



Section 1

GUIDED READING *Cold War:  
Superpowers Face Off*

**A. Analyzing Causes and Recognizing Effects** As you read this section, take notes to explain how each of the following actions or policies led to the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.

1. Meeting at Potsdam, Germany	2. Policy of containment
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3. Truman Doctrine	4. Marshall Plan
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5. Blockade of Berlin	6. Formation of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)
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7. Policy of brinkmanship	8. Launching of <i>Sputnik I</i>
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**B. Determining Main Ideas** On the back of this paper, explain the objectives and organization of the **United Nations**.


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**33**

 LITERATURE SELECTION *from The Nuclear Age*  
 by Tim O'Brien

## Section 1

*The main character of this novel by American author Tim O'Brien, 49-year-old William Cowling, grew up under the dark cloud of anxiety that loomed during the height of the Cold War. In this excerpt, Cowling recalls how he reacted to the threat of nuclear attack when he was growing up in the United States in the 1950s. As you read, think about the steps Cowling takes to protect himself. Do you think his plan could help him survive a nuclear war?*

When I was a kid, I converted my Ping-Pong table into a fallout shelter. Funny? Poignant? A nifty comment on the modern age? Well, let me tell you something. The year was 1958, and I was scared. Who knows how it started? Maybe it was all that CONELRAD stuff on the radio, tests of the Emergency Broadcast System, pictures of H-bombs in *Life* magazine, strontium 90 in the milk, the times in school when we'd crawl under our desks and cover our heads in practice for the real thing. Or maybe it was rooted deep inside me. In my own inherited fears, in the genes, in a coded conviction that the world wasn't safe for human life.

Really, who knows?

Whatever the sources, I was a frightened child. At night I'd toss around in bed for hours, battling the snagged sheets, and then when sleep finally came, sometimes close to dawn, my dreams would be clotted with sirens and melting ice caps and radioactive gleamings and ICBMs whining in the dark.

I was a witness. I saw it happen. In dreams, in imagination. I watched the world end. . . .

Even as a kid, maybe because I was a kid, I understood that there was nothing make-believe about doomsday. No hocus-pocus. No midnight fantasy. I knew better. It was real, like physics, like the laws of combustion and gravity. I could truly see it: a sleek nose cone, the wiring and dials and tangled circuitry. Real fire-power, real danger. I was normal, yes, stable and levelheaded, but I was also willing to face the truth.

Anyway, I didn't have much choice. The nightmares had been squeezing my sleep for months, and finally, on a night in early May, a very quiet night, I woke up dizzy. My eyeballs ached. Things were so utterly silent I feared I'd gone deaf. Absolute

silence. I sat up and wiped my face and waited for the world to rebalance itself. I'd been dreaming of war—whole continents on fire, oceans boiling, cities in ash—and now, with that dreadful silence, it seemed that the universe had died in its sleep.

I was a child. There were few options.

I scrambled out of bed, put on my slippers, and ran for the basement. No real decision. I just did it. Basement. I thought.

I went straight for the Ping-Pong table.

Shivering, wide awake, I began piling scraps of lumber and bricks and old rugs onto the table, making a thick roof, shingling it with a layer of charcoal briquettes to soak up the deadly radiation. I fashioned walls out of cardboard boxes filled with newspapers and two-by-fours and whatever basement junk I could find. I built a ventilation shaft out of card-

board tubing. I stocked the shelter with rations from the kitchen pantry, laid in a supply of bottled water, set up a dispensary of Band-Aids and iodine, designed my own little fallout mask.

When all this was finished, near dawn, I crawled under the table and lay there face up, safe, arms folded across my chest.

And, yes. I slept. No dreams.

My father found me down there. Still half asleep, I heard him calling out my name in a voice so distant, so muffled and hollow, that it might've come from another planet.

I didn't answer.

A door opened, lights clicked on. I watched my father's slippers glide across the concrete floor.

"William?" he said.

I sank deeper into my shelter.

"Hey, cowboy," my father said. "Out."

His voice had a stern, echoing sound. It made me coil up.

*I was a witness.  
I saw it happen.  
In dreams, in  
imagination,  
I watched the  
world end.*

"Out," he repeated.

I could see the blue veins in his ankles. "Okay, in a minute," I told him. "I'm sort of busy right now."

My father stood still for a moment, then shuffled to the far end of the table. His slippers made a whish-whish noise. "Listen here," he said, "it's a swell little fort, a dandy, but you can't—"

"It's not a fort," I said.

"No?"

And so I explained it to him. How, in times like these, we needed certain safeguards. A line of defense against the man-made elements. A fallout shelter.

My father sneezed.

He cleared his throat and muttered something. Then, suddenly, in one deft motion, he bent down and grabbed me by the ankles and yanked me out from under the table.

Oddly, he was smiling.

"William," he murmured. "What's this?"

"What?"

"This. Right here."

Leaning forward, still smiling, he jabbed a finger at my nose. At first I didn't understand.

"Oh, yeah," I said. "It's a fallout mask."

Actually, of course, it was just a paper bag filled with sawdust and charcoal briquettes. The bag had ventilation holes in it, and the whole contraption was attached to my face by strings and elastic bands. I grinned and started to show him how it worked, but my father raised his arm in a quick jerky movement, like a traffic cop, as if to warn me about something, then he squeezed my shoulder.

"Upstairs," he said. "On the double. Right now."

He seemed upset.

He pulled the mask off and marched me up the stairs, coming on strong with all that fatherly stuff about how I could've caught pneumonia, how he had enough to worry about without finding his kid asleep under a Ping-Pong table. All the while he kept glancing at me with those sharp blue eyes, half apprehensive and half amused, measuring.

When we got up to the kitchen, he showed my mother the mask. "Go ahead," he said, "guess what it is." But he didn't give her a chance. "A fallout mask. See there? Regulation fallout mask."

My mother smiled.

"Lovely," she said.

Then my father told her about the Ping-Pong table. He didn't openly mock me; he was subtle about it—a certain change of tone, raising his eyebrows when he thought I wasn't looking. But I was looking. And it made me wince. "The Ping-Pong table," he said slowly, "it's now a fallout shelter. Get it? A fallout shelter." He stretched the words out like rubber bands, letting them snap back hard: "Fallout shelter. Ping-Pong."

"It's sweet," my mother said, and her eyes did a funny rolling trick, then she laughed.

"Fallout," my father kept saying.

Again, they didn't mean to be cruel. But even after they'd scooted me in for a hot bath, I could hear them hooting it up, making jokes, finally tiptoeing down to the basement for a peek at my handiwork. I didn't see the humor in it.

Over breakfast, I tried to explain that radiation could actually kill you. Pure poison, I told them.

Or it could turn you into a mutant or a dwarf or something. "I mean, cripes," I said, "don't you guys even think about it, don't you worry?" I was confused. I couldn't understand those sly smiles. Didn't they read the newspapers? Hadn't they seen pictures of people who'd been exposed to radioactivity—hair burned off, bleeding tongues, teeth falling out, skin curled up

like charred paper? Where was the joke in all that?

Somehow, though, I started feeling defensive, almost guilty, so finally I shut up and finished my pancakes and hustled off to school. God, I thought, am I crazy?

But that didn't end it.

All day long I kept thinking about the shelter, figuring ways to improve on it, drawing diagrams, calculating, imagining how I'd transform that plywood table into a real bastion against total war. In art class, I drew up elaborate renovation blueprints: in study hall, I devised a makeshift system for the decontamination of water supplies: during noon recess, while the rest of the kids screwed around, I began compiling a detailed list of items essential to human survival.

No question, it was nuke fever. But I wasn't wacko. In fact, I felt fully sane—tingling, in control.

In a way, I suppose, I was pushed on by the

***"The Ping-Pong table," he said slowly, "it's now a fallout shelter. Get it? A fallout shelter."***

memory of that snug, dreamless sleep in my shelter. Cozy and walled in and secure. Like the feeling you get in a tree house, or in a snow fort, or huddled around a fire at night. I'll even admit that my motives may have been anchored in some ancestral craving for refuge, the lion's instinct for the den, the impulse that first drove our species into caves. Safety, it's normal. The mole in his hole. The turtle in his shell. Look at history: the Alamo, castles on the Rhine, moated villages, turrets, frontier stockades, storm cellars, foxholes, barbed wire, an attic in Amsterdam, a cave along the Dead Sea. Besides, you can't ignore the realities. You can't use psychology to explain away the bomb.

I didn't need a shrink. I needed sanctuary.

And that's when the Pencil Theory hit me. I was sitting at my desk during the final hour of classes that day, daydreaming, doodling, and then bang, the answer was there like a gift from God. For a second I sat there frozen. I held the solution in my hand—a plain yellow pencil.

"Pencils," I said.

I must've said it in a loud voice, too loud, because the teacher suddenly jerked her head and gave me a long stare. I just smiled.

The rest was simple.

When the final bell rang, I trotted down to the school supply room, opened up my book bag, stuffed it full of No. 2 soft-lead pencils, zipped the bag shut, and hightailed it for home. Nothing to it. I didn't like the idea of thievery, but this wasn't a time for splitting moral hairs. It was a matter of live or die.

That evening, while my mom and dad were watching *I've Got a Secret*, I slipped down into the basement and quietly went to work reinforcing my shelter.

The theory was simple: Pencils contain lead; lead acts as an effective barrier against radiation. It made perfect sense. Logical, scientific, practical.

Quickly, I stripped the table of everything I'd piled on it the night before, and then, very carefully, I began spreading out the pencils in neat rows, taking pains not to leave any cracks or spaces. Wizard, I thought. I replaced the lumber and bricks and rugs, added a double layer of charcoal briquettes, and then crowned it off with an old mattress. All told, my shelter's new roof was maybe three feet thick. More important, though, it now included that final defensive shield of solid lead.

## Research Options

1. **Evaluating Courses of Action** William builds a fallout shelter so that he'll be safe in the event of a nuclear war. What are the pros and cons of his design? First, research the effects of nuclear war in the 1950s. Then determine whether William's fallout shelter would protect him from those effects. Share your conclusions with classmates.
2. **Creating a Multimedia Presentation** Some Americans did build backyard fallout shelters during the Cold War. Find different pictures—photographs, diagrams, advertisements—that illustrate what these fallout shelters looked like. To locate pictures, you might use resources such as history books about the Cold War in the 1950s and early 1960s, magazine articles from the time, or print or on-line encyclopedia articles. With your classmates, create a bulletin board display of fallout shelters. Then, as a class, compare the real fallout shelters with William's.

**CHAPTER**  
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**Section 1**

**CONNECTIONS ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES**

*Restoring the Peace*

**THEMATIC CONNECTION:**  
**POWER AND AUTHORITY**

*As you read in this chapter, two superpowers—the United States and the Soviet Union—emerged at the end of World War II. Allied during war, they disagreed sharply over postwar plans for the “victorious peace” and split Europe into a democratic West and a Communist East. After World War I, the Treaty of Versailles tried to establish a lasting peace, but Europe was at war again barely 20 years later. What factors might account for the continuing tensions after both world wars of the twentieth century? Review Chapter 29, Section 4, and answer the questions that follow.*

1. After World War I, the victorious allies had different goals. France and England, determined to protect their national security, wanted to punish Germany and make it incapable of fighting another war. America’s President Wilson wanted to create a lasting peace supervised by the League of Nations.
  - a. After World War II, what were the U. S. goals for peace? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. What were the goals of the Soviet Union? \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. After World War I, the Allies took territory away from Germany, limited the size of the German army, and required Germany to pay \$33 billion in reparations. How did the Allies treat Germany after World War II? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. The Treaty of Versailles established the League of Nations after World War I. However, the United States did not join, Germany and the Soviet Union were not members, and the League proved unable to preserve world peace. How successful was the United Nations, the world peacekeeping body established after World War II? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. The Soviet Union was not included in the peace discussions among the Allies after World War I. In fact, some of its territory was taken to form independent nations in central Europe.
  - a. How did the other Allies treat the Soviet Union after World War II? \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. How might the experience of the Soviet Union after World War I have affected its policies after World War II? \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. The United States refused to sign the Treaty of Versailles or join the League of Nations after World War I. How was U.S. policy different after World War II? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
6. A little more than 20 years after World War I ended, another massive international conflict began. Even though there have been many wars since the end of World War II, there has not been a worldwide war. In your opinion, what are the major factors that have contributed to the relative peace since World War II? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

CHAPTER  
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## Section 1

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY Super Spy Plane

*During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and the United States competed for influence in the world and in space. The ability of one nation to gather secret information about the other was vital to maintaining power. As a result, each country spent millions of dollars to develop spying technology.*

By the early 1960s, the American U-2 spy planes were becoming vulnerable to surface-to-air missiles. As a result, the United States Air Force asked the Lockheed Corporation to develop a reconnaissance plane that could fly faster than the speed of sound. At the super-secret “Skunk Works” in Palmdale, California, Lockheed engineers developed the world’s fastest airplane. Originally code-named Project Oxcart, the SR-71 Blackbird entered active service in 1966 and became one of the most amazing aircraft ever to fly.

This plane is 161 feet long and is covered with special black paint that makes it nearly invisible to radar. The Blackbird holds the world speed record for an airplane, which stands at 2,193 miles per hour—more than three times the speed of sound. It normally flies at altitudes above 85,000 feet. By comparison, a passenger jet flies around 500 miles per hour at altitudes of about 33,000 feet.

The shell of the SR-71 is made of titanium. A large amount of heat from air friction causes the skin of the plane to expand during flight. Captain Thomas L. Peterson, a Blackbird pilot, said “The [windshield] gets so hot that a pilot can’t keep his hand on it for more than 20 seconds even with flame-retardant gloves.” A fast landing speed requires the use of a parachute to help the plane stop. The wheels are filled with nitrogen, instead of normal air, to keep the tires from burning up when they touch the runway. Special fuel, called JP-7, was developed to keep the engines running at high altitudes.

Blackbird crews start getting ready for a flight three days before takeoff. Navigation preparation is especially important since the plane covers more than 30 miles every minute. The pilot, navigator, and radar officer wear pressure suits similar to an astronaut’s and use oxygen tanks to help their breathing. Special engines are used to start the aircraft. During photographic spying missions, the Blackbird’s cameras can take pictures of 100,000 square miles every hour.

The SR-71 was used extensively for spying and

reconnaissance missions during the Vietnam War and the several years that followed. Improved technology of space-based spy satellites, combined with high maintenance and operating costs of the SR-71, made it difficult to justify the continued operation of the plane.

The last operational flight of an SR-71 was made in 1989, and the remainder of the Blackbird squadrons have since been deactivated. It flew for almost 25 years, set many still-standing speed records, and made an immeasurable contribution to national security during a difficult time in the history of the United States.

### Questions

1. **Drawing Conclusions** Why did the Air Force decide to stop flying the SR-71?
2. **Clarifying** How much area can the Blackbird’s cameras photograph in an hour?
3. **Comparing and Contrasting** Compare the advantages and disadvantages of a space-based satellite and the SR-71 Blackbird.

Courtesy Lockheed Martin Skunk Works.



A Blackbird soars through the sky. In 1991, the SR-71 broke the transcontinental speed record when it flew from California to Maryland in just over an hour.



## Section 1

## RETEACHING ACTIVITY

# *Cold War: Superpowers Face Off*

**Reading Comprehension** Find the name or term in the second column that best matches the description in the first column. Then write the letter of your answer in the blank.

- |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Soviet leader at Yalta  | A. Marshall Plan                      |
| _____ 2. International organization formed to protect its members against aggression   | B. Harry S. Truman                    |
| _____ 3. U.S. president at Yalta   | C. brinkmanship                       |
| _____ 4. British representative at conference at Potsdam, Germany  | D. Truman Doctrine                    |
| _____ 5. Phrase used to represent Europe's division into mostly democratic Western Europe and Communist Eastern Europe       | E. Stalin                             |
| _____ 6. U.S. foreign policy directed at blocking Soviet influence and stopping the expansion of communism                   | F. Franklin D. Roosevelt              |
| _____ 7. Truman's pledge of support for countries that rejected communism  | G. Warsaw Pact                        |
| _____ 8. U.S. assistance program that would provide food, machines, and other materials to European countries that needed it | H. containment                        |
| _____ 9. Struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union over political differences carried on by means short of war | I. North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| _____ 10. Defensive military alliance of 10 Western European nations with the United States and Canada                       | J. iron curtain                       |
| _____ 11. Soviet alliance with East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania                 | K. Cold War                           |
| _____ 12. Willingness of a country to go to the edge of war  | L. United Nations                     |

