

NOT BORING MEDIA

THE DAY THE SUN ROSE TWICE

High-Interest Nonfiction Reading Passage

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ Reading Passage ✓ Comprehension Questions
- ✓ Answer Key ✓ Teacher Guide

GRADES 4-6 • LEXILE ~750L • DOK LEVELS 1-4

Reading they'll actually do.

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WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ✓ High-interest nonfiction reading passage (300-400 words)
- ✓ 6 comprehension questions spanning DOK levels 1-4
- ✓ Complete answer key with explanations
- ✓ Teacher guide with standards, pacing, and extensions

Questions or feedback? Leave a review or message us through TPT!

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THE DAY THE SUN ROSE TWICE

On July 16, 1945, residents across New Mexico and neighboring states witnessed something no human being had ever seen before: what appeared to be a second sunrise lighting up the predawn sky. The Trinity test—the first nuclear explosion in human history—was so blindingly bright that it briefly illuminated the darkness like daylight for observers up to 200 miles away from the blast site.

The test took place at exactly 5:29 in the morning in a remote desert location called Jornada del Muerto, a Spanish name meaning 'Journey of the Dead Man.' Scientists from the top-secret Manhattan Project had gathered in reinforced bunkers to witness the detonation of a plutonium implosion bomb—the same basic design that would destroy the Japanese city of Nagasaki just three weeks later, helping to end World War II.

The explosion dramatically exceeded all scientific predictions and calculations. Researchers had estimated a yield equivalent to between 5,000 and 10,000 tons of TNT. The actual yield was over 20,000 tons—more than double the upper prediction. The fireball instantly vaporized the 100-foot steel tower holding the bomb and created a crater over 1,000 feet wide in the desert floor. The distinctive mushroom cloud rose approximately 40,000 feet into the atmosphere.

Residents across a vast area reported seeing the brilliant flash and feeling the powerful shockwave that followed. Windows shattered in towns more than 100 miles from the test site. The government initially told curious citizens that an ammunition storage facility had accidentally exploded, hiding the true nature of the test until after the war ended.

Project director J. Robert Oppenheimer later famously recalled that a line from Hindu scripture came to his mind as he watched the explosion: 'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds.' Many of the scientists present felt deeply conflicted emotions—tremendous pride in their technical achievement combined with horror at the destructive implications of what they had created.

The Trinity test marked humanity's irreversible entry into the atomic age. That artificial sunrise over the New Mexico desert remains one of history's most consequential moments.

Word Count: 345 | Lexile: ~750L | Grades 4-6 | Source: U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 **What date was the Trinity test?**

- A) July 4, 1945
- B) July 16, 1945
- C) August 6, 1945
- D) August 9, 1945

2 **What was the actual yield?**

- A) 5,000 tons
- B) 10,000 tons
- C) Over 20,000 tons
- D) 100,000 tons

3 **Why did the government lie?**

- A) They didn't know
- B) To hide the nuclear program until after the war
- C) They were embarrassed
- D) Nothing happened

4 **What does Oppenheimer's quote reveal?**

- A) Pure excitement
- B) Conflict between achievement and horror
- C) Regret for starting
- D) Confusion

5

Why is Trinity so consequential?

- A) Biggest explosion ever
- B) Humanity gained power to destroy itself
- C) It ended WWI
- D) Science is good

6

What responsibility do scientists have?

- A) None
- B) Consider consequences and advocate for responsible use
- C) Only peaceful projects
- D) Governments decide

ANSWER KEY

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- 1.** B) July 16, 1945

DOK 1 — Recall.

- 2.** C) Over 20,000 tons

DOK 1 — Recall.

- 3.** B) To hide the nuclear program until after the war

DOK 2 — Inference.

- 4.** B) Conflict between achievement and horror

DOK 2 — Inference.

- 5.** B) Humanity gained power to destroy itself

DOK 3 — Analysis.

- 6.** B) Consider consequences and advocate for responsible use

DOK 4 — Extended Thinking.

TEACHER GUIDE

The Day The Sun Rose Twice

STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.4.1 — Refer to details and examples in a text
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.4 — Determine meaning of words and phrases
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.5.8 — Explain how author uses evidence
- NGSS — Connections to scientific practices
- C3 Framework — Historical thinking skills

PACING OPTIONS

- Quick Read (10-15 min): Passage + questions 1-4
- Standard (20-25 min): Full passage + all questions
- Deep Dive (35-40 min): Add discussion + extension

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Oppenheimer felt conflicted about his creation. Should scientists refuse to work on weapons?
- The Trinity test was kept secret. When is government secrecy justified?
- How has living in the nuclear age affected how humans think about the future?

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Create a timeline of nuclear weapons development and use.
- Research the long-term effects on the Trinity test site.
- Write a journal entry from the perspective of a scientist watching the first nuclear explosion.

DIFFERENTIATION

- Struggling: Pre-teach vocabulary, partner reading
- Advanced: Add research, compare to related events
- ELL: Visual supports, pre-teach context

SOURCE

- U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit / BBC