



NUCLEAR WEAPONS: YES OR NO?

THE NUCLEAR DEBATE

WORKBOOK



Peace Education Scotland's educational resource 'Nuclear Weapons: Yes or No' is designed to introduce pupils to ideas and themes surrounding the topic of nuclear weapons. It has 4 units: The Nuclear Weapons Debate, Nuclear Explosions, Trident, and Pressure Groups.

This course is as objective and balanced as possible, with opportunities for you to develop your creative and critical thinking skills. It has been designed around the underlying principle that young people should be encouraged to have knowledgeable debates and opinions about nuclear weapons.

CHECK

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you already know about the debate surrounding nuclear weapons?

0 – 3: I don't know much about nuclear weapons or how people feel about them

4 – 6: I know a bit about nuclear weapons and the arguments for and against them

7 – 10: I feel confident identifying arguments for and against nuclear weapons

Write your answer here:

WATCH

You will now watch a short film about the Nuclear Weapons Debate.

The film will introduce you to a lot of the information in this module. It might contain information you already know, or information that surprises you! Pay attention to how you feel watching the film, and how the film makes an impact on you. Think about this impact as you go through the exercises in this module, and when you begin debating yourself!

LEARN

WHO HAS NUCLEAR WEAPONS?

Nine countries currently have their own nuclear weapons programs. There are many more countries who host nuclear weapons on their lands for one of these nine countries.

- Russia currently has 5977 weapons
- The USA currently has 5428 weapons
- China currently has 350 weapons
- France currently has 290 weapons
- Britain currently has 225 weapons
- Pakistan currently has 165 weapons
- India currently has 160 weapons
- Israel currently has 90 weapons
- North Korea currently has 20 weapons

LEARN

FACTS AND OPINIONS

On both sides of the nuclear debate you will hear people using both facts and opinions in their arguments. To understand the issues critically and form your own knowledge and ideas about nuclear weapons, it's important to understand the difference between them.

Facts are objective truths. This means they are universal, and they are not shaped or changed by individual people's thoughts and feelings. Facts are discovered and updated through research, collecting and analysing information.

Opinions are people's thoughts and ideas about a topic. They are usually a logical or emotional response to facts and information. Opinions can change with new feelings or new information. They can be shared by lots of people, but they are not universal.

THINK

FACT OR OPINION?

Read the following statements, and decide whether they are facts, or opinions.

1. America and Russia possess nuclear weapons. They both took part in the Cold War.
2. Nuclear weapons protect Britain from war.
3. Britain has nuclear weapons and carries nuclear warheads on board Navy submarines.
4. Nuclear weapons have not been used to attack a country since 1945.
5. Nuclear weapons can make a country too powerful.
6. These countries have nuclear weapons; Russia, USA, Britain, China, France, India, Pakistan, Israel, North Korea.
7. The only country in the world to be bombed by nuclear weapons in a war is Japan.

- The cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were attacked and almost destroyed.
8. Faslane is near Glasgow and is a nuclear submarine base for the UK nuclear weapons programme, Trident.
 9. Money from nuclear weapons would be better spent on better wages, schools and hospitals.
 10. Nuclear bombs were dropped in 1945.
 11. Countries who do not currently own nuclear weapons programmes all want to develop them soon.
 12. Nuclear weapons make countries into bullies.
 13. Generations later, people are still suffering from health complications caused by exposure to radiation from nuclear bombs and nuclear tests.

FACT	OPINION

THINK

NUCLEAR VIEWPOINTS - FOR OR AGAINST?

People often have a viewpoint to support, or oppose, nuclear weapons. People's viewpoints on nuclear weapons are made up of facts and opinions. Read through the following viewpoints and decide whether the viewpoint is FOR nuclear weapons, or AGAINST nuclear weapons.

1. A nuclear war would contaminate the environment for hundreds of years.
2. Britain having nuclear weapons means that we do not rely on other nations to defend ourselves.
3. Having a nuclear weapons programme creates jobs for the people in that country.
4. South Africa dismantled all of their nuclear weapons in the 1990s. Other countries should follow this good example.

5. Nuclear weapons would be useless to defend people in a terror attack.
6. An accident at a nuclear weapons facility could be catastrophic.
7. The billions of pounds spent on nuclear weapons in Britain would be better used in hospitals, healthcare & schools.
8. The total number of nuclear weapons in the world could destroy the human race many times over.
9. The nuclear weapons industry is over eighty years old and the technology cannot be erased or forgotten. We can't turn back now, so we should keep on making them.
10. Since the invention and development of nuclear weapons, countries have still been going to war with one another.
11. Nations having nuclear weapons for protection is like people carrying personal weapons for protection. If they are available to use, there is a chance they will be used for other reasons.
12. Having nuclear weapons makes Britain an important country.
13. No nuclear weapons have been used in war since 1945. Countries having nuclear weapons has stopped them from being used in wars again.
14. Nuclear weapons bases, such as Faslane in Scotland, would be targets in a war. The people living and working nearby are at high risk of being harmed in an attack.
15. Nuclear-free countries are less likely to choose to go to war with countries that have nuclear weapons, because they don't have the same amount of power. This keeps nuclear-armed countries safe.
16. Having nuclear weapons means Britain has a close relationship with other powerful countries around the world.

FOR NUCLEAR WEAPONS	AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS

LEARN

THE ATOMIC BOMB IN WORLD WAR II

Throughout World War II (1939-45), the bombing of civilians grew in intensity all over the world. Many Japanese cities (but not Hiroshima or Nagasaki), were fire bombed by allied forces. This resulted in tens of thousands of casualties. In August 1945, the United States (with written consent from Britain) dropped 2 'atomic bombs' (what we now call 'nuclear weapons') on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

These bombs were thousands of times more powerful than high explosive bombs. Both cities were almost destroyed, and over 100,000 people were killed from the impact of the blasts, and then from exposure to the atomic radiation released by the bombs. Since then no atomic weapons have been used in wars, but the nuclear weapons produced today are far more powerful. There is much debate about whether the atomic bombings in Japan were justified. Supporters of nuclear weapons argue that the bombings were necessary to bring about the end of World War II. People who oppose nuclear weapons argue that this is historically inaccurate, or that the use of atomic bombs can never be justified.

You will now read quotes from politicians, historians and military figures who either supported or opposed the use of the atomic bombs. Notice how one figure appears both for and against - a good demonstration of how our opinions can change over time with hindsight or new information!

QUOTES - FOR THE USE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

1. *"I am surprised that people should adopt a position that rather than throw this bomb, we should have sacrificed a million American and a quarter of a million British lives"*
- Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of Britain at the time of the atomic bombings, who gave Britain's consent for the bombs to be used.
2. *"If the atomic bomb had not been used ...there would have been many more months of death and destruction"*
- Karl Compton, physicist and member of the Interim Committee created to advise the American president on the use of the atomic bombs in 1945.
3. *"Japan's armed forces were determined to fight a final Armageddon battle."*
- Richard B Frank, historian and author of the book "Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire" in 1999

QUOTES - AGAINST THE USE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB

1. *"Japan was that very moment seeking some way to surrender with minimum loss of face. It wasn't necessary to hit them with that awful thing."*
- General Dwight Eisenhower, Commander of Allied forces in World War II, who went on to be the President of America in 1953
2. *"The Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan was decisive in hastening the end of the war in the Pacific which would have occurred even if the atomic bomb had not been used."*
- General Chennault - Commander of the US Air Force in China during World War II
3. *"It would be a mistake to suppose that the fate of Japan was settled by the atomic bomb. Her defeat was certain before the first bomb fell and was brought about by overwhelming maritime power."*
- Winston Churchill, Prime Minister who gave Britain's consent to use the atomic bombs

THINK

THE ATOMIC BOMB IN WORLD WAR II

Read the following viewpoints about the use of the atomic bomb and decide whether they are FOR the use of the bombs, or AGAINST the use of the bombs.

1. The use of the atomic bombs was immoral
2. Dropping the bombs ended the war in Japan
3. The bombings saved many lives around the world
4. The war was already won - Japan wanted to surrender
5. Other parts of World War II claimed many more lives
6. Dropping the atomic bombs on civilians was a war crime
7. The atomic bombs demonstrated the power of the allied forces
8. Dropping the bombs was effective as a military strategy
9. Using the bombs went against the wishes of many people
10. The bombs started the nuclear arms race that nearly ended the world

FOR THE USE OF THE BOMBS	AGAINST THE USE OF THE BOMBS

LEARN

THE COLD WAR

The Cold War lasted for 44 years after the end of World War II. Dropping the atomic bombs on Japan at the end of World War II showed other countries how powerful the American and allied military forces had become. Other countries wanted access to nuclear technology to protect themselves in the future. The Soviet Union (now Russia) in particular wanted to develop its own nuclear weapons programme. After the end of World War II, the Soviets and America were very suspicious of one another. They were both leading world powers, but with very different systems of running their countries and looking after their people.

America was (and is) a capitalist country. This means that they believe people should earn their own money, and if people work hard they will succeed and become wealthy. However, with that wealth comes responsibilities, such as paying for your own housing and healthcare. The Soviet Union was a communist country, meaning they believed that the government

should provide basic rights like housing and healthcare. The government also owned all businesses so everyone received a fair share of profits, and there was a small gap between rich and poor.

The differences between America and the Soviets were in their ideas of how to run a country. The nuclear 'arms-race' became the way that they fought this conflict. Both countries needed to have the most powerful weapons to feel secure. This created fierce competition to create bigger and bigger stockpiles of warheads, and to develop weapons with more and more destructive power. Both countries placed nuclear weapons depots in other countries and conducted nuclear weapons tests all over the world, which was devastating to the local communities. Both countries used spies to find out when new weapons were made and tested by the other country, which increased suspicion and tensions.

Because there was no direct fighting between the two countries, this contest between America and The Soviet Union became known as the 'Cold War'. Countries around the world feared that the escalation of the 'arms-race' in the Cold War would lead to one of the countries firing one of the weapons, either on purpose, or by accident. If this happened, it would force the other country to retaliate, and could result in nuclear weapons being fired all over the world. By 1990, there were 60 thousand nuclear warheads in the world, enough to end human life on earth many times over.

In December 1989, the Presidents of America and The Soviet Union declared the end of the war at a summit in Malta. Several reasons played into this decision. Both countries had signed the United Nations Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1968 and reduced their weapons stockpiles through the 1980s and 1990s. 1989 - 1991 saw a wave of revolution in Europe, where free elections ended communist regimes across the continent. By the end of 1991, The Soviet Union had dissolved into 15 independent states.



THE COLD WAR

Answer the following questions, and then discuss your answers with the rest of the class.

1. How long did the Cold War last?
2. What were spies used for during the Cold War?
3. What is an 'arms-race'?
4. How did the end of the Cold War affect countries around the world?

CHALLENGE

THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS DEBATE

You should now have an understanding of some of the viewpoints for and against nuclear weapons, and some of the facts and opinions that shape those viewpoints. With the information you have, you can start to think about forming your own viewpoints about the strengths and weaknesses of nuclear weapons. Debate is a helpful tool to help you figure out your own viewpoints. When you debate an issue, you have to closely consider both sides of an argument and how you feel about them. By closely considering other people's viewpoints, you might learn new information or change your mind about a topic.

Your challenge, as a class, is to hold your own debate about nuclear weapons. Your debate question is *"Should nuclear weapons exist?"*.

One team will present arguments that are FOR the existence of nuclear weapons. The other team will present arguments that are AGAINST them. After the debate, the class will take a vote about nuclear weapons to see which team was more convincing at arguing their points and influencing people's opinions.

STEP 1 - PREPARING TO DEBATE

Split the class into 2 teams: FOR nuclear weapons, and AGAINST nuclear weapons. The teams discuss their plans for the debate. Think about the viewpoints and arguments you want to share. Think about the viewpoints and arguments the opposite side might use, and how to respond to them. Both teams choose their strongest points to use as opening arguments, and choose one person to present their opening arguments for 2 minutes each.

STEP 2 - HOLD THE DEBATE

Someone from each team takes 2 minutes to present their opening arguments to the class to start things off. The other members of both teams take it in turns to make arguments and counter-arguments back and forth. Everyone should participate at least once. You cannot speak over one another, but you can take notes while the other team is speaking to help you remember what you want to say when it's your turn.

STEP 3 - FINISHING THE DEBATE

The debate is over once everyone on both teams has had a chance to speak. The class holds a secret vote where everyone answers the debate question. You should vote depending on how you really feel about the debate question, no matter what debate team you were on. The teacher reveals the results of the vote to see which side was more convincing!

CHALLENGE

THE WORLD WAR II DEBATE

Your challenge, as a class, is to debate the use of the atomic bombs in Japan. Your debate question is *"Should atomic bombs have been used in Japan?"*.

One team will present arguments that are FOR the use of the atomic bombs. The other team will present arguments that are AGAINST their use. After the debate, the class will take a vote about the bombings to see which team was more convincing at arguing their points and influencing people's opinions.

CHALLENGE

THE WORLD WAR II DEBATE

Your challenge, as a class, is to debate the effects of the nuclear arms race in the Cold War. Your debate question is *“Could the Cold War have ended the world?”*.

One team will present arguments that the Cold War **COULD** have ended the world. The other team will present arguments that it **COULD NOT** have ended the world. After the debate, the class will take a vote about the Cold War to see which team was more convincing at arguing their points and influencing people's opinions.

CHECK

On a scale of 1 to 10, how much do you know now about the debate surrounding nuclear weapons?

0 – 3: I don't know much about nuclear weapons or how people feel about them

4 – 6: I know a bit about nuclear weapons and the arguments for and against them

7 – 10: I feel confident identifying arguments for and against nuclear weapons

Write your answer here: