**Bomb: The Race to Build and Steal the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon**

By: Steve Sheinkin

Publisher: Roaring Brook Press

Copyright: 2012

Genre: Nonfiction

Setting: 1940’s during the beginning of World War II and the development of the atom bomb

**SUMMARY:**
Steve Sheinkin once again proves his prowess in writing non-fiction that is gripping as well as accessible. *Bomb: The Race to Build and Steal the World’s Most Dangerous Weapon* tells the story of the contest between the United States and Germany to build an atomic bomb and the Soviet Union’s successful efforts to steal those discoveries. There are several stages in which the characters play their roles but it is Sheinkin’s brilliance that weaves their stories together that is truly enthralling. From brilliant physicists like Robert Oppenheimer to spies like Lona Cohen to commandos like Knut Haukelid, this book explores the personalities and motivations for heroism and treachery. You may want to read more about this subject when you finish this book.

**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH:**
Steve Sheinkin was born in Brooklyn, NY. His family lived in Mississippi and Colorado before moving back to New York, settling in the northern suburbs of NYC. As a child, his favorite books were action stories and outdoor adventures. He attended Syracuse University and now lives with his wife and two kids in Saratoga Springs, NY just down the road from the Saratoga National Historical Park.

Other books written by the author:

- *King George: What Was His Problem?: Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn’t Tell You about the American Revolution*
- *Two Miserable Presidents: Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn’t Tell You about the Civil War*
- *Which Way to the Wild West: Everything Your Schoolbooks Didn’t Tell You about America’s Westward Expansion*
- *The Notorious Benedict Arnold; A True Story of Adventure, Heroism and Treachery*
- *Lincoln’s Grave Robbers.*

**SIMILAR BOOKS/BOOKS WITH A SIMILAR THEME:**

- *Why Did Hiroshima Happen?* By R.G. Grant
- *Himoshima and Nagasaki: Fire from the Sky* by Andrew Langley
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS
1. Why do you think Harry Gold and others decided to give the secrets of the atomic bomb to the Russians? What would you have done in their place?

2. Did President Truman make the right decision when he decided to drop the bombs on Japan? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Oppenheimer gave secrets to the Russians? Why or why not?

4. The chapter, “Quiet Fellow,” ends with this statement: “It was a decision that would haunt him for the rest of his life.” Discuss why this episode would haunt Dr. Oppenheimer. Do you think he felt guilty about his decision? (p.61-65)

5. Discuss how the development of the atomic bomb has affected your life. What do you believe you can do to promote peaceful existence between the nations of the world? Do have any anxiety about countries such as Iran and North Korea’s capabilities to fire a nuclear weapon at the United States?

6. Discuss “collateral damage.” On pg. 113, we learn 26 Norwegian civilians were killed when Knut Haukelid and his commandos sunk the ferry carrying the German heavy water. Discuss your feelings about the loss of innocent lives during any war.

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LITERARY LINKS or ACTIVITIES:

http://voicerussia.com/radio_broadcast/58461471/88640121.html
http://www.hanford.gov/c.cfm/oci/ci_briefingcenter.cfm
**Language Arts**
Write a letter that one of the people in the book may have written to a friend explain why they’d suddenly disappeared, without giving away any secret information.

On. Pg. 135, Theodore Hall (1925-1999), stating why he chose to share the secrets of building an atomic bomb with the Russians said, “It seemed to me that an American monopoly was dangerous and should be prevented.” Research Theodore Hall online to learn more about him. Write a letter to him that expresses your agreement or disagreement with his decision. Support your position with facts and figures you learn during your investigation.

EL.6.4.6 2006 ; EL.6.4.8 2006 ; EL.6.5.2 2006  
EL.7.4.5 2006 ; EL.7.4.6 2006 ; EL.7.4.8 2006 ; EL.7.5.2 2006  
EL.8.4.2 2006 ; EL.8.4.3 2006 ; EL.8.4.7 2006 ; EL.8.4.9 2006

**Science**

Make a model of fission.

Make a diagram of the atomic or plutonium bomb

6-8.RS.3 ; 6-8.RS.4 ; 6-8.RS.7 ; 6-8.RS.8 ; 6-8.RS.9 ; 6-8.WS.2

**Social Studies**

Research more on one of the people in this book.

Research the results on the FBI’s investigation.

6-8.RH.1 ; 6-8.RH.7

**Challenging Words (pronunciation, spelling, defining)** (include chapter and/or page #):

Incriminating  
Physics  
Smoldering  
Radioactive  
Execrable  
Courier  
Fission  
Implosion