

# The Bomb

Theodore Taylor

## TEACHER GUIDE

**NOTE:**

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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### Thinking

Brainstorming, analysis,  
compare and contrast,  
evaluating

### Vocabulary

synonyms/antonyms,  
base/root words, words in  
context

### Listening/Speaking

Discussion, drama, role play

### Comprehension

Predicting, sequencing,  
cause/effect

### Literary Elements

Character, setting, plot  
development, story  
mapping, figurative  
language, point of  
view, conflict

### Writing

Free writing, research, letter,  
poetry, news article, radio  
address, simile, persuasion,  
interview

### Other

Multicultural activity, science,  
art, geography, current  
events

## Summary of *The Bomb*

*The Bomb* tells the story of Sorry Rinamu and his family on Bikini Atoll at the end of World War II and the years that follow. Sorry is nearly fourteen years old when the story opens and about to take his place as a man among the islanders of Bikini. Intrigued by the “other world,” Sorry longs to visit the big cities and see the wonderful things pictured in his Japanese magazine. When his Uncle Abram returns to the island after many years’ absence, however, Sorry learns that the “other world” might not be as wonderful as he thinks. Abram tells him of the dirty cities with too many people and too much noise. Because Abram knows English, he also understands the radio news announcements describing the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by “the bomb to end the world” and shares the terrible news with Sorry and the other islanders. When the American government announces plans to relocate the Bikinians so it can test the destructive powers of the atomic bomb near their homeland, Abram vows to stop them through protest. Abram’s untimely death stops him from carrying out his plan, but Sorry takes up his uncle’s cause and vows to stop the test bombing and save his home.

## About the Author

Theodore Taylor has written numerous young people’s books including *The Cay*, *Timothy of the Cay*, *Sniper*, *Walking Up a Rainbow*, *The Weirdo*, *The Trouble with Tuck*, *Tuck Triumphant*, *Maria*, *The Maldonado Miracle*, and *The Outer Banks Trilogy*. Taylor served aboard the USS *Sumner* in 1946 and was involved in the navy’s work at Bikini Atoll. His inspiration for *The Bomb* emerged from a doll he found on Bikini after the islanders had been removed for the test bombing. In the author’s note at the end of the novel, Taylor writes that the test bombing at Bikini created a “modern Trail of Tears, the unjust removal of the people of Bikini from their homeland, and endless unkept promises.”

## Introductory Activities

1. **Previewing the book:** Have students look at the cover of the book and make some guesses about the story. Ask: What picture appears on the cover of the book? What kind of bomb is exploding in the picture? Why is a boat also pictured? What kind of boat is it? Do you think there may be people on the boat? Why or why not? Where do you think this story probably takes place? Why?

Given the following clues, ask students to write a paragraph predicting what they think will happen in the story.

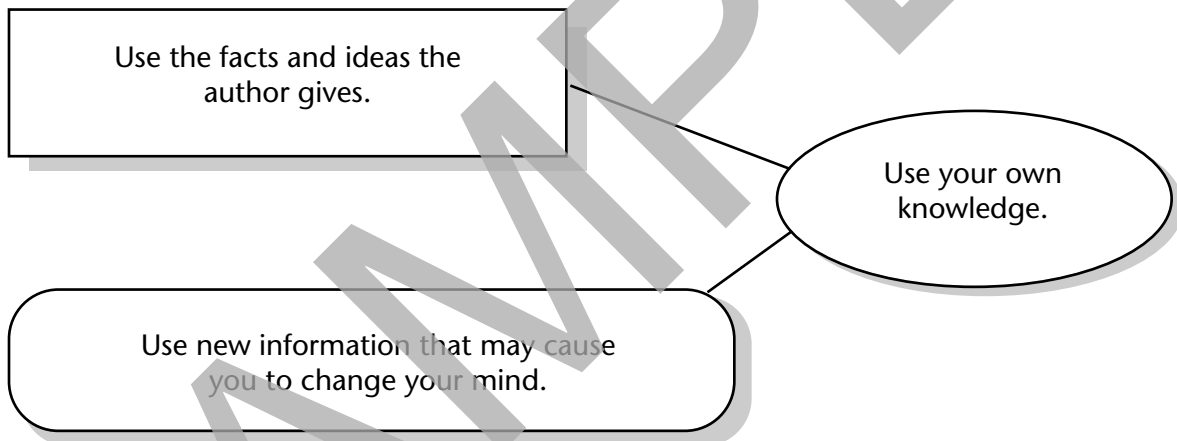
bomb                      ocean                      boat                      boy                      grandfather

2. Create an **attribute web** (see next page) with students for each of the following ideas: war, progress, home, family, courage. Focus on one word at a time. Begin by writing the word in the center of a large piece of paper. Ask students to quickly tell what each word brings to mind. Encourage students to elaborate on particular ideas.

## Using Predictions in the Novel Unit Approach

We all make predictions as we read—little guesses about what will happen next, how the conflict will be resolved, which details given by the author will be important to the plot, which details will help to fill in our sense of a character. Students should be encouraged to predict, to make sensible guesses. As students work on predictions, these discussion questions can be used to guide them: What are some of the ways to predict? What is the process of a sophisticated reader's thinking and predicting? What clues does an author give us to help us in making our predictions? Why are some predictions more likely than others?

A predicting chart is for students to record their predictions. As each subsequent chapter is discussed, you can review and correct previous predictions. This procedure serves to focus on predictions and to review the stories.



Predictions:

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## Book I: Bikini

### Chapter 1—pages 3-9

#### Vocabulary

lagoon (3)	wails (3)	paralleled (4)	pandanus (4)
quivered (4)	throbbing (5)	bewildered (5)	atoll (5)
islets (5)	ventured (5)	ebbing (6)	clatter (6)
jabbering (6)	squat (6)	descendant (7)	chieftan (7)
outriggers (7)	wondrous (8)	inferior (8)	taro (8)
catchments (9)	cisterns (9)	corrugated (9)	

#### Discussion Questions

1. How do the people react to the airplanes flying over the island? (*They are startled and run to the beach to see the planes.*) Why? (*They are accustomed to the quiet atmosphere on the island.*)
2. Why are the people happy to know the pilots are Americans? (*They think the Americans will free them from the Japanese.*)
3. Describe the Bikini Atoll. (*Bikini is the largest and most beautiful of twenty-six islands in the Ralik chain. It is four miles long and less than a half mile wide.*)
4. Why is Sorry's fourteenth birthday an important occasion? (*He will officially become a man.*)
5. Why do the islanders call the Japanese weather station the "house of fear"? (*The Japanese soldiers attacked the island women. They never smile and are never polite.*)
6. Why does Chief Juda and Jonjen think it is a bad idea to kill the Japanese soldiers? (*They think Japanese soldiers will come and shoot everyone on Bikini.*)
7. Who are the outriggers? (*boats that visit from other islands*) Why are their visits to the island important? (*They bring news from the other islands.*)
8. The author says that after the outriggers left, people would "talk about the talking." What does that mean? (*The islanders talk about the celebration and visiting that has taken place.*)

#### Supplementary Activities

1. **Multicultural Study:** Throughout the story, the author uses several Marshallese words and terms. Have students begin a Marshallese glossary that lists each word with its definition. As students read the following chapters, they may add new Marshallese words to the glossary.
2. **Literary Analysis/Story Maps:** Have students begin a story map (see page 10 of this guide) to use as they read the story. As they read the book, they can add new information about the characters, setting, problems, and events of the story.
3. **Predicting:** Have students begin a prediction chart (see page 6 and 7 of this guide) to use as they read the story. At the end of each chapter, students record the characters and major conflicts in the story. They then predict what will happen next in the story and give reasons for their predictions.
4. **Critical Thinking:** This book does not include titles for individual chapters. Have students think about the events from Book I, Chapter 1 and write an appropriate title for it. Post the students' titles and let the class vote on the best one. Repeat this activity at the end of each chapter.