



# What happened at Hiroshima?

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Ages 11-18 ⌚ 2 min read

At 8:15 in the morning on August 6, 1945, a single American bomber called the Enola Gay flew over the Japanese city of Hiroshima. From its belly fell a bomb unlike any weapon the world had ever seen. When it exploded 600 metres above the city, it created a flash brighter than the sun and temperatures hotter than 3,000 degrees Celsius — hot enough to melt copper.

## The Atomic Bomb

This was the world's first **1** used in warfare. Scientists had discovered they could split tiny particles called atoms to release enormous amounts of energy. The bomb, nicknamed "Little Boy," was only about the size of a large refrigerator, but it had the explosive power of 15,000 tons of dynamite.

Imagine every firework from every Guy Fawkes Night celebration in Britain for the past 100 years exploding at exactly the same moment in the same place — that still wouldn't come close to the power of this one bomb.

## What Happened to the City

The explosion instantly destroyed everything within a 1.6-kilometre radius. Buildings turned to dust, metal melted, and shadows of people were burned permanently into concrete walls. The blast created winds of 1,000 kilometres per hour and started fires that burned for days. Around 80,000 people died immediately, and by the end of 1945, the death toll had risen to about 146,000 as people succumbed to burns and radiation sickness.

Hiroshima wasn't chosen randomly. It was an important military city with weapons factories and army headquarters. But it was also home to hundreds of thousands of ordinary people — families, children, shopkeepers, and teachers who had nothing to do with the war.

## Why It Happened

World War II had been raging for six years, and Japan was the last country still fighting against the Allies. American leaders believed that invading Japan would cost hundreds of thousands more lives on both sides. They thought dropping this terrifying new weapon might shock Japan into surrendering immediately.

Three days later, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 15, Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender, ending World War II. The atomic age had begun, and the world would never be quite the same again.