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

- One journalist, writing for the Department of State *Washington Bulletin*, described witnessing the blast:
- "You put on the dark goggles, turn your head, and wait for the signal. Now -- the bomb has been dropped.
- You wait the prescribed time, then turn your head and look. A fantastically bright cloud is climbing upward
- like a huge umbrella.... You brace yourself against the shock wave that follows an atomic explosion. A heat
- wave comes first, then the shock, strong enough to knock an unprepared man down. Then, after what seems
- 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
- 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,
- 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 Vegans were only made aware of the impending tests two weeks before the first detonation. Although
- 30 some Las Vegans 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
- of their misgivings. As they had done with the construction of the Boulder Dam more than twenty years
- before, Las Vegans jumped at the chance to market themselves as a tourist attraction. As they had once
- touted their city as the "Gateway to the Boulder Dam," Las Vegans began promoting their hometown as
- 35 "Atomic City."

A Vegas Attraction 36

- Days after the first bomb was detonated on January 27, 1951, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce issued a 37
- stream of press releases excitedly describing the new testing grounds as one of the many attractions Las 38
- Vegas had to offer. As one official described, "The angle was to get people to think the explosions wouldn't 39
- 40 be anything more than a gag."

Nuclear Innocence 41

- After the April 22, 1952, televised broadcast of the bomb, atomic culture swept the nation, and Las Vegas 42
- became the epicenter of the craze. The mushroom cloud associated with the bomb became an icon for Las 43
- 44 Vegas, adorning postcards, candy, toys, showgirls' headdresses and more. Las Vegas establishments like the
- Flamingo and the Sands hawked the Atomic Cocktail, the Atomic Hairdo and Miss Atomic Bomb beauty 45
- contests. 46

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Atomic Tourism

- The Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce issued a calendar for tourists, listing the scheduled times of the bomb 48
- detonations and the best places to view them. The Sky Room at the Desert Inn, offering a panoramic view of 49
- the Nevada horizon, was a favorite watch spot of tourists, as was nearby Mount Charleston. Many tourists 50
- packed "atomic box lunches" and had picnics as close to ground zero as the government restrictions would 51
- allow. On the eve of detonations, many Las Vegas businesses held "Dawn Bomb Parties." Beginning at 52
- midnight, guests would drink and sing until the flash of the bomb lit up the night sky. 53

One Bomb Every Three Weeks for 12 Years

- In addition to generating tourism, the Nevada Test Site also brought thousands of military personnel, 55
- thousands of jobs and more than \$176 million in federal funds to the region, two-thirds of which went back 56
- into Las Vegas' economy. For twelve years, an average of one bomb every three weeks was detonated, at a 57
- total of 235 bombs. Flashes from the explosions were so powerful that they could reportedly be seen from as 58
- far away as Montana. Scientists claimed that the radiation's harmful effects would have dissipated and been 59
- harmless once the shock waves reached Las Vegas, and they scheduled tests to coincide with weather 60
- patterns that blew fallout away from the city. However, as the tests continued, people in northeastern Nevada 61
- and southern Utah began complaining that their pets and livestock were suffering from beta particle burns 62
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and other ailments; site.	by 1963 the Limited Te	est Ban was in effect, b	panning above ground n	uclear testing at the
After Reading Task	k: Summarize the tex	t in a 30 word "Twee	t".	