



Based on a True Story - Winter Reading 2019-2020

Please read *Hiroshima* by John Hersey. The paperback edition of this book can be purchased on Amazon for an inexpensive price, but it can also be found online (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1946/08/31/hiroshima>) from *The New Yorker* for free. Please actively read by taking notes so that you can recall the details and themes of the text. We will spend the first week of school discussing the book, so read thoughtfully and thoroughly.

Along with the reading, please respond in writing to the questions and be prepared to turn them in on the first day back to school. For each question, please write a short paragraph (4-6 sentences) and make sure you provide page numbers for any quotes or scenes you write about.

Questions for Critical Thinking

- 1) Some critics believe this novel illustrates the strength of the human spirit. Cite two instances from the story to support this idea.
- 2) Why did Hersey pick six people whose stories were interconnected in some way? What is the effect of that choice?
- 3) Explain the importance of “face” to the Japanese people. Cite several examples from the text.
- 4) At the end of Chapter One, Hersey writes about Miss Sasaki, who is buried under a pile of books. “There, in the tin factor, in the first moment of the atomic age, a human being was crushed by books.” Discuss the irony in this statement.
- 5) The six main characters are real people who survive the atomic bomb. Hersey writes: “A hundred thousand people were killed by the atomic bomb, and these six were among the survivors. They still wonder why they lived when so many others died. Each of them counts many small items of chance or volition—a step taken in time, a decision to go indoors, catching one streetcar instead of the next—that spared him.”

What does the above statement suggest to the reader about how the six survivors feel about being alive when so many others are killed?

- 6) How would a *novel* about the same subject matter likely be different from *Hiroshima*?