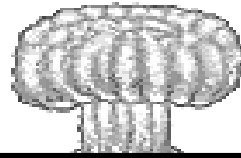


Trust US



Springboard:

Students should study the “Marshall Islands Nuclear Tests” graph and answer the questions.

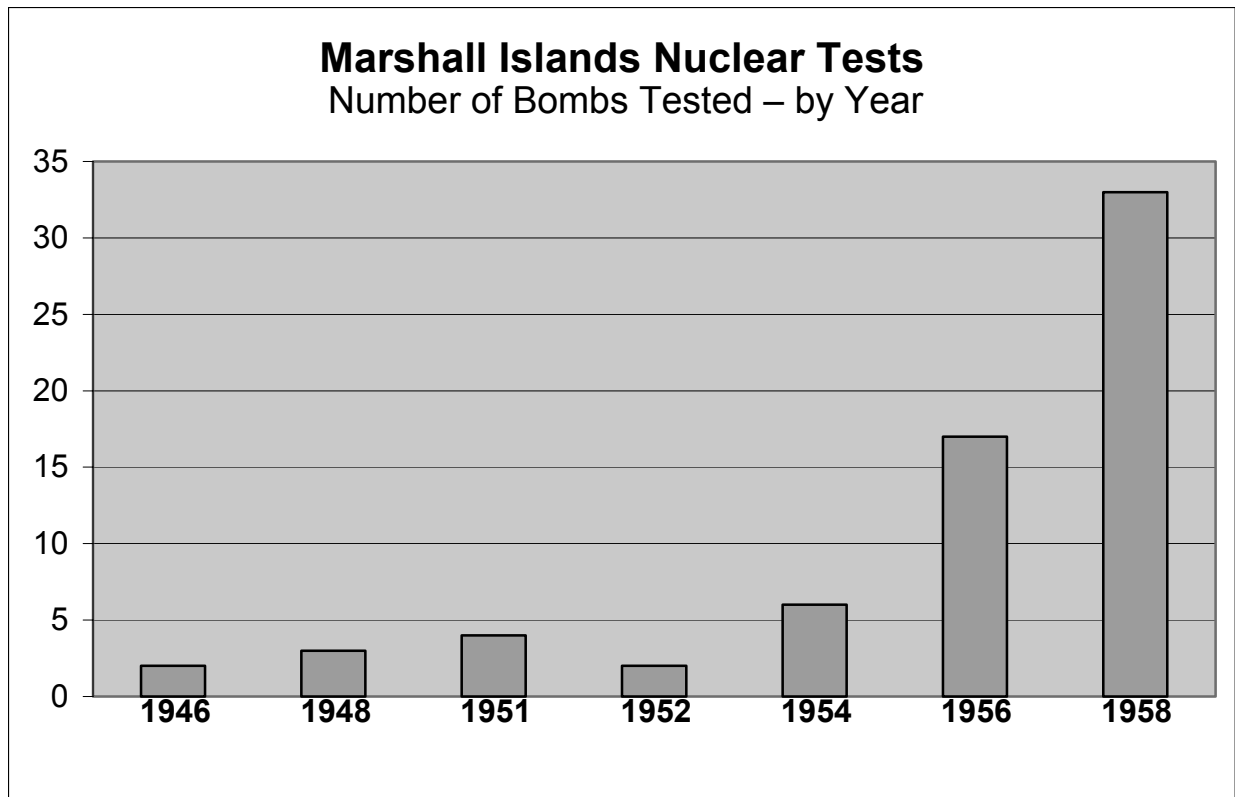
Objective: The students will be able to explain how the Cold War affected the people of the Marshall Islands.

Materials: Marshall Islands Nuclear Tests (Springboard transparency)
Nuclear Tribunal for the Republic of the Marshall Islands (handouts or transparencies)

Terms to know: **Cold War** – time of tension and competition between communist and free countries
class action suit – lawsuit filed for a group of people
exile – forced separation from one’s homeland

Procedure:

- While students may have other answers, the CORRECT Springboard answers are (1) 67; (2) the U.S.; (3) the Cold War nuclear arms race; and (4) the relatively small population of the islands.
- After discussing the Springboard, explain that Marshall Islanders are still experiencing the effects of those tests such as cancers and other illnesses. In fact a group of islanders from Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands has sued the U.S. government. The case went to a special court called a “tribunal” in 2001.
- Go on to explain that in this lesson the students will pretend to be judges in the tribunal. They can be given copies of the “Nuclear Tribunal for the Republic of the Marshall Islands” to read on their own, or you can display the pages on transparencies to read as a group. The handout is adapted from the actual case documents. The complete tribunal documents can be found at: www.bikiniatoll.com/NuclearClaimsTribunalDec.pdf.
- If time allows, students can read “testimony” (interviews) with Bikinians found at www.bikiniatoll.com/Bikini%20Sources.html. You could print out a few interviews and let some students read them and “testify” in their own words about what life has been like for the Bikini people.
- They should then discuss what they think should have been or should be done for the people of Bikini Atoll. Explain that one of the jobs of the Tribunal was to decide how much money, if any, the people of Bikini should receive for “damages.”
- Then explain that the Nuclear Claims Tribunal found that the Bikini people should be awarded more than \$563 million (loss of value \$278 million, restoration costs \$251.5 million, suffering and hardship \$33.8 million), except the Nuclear Claims Tribunal doesn’t have the money to pay the claim, so the Bikinians must ask the U.S. Congress for it. This is expected to take many years and it is uncertain if the United States will honor their claim.
- Students should answer the objective question about the Cold War Era.



- (1)** About how many nuclear bombs were exploded in the Marshall Islands from 1946-1958?
- (2)** What country do you think would have been doing nuclear tests in the Marshall Islands in the 1940's and 50's?
- (3)** Why do you think nuclear testing was being done?
- (4)** Why do you think the Marshall Islands would have been chosen as a test site?

NUCLEAR TRIBUNAL FOR THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

In the Matter of
The People of Bikini Atoll
Claimants

NCT No. 23-40134

MEMORANDUM OF DECISION AND ORDER

Summary:

This claim is a class action suit for and on behalf of the People of Bikini for damage as a result of the United States' Nuclear Testing Program.

Bikini Atoll is located in the northwestern Marshall Islands of Micronesia and was used by the Government of the United States as a testing site for nuclear weapons from 1946 to 1958. The People of Bikini were removed from Bikini Atoll on March 7, 1946. After that twenty-three atomic and hydrogen bombs were exploded there over the next twelve years. These explosions changed the island's geography and left it contaminated with radiation.

The People of Bikini Atoll ask for payment for damages resulting from those tests in three categories: loss of use of their land; costs to restore their land and homes; payment for hardships suffered by the Bikini people because of being moved from their land.

The People of Bikini Atoll have not had the use of their island since March 7, 1946, and this loss of use will continue until steps are taken to again make the land livable. Despite this long period of time, it was never the intent of the United States to permanently prevent the Bikini People from returning to their land. Expert witnesses have given testimony that the total fair value of the land on Bikini Atoll, for both past and future use, is equal to 278 billion dollars (US).

Unless the radiation on Bikini Atoll is cleaned up, Bikini Atoll cannot support human life. Reports and testimony at this Tribunal suggest more than 20 ways to clean up the island. The cost of such a cleanup would range from \$218 million to \$1.4 billion.

The People of Bikini have also suffered during their years in exile from Bikini Atoll. Such hardships include food shortages, hunger, disease, loss of culture, and pain and discomfort.

Background:

Bikini Atoll is a low-lying atoll in the northwestern Marshall Islands about 400 miles from the capitol city of Majuro. It has a lagoon in the center that is 240 square miles in size and, before the testing, had a total dry land area of 2.94 square miles of coral islands around the lagoon.

On March 29, 1944, American forces landed on Bikini Atoll and captured it from the Japanese. In December 1945, after the end of World War II, the United States chose Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands as the site for "Operation Crossroads," the first post-war test of nuclear weapons and U.S. President Harry Truman approved. At the time the Marshall Islands were a "trust territory" of the United States under U.S. control after being taken from Japan after World War II.

On March 7, 1946, the People of Bikini were removed from the island and taken to Rongerik Atoll. At the time the U.S. government told them that they could return at the end of Operation Crossroads in early 1947. Then, from 1946 to 1958, the United States exploded twenty-three atomic bombs at Bikini Atoll. (Others were exploded elsewhere in the Marshall Islands.) The largest and most damaging of these tests, called the "Bravo Shot," was done in 1954. This explosion had a force 750 times more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan.

In the early 1970's, following limited cleanup, some of the Bikini people were allowed to return to the island to live. Then, in 1978, medical exams proved that their bodies had high levels of radiation and they had to leave the island immediately.

Conclusion:

Through the process of several hearings, the Tribunal has heard from various experts and from the People of Bikini themselves. It has reviewed reports and documents totaling thousands of pages. The process has been a long and difficult one, as the Tribunal has had to deal with many issues. However, nothing the Tribunal has seen or heard can begin to compare with the fact that the People of Bikini have been in exile for some 55 years now. Although the Tribunal has seen that the People of Bikini have suffered loss and injury to themselves, their land, and their property, nothing can make up for the damage, loss, and hardship they have suffered over the years. The Tribunal can only hope to bring an end to this tragedy and allow the People of Bikini to move forward.