The Atomic Bomb

Before World War II, scientists around the world were discovering many new things about the smallest unit of matter: the atom. When World War II started, countries wanted to use these discoveries to build new weapons. They especially wanted to make an atomic bomb. This type of bomb is made by splitting the atom into two parts. The explosion of this bomb would be more destructive than anything the world had ever seen.

The United States was not the only country trying to make an atomic bomb. Japan and Germany also had scientists busily working on a bomb. It was a race. Whoever developed the bomb first would win World War II. They could also end the war and save the lives of soldiers. However, the great loss would be in civilian life. The bomb could not pick and choose to kill only soldiers. Innocent men, women, and children would die.

Scientists in the United States were the first to learn the secret of splitting the atom. On August 6, 1945, the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb with the code name of “Little Boy.” The bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

Below is part of President Truman’s speech about his decision to drop the atomic bomb.

August 9, 1945
We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war. We have used it in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans. We shall continue to use it until we completely destroy Japan’s power to make war.

The United States dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan on August 9, 1945.

After the second attack, Japan surrendered.

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1 civilian: a person who is not in the military
2 agony: intense pain
3 surrender: to give oneself up into the power of another
1. All of the following countries were trying to make an atomic bomb except:
   a. France
   b. The United States
   c. Japan
   d. Germany

2. Most of the casualties caused by the bomb were civilians because the bomb
   a. killed only people who were not in uniform.
   b. killed everyone around it.
   c. was dropped on a military base.
   d. was dropped in the ocean.

3. The country that won the race to build the first atomic bomb was
   a. Japan
   b. France
   c. Germany
   d. The United States

4. Where was the second bomb dropped?
   a. Hiroshima, Japan
   b. Nagasaki, Japan
   c. Berlin, Germany
   d. Phoenix, Arizona

5. The passage is mainly about
   a. the military tactics used in WWI.
   b. how the United States built its first atomic bomb.
   c. the race to build the first atomic bomb during WWII.
   d. Truman’s decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan.
6. Whom do you think Truman was speaking to when he gave his speech after the dropping of the bomb?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

7. What is something special that happens in an atomic bomb?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

Several countries were trying to build an atomic bomb, ________ Germany.

a. despite  
b. also  
c. including  
d. further

9. Answer the following questions based on the sentence below.

Before World War II, scientists discovered many things about atoms.

Who? scientists

(did) What? ______________________________________________________

When? __________________________________________________________


Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: ________________________________
Passage Reading Level: Lexile 800

Featured Text Structure: Descriptive – the writer explains, defines, or illustrates a concept or topic

Passage Summary: While many countries were working to figure out how to build an atomic bomb during World War II, the U.S. was the first to succeed. The first two atomic bombs ever used in war were dropped by the U.S. on Japan. After the second one, Japan surrendered.

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**Suggested answer:** Truman was speaking mainly to the American people and their Allies because they were the ones who would care about making the war shorter and about saving American lives. He might also have been speaking to Japan as a secondary audience, with the purpose of warning them that the atomic bomb attacks would continue until Japan surrendered.

7. What is something special that happens in an atomic bomb?

**Suggested answer:** In an atomic bomb, atoms are split into two parts.

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Who? scientists

(did) What? **discovered many things about atoms**

When? **before World War II**

10. **Vocabulary Word:** agony: intense pain.

Use the vocabulary word in a sentence: answers may vary.