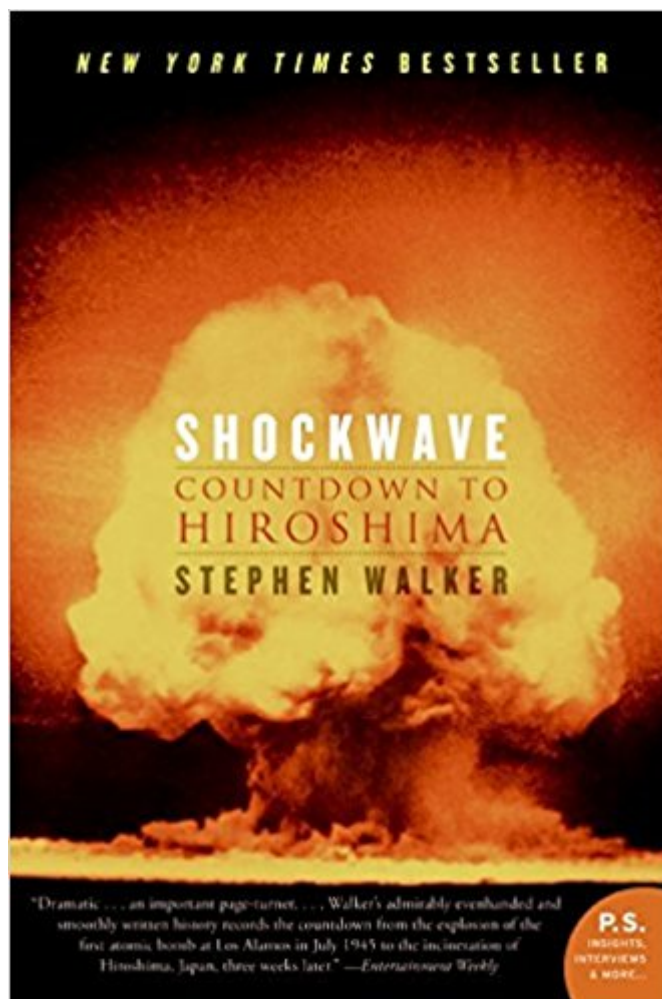


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# Shockwave: Countdown To Hiroshima



## Synopsis

A riveting, minute-by-minute account of the momentous event that changed our world forever. On a quiet Monday morning in August 1945, a five-ton bomb—dubbed Little Boy by its creators—was dropped from an American plane onto the Japanese city of Hiroshima. On that day, a firestorm of previously unimagined power was unleashed on a vibrant metropolis of 300,000 people, leaving one third of its population dead, its buildings and landmarks incinerated. It was the terrifying dawn of the Atomic Age, spawning decades of paranoia, mistrust, and a widespread and very real fear of the potential annihilation of the human race. Author Stephen Walker brilliantly re-creates the three terrible weeks leading up to the wartime detonation of the atomic bomb—from the first successful test in the New Mexico desert to the cataclysm and its aftermath—presenting the story through the eyes of pilots, scientists, civilian victims, and world leaders who stood at the center of earth-shattering drama. It is a startling, moving, frightening, and remarkable portrait of an extraordinary event—a shockwave whose repercussions can be felt to this very day.

## Book Information

Paperback: 400 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (May 9, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060742852

ISBN-13: 978-0060742850

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 0.9 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 69 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #533,050 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #264 in [Books > History >](#)

[Military > Weapons & Warfare > Nuclear](#) #4516 in [Books > History > Military > World War II](#)

#23474 in [Books > History > Americas > United States](#)

## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. The pace of Walker's narrative replicates the frantic advance of August 1945. BBC filmmaker Walker won an Emmy for his documentary on the bombing of Hiroshima and brings precision jump-cuts to this synesthetic account of the 20th century's defining event. Beginning his story three weeks before August 6 (with the first test of a bomb some of its creators speculated might incinerate the earth's atmosphere), Walker takes readers on a roller-coaster ride through the

memories of American servicemen, Japanese soldiers and civilians, and the polyglot team of scientists who participated in the Manhattan Project under Gen. Leslie Groves. He establishes the doubts, fears and hopes of the bomb's designers, most of whom participated from a fear that Nazi Germany would break the nuclear threshold first. He nicely retells the story of Japan's selection months before as a target, reflecting the accelerated progress of the war in Europe, and growing concern among U.S. policymakers at the prospect of unthinkable casualties, Japanese as well as American, should an invasion of Japan's "Home Islands" be necessary. Walker conveys above all the bewilderment of Hiroshima's people, victims of a Japanese government controlled by men determined to continue fighting at all costs. Shockwave's depiction of the consequences invite comparison with John Hershey's still-classic Hiroshima. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

**\*Starred Review\*** Every account of the destruction of Hiroshima is dramatic, but historian and filmmaker Walker has created an exceptionally taut and revealing chronicle. By beginning with the first atomic bomb test in New Mexico on July 16, 1945, and documenting with cinematic selectivity and flow the key events of the next three weeks leading up to August 6, 1945, the day Little Boy was detonated above Hiroshima, he captures the mix of fury and ambition that drove the decision to deploy this barely understood weapon against a civilian population. With an unerring sense of striking detail and ironic juxtaposition, Walker cuts from the tension at Los Alamos to Potsdam--where Truman, Churchill, and Stalin met to decide Japan's fate--to the top-secret airbase on the tiny Pacific island of Tinian, from which the Enola Gay took flight. Here are sharp and searching close-ups of the bomb makers and the bomb's victims, including Taeko Nakamae, then a girl soldier, and a doctor, Shuntaro Hida, who both survived the apocalypse and share their horrific memories 60 years later. Walker brings a fresh, judicious perspective to the eternally shocking story of Hiroshima, which must be told and retold so that its terrible lessons are never forgotten. Donna Seaman Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Well done! Reads like a novel but is really a history book in disguise. I found this to be an excellent read and a thoroughly referenced resource to this time period in history, the main characters, and the prevailing motivation for the bomb and its delivery. Ending the war quickly with Japan was certainly a goal (without the need for invading mainland Japan) but the race for a "one-up" on

Russia was also a goal...little did we know they had a spy in New Mexico. Quite a "heady" time for nuclear science and the arms race. Will definitely make you the smartest guy in the room when your kids come home with the inevitable middle school debate question: "should we or shouldn't we have dropped the bomb on Japan"?

This is a very interesting history of the weeks leading up to the attack on Hiroshima. The story is told from a tactical, personal perspective. You'll learn of stories from both the American and Japanese side of events. I found it to be a great companion to "The Making of the Atomic Bomb," *The Making of the Atomic Bomb: 25th Anniversary Edition* which offers a more technical and strategic perspective.

Shockwave is a detailed account of the development of the atomic bomb, the selection of the crew that would carry out the mission, and the actual narrative of events that took place during the bombing mission over Hiroshima. It begins with a description of the formation of the Manhattan Project and the extreme confidentiality that surrounded this mission. The mission was so top secret that the wives of the scientists were never told what was going on. Selecting the crew for the B-29 bombing mission was highly selective. Colonel Paul Tibbets was regarded as the top pilot of all the aviators in the U.S. military. But he had to pass a test of honesty in order to be offered the job as the first pilot to drop an atomic bomb on the enemy. He had to confess that he had been arrested for a fling with one of the females at his training base. Once he did that, he was named the pilot for the mission. Training for this mission took place on the island of Tinian, a strategically located island which featured three lengthy runways, each one being a mile and a half in length. The crew was treated like royalty and received the best of everything, including the best steaks and the best living quarters. Meanwhile the training continued with countless bombing runs testing the new B-29's which were specially made for such missions....they could fly at an altitude of 30,000 feet, they had hydraulic bomb bays, and pressurized compartments for the crew. They could also carry the weight of a bomb weighing 9,000 pounds! But the extreme torque produced in the engines at takeoff could cause fires to break out and explode the aircraft....this would've been catastrophic with an atom bomb on board. For this mission, the B-29 had to be stripped of everything except the fuel tanks and the enormous bomb....only one tailgunner was allowed to defend the aircraft from attack. After the atomic bomb had been tested in the desert and was successful, President Truman was ready to issue a formal demand for an unconditional surrender by the Japanese. But when they chose to "reply with silence", Truman gave the order to drop the bomb. After much fanfare, numerous pictures

taken under floodlights, and a quick coat of paint spelling Enola Gay (the pilot's mother) on the nose of the plane, the crew was ready for takeoff on their historic mission.....destination....the Empire. The trip would be fraught with danger. From the start, Colonel Tibbetts would need every inch of the mile and a half runway to launch the Enola Gay off the ground. While in flight, the atom bomb needed to be "armed" or it wouldn't detonate. This task demanded electronic wizardry at the highest level, and one of the scientists on the crew commanded that special accumen. Once the aircraft arrived over Hiroshima, the crew encountered heavy cloud cover, which forced them to circle until they had a perfect visual view of the target. The blast was so powerful that the entire aircraft and crew could've easily been destroyed except for the mastery of the pilot, Colonel Tibbetts. After the bombing, President Truman expected a swift and unconditional surrender from the Japanese. Instead, they stalled for more time hoping that Russia could broker a more generous surrender which would allow them to keep their Emperor. When the deadline for that lapsed, Truman ordered a second atomic bomb to be dropped, promising a "rain of ruin". The intended target was Kokura, but cloud cover forced the pilot to bomb a secondary target instead.....Nagasaki. After Russia declared war against Japan, the Japanese gave and surrendered. Not many people knew that the U.S. military was planning a massive land invasion of the Japanese empire on November first. Estimates of U.S. losses in such an invasion reached as high as one million while Japan's losses would've been in the millions. Truman hoped that the two atom bombs would make them surrender so that the land invasion wouldn't be necessary...he wanted to end the war and stop the killing. This fascinating account of the development and bombing mission of the atom bomb addresses the question that has been asked for the last 70 years.....did the U.S. need to drop two atom bombs on Japan to make them surrender? This detailed account is extremely riveting and I'd recommend it to anyone who's a WW II history buff.

I can't put it down. I wish there was an Audible edition of this book. It's a minute-by-minute account and is relentlessly to the point. No long history about multiple players, no digressing. Anything and everything related to the A-Bomb project is there, but no fat, like personal incidents, when they were children, etc. At times, it is really funny: like Groves wielding power like a God and acting like one. And the film getting chewed up at Tinian, or the upside-down military insignia. I hope the author writes more books like these.

Exceptional account of the making of the atomic bomb. This book brings the story to life as so many people worked hard to find a way to harness the power of the atom in hopes of ending WWII. A

fascinating read. The destructive power of this weapon has been a deterrent to help preserve the peace for almost 70 years. This book is a must read for anyone interest in this subject and the history of nuclear weapons.UPDATE: With the 70th anniversary of the end of WWII, I have gone back and read this book again. I strongly recommend this highly readable and very interesting book. The world has remained safer since the development and employment of these weapons. How can I say that? Look at combat casualties that occurred in world conflict before 1945 compared to after 1945. World powers have exercised more restraint. We can all wish that nuclear weapons could be eliminated, but this will probably never happen. Read this book to better understand how this journey started. As a military officer in the nuclear enterprise, I recommend this book wholeheartedly.

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