

Cuban Missile Crisis and Tennessee

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

Author: Patricia Lockhart

Grade Level: 5th Grade

Date Created: 2017, standards updated 2019

Visit <http://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education> for additional lesson plans.



Introduction: After the end of World War II Americans had a lot to celebrate. Nevertheless, the country was on edge with the threat of a nuclear attack. Schools prepped students while the government prepared cities and government officials. People feared atomic weapons. Therefore, the Civil Defense department in Tennessee constructed plans, test exercises, and fallout shelters in case of a nuclear attack.

Guiding Question(s):

- How did Tennessee prepare for a nuclear attack?
- What was the goal of the Civil Defense Department?
- What was the purpose of a fallout shelter?

Learning Objectives: The goal of this lesson is to evaluate Tennessean concerns about the Soviet Union's nuclear weapons and the possibility of a nuclear attack. Students will analyze correspondence regarding the preparing of Tennessee's Civil Defense and read informational text to be able to speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Curriculum Standards:

5.23 Examine how Cold War events impacted the U.S., including : *Arms Race, and *Cuban Missile Crisis (in relation to Tennessee). (C, E, G, H, P)

RI 5.1 - Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

RI 5.7 - Draw on information from multiple print or digital sources, demonstrating the ability to locate an answer to a question quickly or to solve a problem efficiently.

RI 5.9 - Integrate information from several texts on the same topic in order to write or speak about the subject knowledgeably.

Page 1 of 4

Materials Needed:

- [Correspondence between Mr. Sutermeister and Governor Frank Clement](#)
- [Copy of letter from Gov. Clement to Oscar Sutermeister](#)
- "I have...Who Has..." cards, cut into individual cards
- [Personal Preparedness in the nuclear age](#)
- [Tennessee Civil Defense "Test Exercise Memo" for June 14-15, 1954.](#)
- [The letter from Governor F. Clement dated for November 12, 1954.](#)
- [Transcribed address by Governor Clement at the Memphis Civil Defense Banquet on April 20, 1954](#)
- **"Bert the Turtle: Duck and Cover" (1951)** Bingo sheet
- Popsicle stick and pipe cleaner or Construction Paper
- [Fallout Shelter Booklet](#)
- [Family Shelter Designs Booklet](#)
- [The Spoils of our October "Victory"! Political cartoon](#)

Introduction to Activities: The following activities are constructed to add vigor to your lesson using primary sources as authentic materials as well as complex text. The Introductory Video and Introductory Activity are great ways to introduce the lesson and the primary sources. (The primary sources are full of great text and interesting information.) Each activity, Activities 1-5, can be setup as learning stations.

Introductory Video - "[Bert the Turtle: Duck and Cover](#)" (1951) -

Pass out the Bingo Sheet and show the video about Bert the Turtle.

Complete the **"Bert the Turtle: Duck and Cover" (1951)** bingo sheet as a way to formatively assess the students' comprehension of the knowledge. (Duration: 15 minutes)

Lesson Activities: "We Have...Who Has...." Introduction Activity

Divide the class into 8 small groups. Give each group 1 primary source. Give the groups about 5-8 minutes to browse through their primary source. Next, pass out the "I have...Who Has..." cards. Match the cards with the source number as indicated below. The first group will give a description of the primary source that they have in their possession. (*Example: I have a letter from Mr. Sutermeister to Governor Clements.*) Then they would read their "Who Has..." card. (*Example: Who has...a pamphlet on Personal Preparedness in the Nuclear Age?*) (Duration: 20 minutes)

Card 1 and [Primary Source 1](#)

Card 5 and [Primary Source 5](#)

Card 2 and [Primary Source 2](#)

Card 6 and [Primary Source 6](#)

Card 3 and [Primary Source 3](#)

Card 7 and [Primary Source 7](#)

Card 4 and [Primary Source 4](#)

Card 8 and [Primary Source 8](#)

Page 2 of 4

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 1

Writing a Letter

Mr. Sutermeister wrote Governor Frank Clement [a letter](#) offering to aid Tennessee in their defense against nuclear weapons. Governor Clement [responded](#) to Mr. Sutermeister. Carefully read both letters. From the point of view of Sutermeister, write another letter to Governor Clement detailing how he plans to help Tennesseans prepare themselves against a nuclear attack. (How would you, as Mr. Sutermeister, help Tennesseans prepare against a nuclear attack?)

Materials Needed: [Letter from Mr. Sutermeister and Governor Frank Clement.](#)

[Letter from Governor Clement to Mr. Sutermeister](#)

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 2

Civil Defense Memo and Text Dependent Questions

The Tennessee Civil Defense department had to practice what to do in the case of an atomic/nuclear attack. This [“Test Exercise” happened on June 14-15, 1954.](#) Read through the memo with a partner. Answer the following questions and cite evidence explicitly from the text.

- How is the public expected to participate in the Test Exercise?
- What cities are on the “Assumed to be Attacked” list?
- What are the nicknames for a Red Alert, Yellow Alert and a White Alert?
- Under “Purpose of Exercise,” which do you feel is most important? Explain why.
- What agency gives assistance to people who are in need of temporary housing?

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 3:

Using a Primary Source to Answer an extended Response Question.

On November 12, 1954, Governor Frank Clement wrote a letter about Russia possibly attacking Tennessee with her planes and bombers. What evidence does he provide as reasons Tennessee should prepare for a nuclear attack? Be sure to cite evidence from the letter that supports your reasoning.

Materials Needed: [The letter from Governor Clement dated for November 12, 1954.](#)

Page 3 of 4

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 4

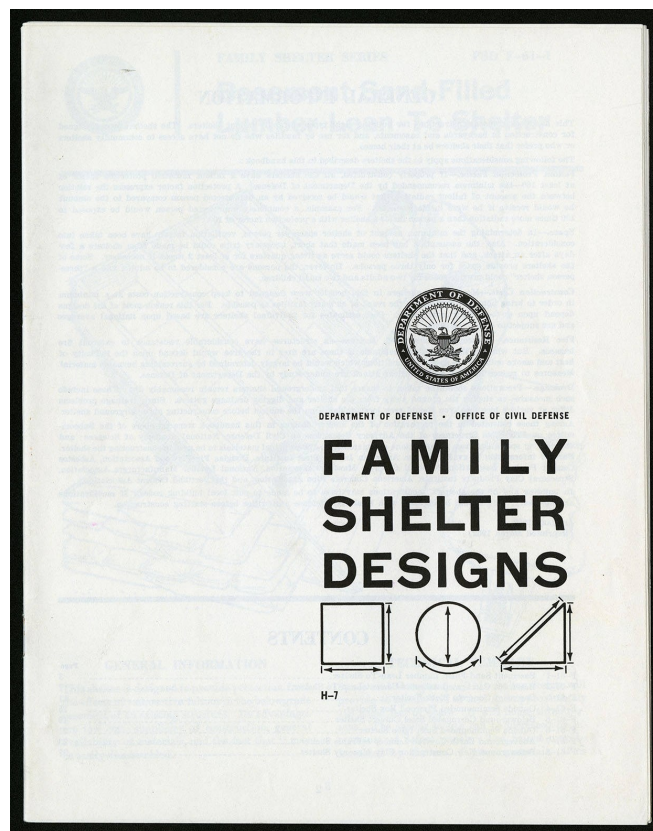
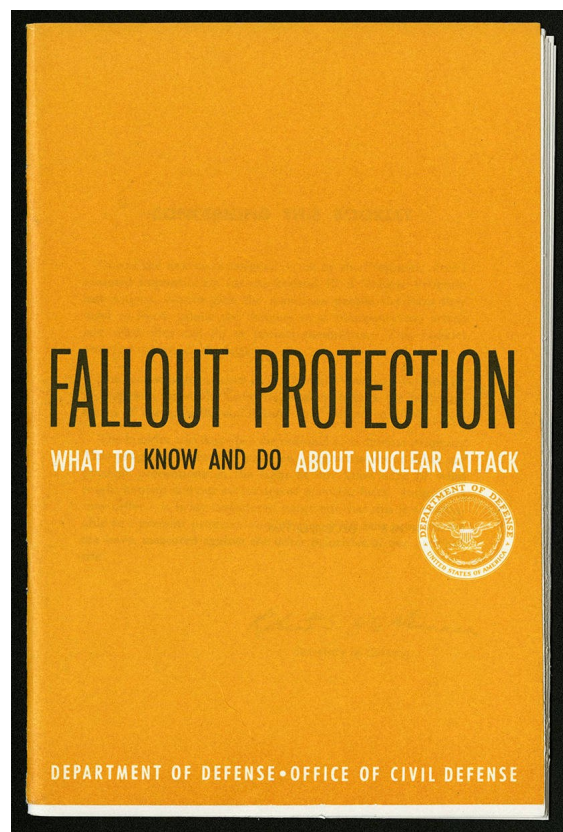
Creating High Questions

Read the [transcript of Governor Clement from a Civil Defense Banquet](#) in Memphis, TN. Imagine that you are a reporter in the room during the delivery of his message and you don't agree with everything Governor Clement is saying. Generate some questions you might ask him based upon his speech? (For example: "Governor Clement, if we would never use these nuclear weapons in a war of aggression, then why did we use them on Hiroshima?" Inquire if any of your classmates can answer your questions in defense of Governor Clement.

Materials Needed: [Transcribed address by Governor Clement at the Memphis Civil Defense Banquet on April 20, 1954](#)

Lesson Activities Continued: Activity 5

Allow the students to browse through the following pamphlets: [Fallout Protection](#) and [Family Shelter Designs](#). The students can construct their own fallout shelter using popsicle sticks and pip cleaners or draw a diagram of their fallout shelter using construction paper and drawing supplies.



“Bert the Turtle: Duck and Cover” Bingo Sheet

Directions: Watch the “*Bert the Turtle: Duck and Cover*” video. Listen for the “key terms” in the Bingo Sheet. As you hear the “key terms” mark them off until you have Blackout Bingo.

Bert the Turtle was very alert.	Atomic Bomb	Civil Defense
Duck and Cover in the hall away from windows	Safe shelters	Duck and Cover
The children duck and cover under the desk.	Be ready at anytime.	Atomic burn flash burns worse than a sun burn.
Enemy planes	“With warning and without any warning”	Loud sirens.

Cuban Missile Crisis “I Have...Who Has.”

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 1</u></p> <p>I have..... -I have a letter from Mr. Sutermeister to Governor Clements</p> <p>Who Has.... -A pamphlet on Personal Preparedness in the Nuclear Age?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 2</u></p> <p>I have..... -A pamphlet on Personal Preparedness in the Nuclear Age?</p> <p>Who Has.... -An address by Governor Clement to the Civil Defense discussing the threat of atomic warfare?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 3</u></p> <p>I have..... -An address by Governor Clement to the Civil Defense discussing the threat of atomic warfare.</p> <p>Who Has.... -Operations Alert test exercise by the Tennessee Civil Defense on what to do in the case of an atomic/nuclear attack?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 4</u></p> <p>I have..... - Operations Alert test exercise by the Tennessee Civil Defense on what to do in the case of an atomic/nuclear attack?</p> <p>Who Has.... -A letter Governor Frank Clement wrote about Russia possibly attacking Tennessee with her new long-range missiles, planes and bombers?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 5</u></p> <p>I have..... -A letter Governor Frank Clement wrote about Russia possibly attacking Tennessee with her new long-range missiles, planes and bombers.</p> <p>Who Has.... -A booklet that instructs families on how to build a fallout shelter?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 6</u></p> <p>I have..... -A booklet that instructs families on how to build a fallout shelter.</p> <p>Who Has.... -A book about what to know and do about a nuclear attack?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 7</u></p> <p>I have..... -A book about what to know and do about a nuclear attack.</p> <p>Who Has.... -A political cartoon about the Cuban Missile Crisis.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Card 8</u></p> <p>I have..... -A political cartoon about the Cuban Missile Crisis.</p>