathy during this lesson or activity? If so, which ones?

5. Be prepared to present your findings to your class.

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Use the following Answer Key to assess the quality of students’ notes for Handout 2, Note-taking Sheet.

1. What did Rokuro Kubosaki do when he saw the U.S. soldier?
   *He threw a soda bottle at his face.*

2. Who is Normand Brissette, and what is Susan Archinski’s connection to him?
   *Normand was one of the U.S. POWs who died in Hiroshima as a result of the atomic bombing. Susan is his niece.*

3. Why were there POWs in Hiroshima at the time the atomic bomb was dropped?
   *Shortly before the bomb was dropped, there was fighting in nearby Kure, Japan. Five U.S. aircraft were hit, the pilots parachuted to safety, but were then captured and taken to Hiroshima.*

4. What happened to these POWs?
   *They were temporarily put in army facilities, but when the bomb was dropped, 12 were killed almost instantly. Normand survived the moment of the bombing, but died 13 days later.*

5. Who is Shigeaki Mori and what did he do once he learned that a U.S. soldier had died near his elementary school?
   *Shigeaki Mori is a survivor of the atomic bomb. When he learned that a U.S. soldier had died near his elementary school, he conducted research, found information pertaining to the family of the POW, and sent them information. He also made a memorial plaque for the U.S. POWs at the site of the former Chugoku Military Police Headquarters.*

6. Who is Nobuichi Fukui and how was he connected to Normand Brissette?
   *Nobuichi Fukui was a member of the Hiroshima Military Police Corps. While he had been ordered to kill the U.S. POWs, he was very much against doing so. He said that “under international law, it’s forbidden to abuse POWs.” He insisted that the POWs (which included Normand Brissette) not be killed.*

7. Who is Connie Provenchar?
   *Connie Provenchar is Normand Brissette’s younger sister.*

8. What kind of person was Normand Brissette?
   *He was the family’s firstborn son. He delivered papers and shared the money earned from that with his younger sister. He liked to build model airplanes and ships, and joined the Navy when he was 17. He willingly signed up, and didn’t wait to be drafted.*

9. What happened to the bodies of Normand and the other POW who died at the same time as him?
   *The bodies of Normand and the other POW who died at approximately the same time were cremated, and their graves were marked with a cross.*
10. Why was there conflict within Normand’s surviving family over his memory?
   Some family members wanted to talk about him as a way to remember him/not forget him. Some didn’t want to because talking about him still caused so much pain.

11. Who is Barry Frechette, and what is his connection with Normand’s family?
   He is a documentary filmmaker. His great-uncle Edward was best friends with Normand Brissette.

12. Who are the two Ralph Neals?
   - Ralph Neal (elder)
     A U.S. soldier whose B-24 bomber was shot down in Japan. He was then captured and taken to Hiroshima where he was when the atomic bomb was dropped.
   - Ralph Neal (59 years old at the time the documentary was filmed)
     He is the other Ralph Neal’s nephew.

13. How did the surviving Ralph Neal react when he saw the photo of his uncle’s grave and heard that he was treated with respect after he died?
   He felt grateful and wanted to thank the Japanese people for the honor showed to his uncle and for the memorial.

14. When did the U.S. government officially inform Ralph Neal’s mother that he had passed away as a result of the atomic bombing?
   During the 1970s

15. Who is Takeyoshi Kondo?
   He is a Japanese man who worked on the carrier that shot down Ralph Neal’s aircraft.

16. What did Kondo and Neal agree on when they met?
   They agreed that war is terrible. Kondo stated, “Yesterday’s enemy is today’s friend.” Neal stated, “If we don’t share the history, then history will repeat itself.”

17. Within a year of the atomic bombing, how many people had died as a result?
   Approximately 140,000

18. What types of questions did Barry Frechette say he’s often asked?
   He says he’s often asked the following types of questions:
   - Are you afraid of the radiation in Hiroshima?
   - Has Hiroshima been rebuilt yet?
   - Are they (the Japanese) still angry at us (the United States)?
Discussion Guide

Debrief the documentary film with a discussion using the following suggested questions.

- What new information did you learn from watching the documentary film, *U.S. POWs and the A-bomb*?

- The film opens with Rokuro Kubosaki’s recollection of how he reacted when he saw the U.S. POW after the atomic bombing. Why do you think he did that? How does he feel about his actions now?
  
  *Student answers will vary in their response as to why he did that, but they might think he was angry, looking for someone to blame for all the destruction, didn’t see him as fully human, etc. He expressed remorse at what he did (He stated, “It was a bad thing to do.”)*

- Why do you think it took so long for the U.S. government to disclose to his family that Ralph Neal died from the atomic bomb?
  
  *Student answers will vary.*

- Why do you think it was difficult for Connie to make a comment in response to the statement that the atomic bomb was invented in the United States?

  *Student answers will vary, but might include thoughts such as the following:
  - She was conflicted
  - Anger toward the United States for dropping the bomb
  - Anger toward the interviewer for asking the question*

- Reflect on the following statements made by audience members after viewing Frechette’s documentary film:

  “We should find the humanity in people no matter what the circumstances are.”
  
  - Do you agree or disagree? In what instances (other than the atomic bombing) can you think that this statement can also apply?
    
    *Student answers will vary. However, you can direct their attention to conflicts around the world and consider the difficult situations that many people are experiencing or have experienced.*

  “It was surprising, but compared to the number of Japanese who died in that incident, it was obviously very small. So, I think we have to reflect on what the impact of war is.”
  
  - Do you agree or disagree? Do you think the story of the U.S. POWs should be told? Do you think the stories of atomic bomb victims and survivors should be told?
    
    *Student answers will vary.*

- Even though the United States and Japan were enemies during World War II, throughout this film, there are many examples of acts of empathy. What were some that you remember?
  
  *Student answers will vary.*

- Referring to the three types of empathy, what kinds of empathy did people demonstrate during this film?
  
  *Student answers will vary.*