

Distance Learning for Middle School

Social Studies Lesson

Instructions: This article provides background information to explain the images from Lesson 11. As you read, underline words that you do not immediately know the meaning of. Find context clues that assist you in making meaning for these words or look them up in a dictionary. Write a synonym for each above the word or in the margin. Then complete the “after reading task” to summarize your learning.

1 **Atomic Tourism in Nevada**

2 PBS, An American Experience <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/atomic-tourism-nevada/>

3 On April 22, 1952 about 200 reporters from across the country gathered on a mound of volcanic rock on the
4 edge of Yucca Lake in Nevada. The journalists and cameramen were there to witness the detonation of a
5 nuclear bomb on United States soil. Such tests had been in operation for more than a year, but for the first
6 time, the press had been invited to record and broadcast the nuclear explosion. Dubbed "News Nob," the
7 journalists' post was only ten miles from ground zero, giving Americans, from the safety of their living
8 rooms, a front seat proxy to the explosion.

9 **Upward Like a Huge Umbrella**

10 One journalist, writing for the Department of State *Washington Bulletin*, described witnessing the blast:
11 "You put on the dark goggles, turn your head, and wait for the signal. Now -- the bomb has been dropped.
12 You wait the prescribed time, then turn your head and look. A fantastically bright cloud is climbing upward
13 like a huge umbrella.... You brace yourself against the shock wave that follows an atomic explosion. A heat
14 wave comes first, then the shock, strong enough to knock an unprepared man down. Then, after what seems
15 like hours, the man-made sunburst fades away."

16 **Ground Zero**

17 The 31-kiloton bomb, nicknamed the "Big Shot" by the press and "Charlie" by the Atomic Energy
18 Commission, was enormous when compared to the 13-kiloton and 20-kiloton bombs that the United States
19 had dropped respectively on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan, during World War II. The broadcast of the
20 explosion awed Americans and officially touched off the atomic craze that swept the nation, for which Las
21 Vegas, merely 65 miles away and the closest city to the testing site, became ground zero.

22 **Nuclear Defense**

23 Americans were in the midst of the Cold War, building bomb shelters and practicing air raid drills,
24 when President Harry Truman selected 640 square miles in Nevada, once a part of the Nellis Air Force Base,
25 as the Nevada Proving Grounds, the only peacetime, above ground nuclear testing site in the continental
26 United States. It had been deemed necessary to conduct tests on nuclear devices in order to develop
27 sufficient protection should such a device be used against Americans.

28 **Atomic City**

29 Las Vegas were only made aware of the impending tests two weeks before the first detonation. Although
30 some Las Vegas were concerned about the possible dangers of such activity nearby, a major government
31 publicity campaign and the potential for increased publicity -- and thus, increased business -- quelled many
32 of their misgivings. As they had done with the construction of the Boulder Dam more than twenty years
33 before, Las Vegas jumped at the chance to market themselves as a tourist attraction. As they had once
34 touted their city as the "Gateway to the Boulder Dam," Las Vegas began promoting their hometown as
35 "Atomic City."

