

Days 158 & 159: “The Atomic Café” Questions

This film combines the primary sources of newsreels, military training films, advertisements and other footage from the Cold War era, juxtaposed with speeches, radio broadcasts and actual music produced during that era. This is one of the better-known films among documentary filmmakers and was made in 1982, while the Cold War was in full-swing. Keep in mind that this film is an attempt to show the craziness of the Cold War Era. Whether you believe this time was as crazy as the film portrayed it to be, I'll leave up to you.

Description of the Chapters:

1. (00:00 – 04:52) Trinity test, description of dropping the bomb on Japan by the pilot.

REVIEW:

- *What was the project called in the United States that developed the nuclear bomb?*
- *What were the two types of bombs that were developed?*
- *Do you feel Paul Tibbets' reaction was appropriate? How do you feel dropping the bomb on Hiroshima affected him?*

2. (04:52 – 10:23) Pres. Truman on the atomic bomb, US determination to use the bomb to force a Japanese surrender, devastation of Japanese cities, why Hiroshima & Nagasaki were chosen, graphic images of bomb victims & their injuries.

- *How did the pilot of the Nagasaki flight describe his experience? Do you feel his reaction was appropriate or not?*
- *Do you feel Americans felt any empathy toward the Japanese victims? Explain your rationale.*

3. (10:23 – 16:45) Montage showing peace after WWII, testing the bomb on the Bikini atoll, risks of using the bomb & myths about the bomb

- *What did the United States government do to their Polynesian hosts?*
- *What lies were told to the Polynesian islanders?*
- *What wound up happening to the Bikini Atoll in the end?*

4. (16:45 – 20:49) Newsreel explaining the Cold War situation 1947; small town communist takeover “experiment” to show that “it can happen here” too, ad linking shopping centers to resist communism

- *What do you feel was causing Americans paranoia during this time?*

- *Was the American government doing this by design, or was it an unintended consequence of the Cold War?*

5. (20:49- 27:04) Soviets get the bomb; bomb shelters and precautions in a montage with 1950s music; beginning of the Korean War and deciding whether or not to use the atomic bomb

- *How was the Korean War portrayed during this portion of the film?*

- *Which examples of bias did you find in the presentation of the conflict?*

- *When the Soviets detonated the bomb, what did it usher in?*

6. (27:04 – 35:36) Let your congressman know how you feel about using the bomb; military training film about communist propaganda on the home front; trial & sentence of the Julius & Ethel Rosenberg including descriptions of the executions

- *What was McCarthyism and the Red Scare?*

- *What parallels are there to the Red Scare in modern times?*

- *What were the Rosenbergs convicted of? What were they symbolic of?*

7. (35:36 – 41:57) Flashback to 1950: public opinion on the H bomb; scary cartoons about communism; Eisenhower's rise to power; 1950s lifestyles juxtaposed with Eisenhower speech; H Bomb testing

- Summarize President Eisenhower's speech- What was he stating?

- How does American consumerism compare to lives of the people in Communist nations?

8. (41:57 – 50:46) Third World War? US military cannot stop an atomic attack; life when both Super Powers have the bomb; after-effects of atomic tests on people living in the Pacific; US army film on rumors & myths about atomic bombs; army footage of testing on pigs.

- What falsehoods about the bomb did Americans believe in regards to the bomb at the time?

- What collateral damage was suffered due to American nuclear testing? i.e.) Polynesians, Japanese Fishermen, Town in Utah

9. (50:46 – 1:01:20) Soldiers preparing for atomic bomb training exercises in the desert & actual test; clearing up misconceptions about the effects of an atomic bomb explosion and presenting the risks of atomic testing as minimal.

- What lies were told to American soldiers?

- How could the American government rationalize and justify such actions?

10. (1:01:20 – 1:10:21) bomb drills in school & explaining it to students, 4-H preparation for a bomb shelter; building bomb shelters; Khrushchev & Nixon argue on TV; how to protect your family with a shelter

- What were children taught during the Cold War?

- *Was this type of indoctrination different from Fascist and Communist regimes? Explain your answer.*

11. (1:10:21 – 1:19:00) emerging from your bomb shelter; atomic bomb song; atomic bomb shelters; applause for Nixon's willingness to use the bomb; mental health & the bomb; what if an attack happened tomorrow? Procedures for an atomic attack.

- *What effect do you think bomb shelters had on the American psyche?*

- *How would you compare these bombing drills of the past to the modern lockdown drill?*

12. (1:19:00 – 1:21:08) atomic bomb detonates; total destruction; credits roll at 1:21:08

- *Was the Cold War era a better or worse time to be alive than today? Explain your answer.*

13. Which chapter was the most ridiculous? What about it was so ludicrous?

14. Although I've preached all year about the value of primary sources, do you feel the filmmakers used primary sources to create propaganda and a bias, or was it an accurate depiction of the Cold War Era? Explain your thinking.