



THE NEVADA TEST SITE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

<http://digital.library.unlv.edu/ntsohp/>

Teaching Handout Created by: Leisl Carr Childers
Excerpts courtesy of Mary Palevsky, Project Director
Project Contact: Cory Lampert
cory.lampert@unlv.edu

Nevada State and Clark County Curriculum Standards for middle and high school:

The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project fulfills the following Nevada State and Clark County History Standards:

Middle School

1.0 Chronology

1.8.2 The student will create a tiered time line.

2.0 History Skills

2.8.1 The student will frame historical questions that examine multiple viewpoints.

2.8.2 The student will evaluate sources of historical information based on bias, credibility, cultural context, reliability, and time period.

2.8.3 The student will read and use informational tools, including charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, political cartoons, photographs, and tables.

9.0 The Twentieth Century, a Changing World: 1945-1990

9.8.1 The student will identify the Cold War, including the Marshall plan, the Berlin Blockade, and NATO.

9.8.2 The student will identify the effects of the Cold War on the United States, including the arms race, nuclear testing, McCarthyism, the space race, and the Cuban missile crisis.

9.8.5 The student will discuss how science and technology changed life in the United States after World War II, including television, electronics and computers, and medical advances.

9.8.11 The student will identify key people and events that contributed to the end of the Cold War, including recognition of China, détente, disarmament, and the Strategic Defense Initiative.

Nation Building and Development – Nevada Statehood

H2.[6-8].5 The student will describe the impact of the United States military and atomic testing in Nevada.

High School

1.0 Chronology

1.12.2 The student will explain the sequence and relationship of events on a tiered time line.

2.0 History Skills

2.12.1 The student will frame and evaluate historical questions from multiple viewpoints.

2.12.2 The student will integrate, analyze, and organize historical information from a variety of sources.

2.12.3 The student will analyze and interpret historical content from informational tools, including charts, diagrams, graphs, maps, political cartoons, photographs, and tables.

9.0 The Twentieth Century, a Changing World: 1945-1990

9.12.1 The student will describe the causes and effects of the Cold War, including the key events in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and the Americas.

9.12.2 The student will describe the effects of the Cold War on the United States, including the arms race and nuclear testing, McCarthyism, the space race, and the Cuban Missile Crisis.

9.12.5/H3.[9-12].12/H3.[9-12].10 The student will analyze how postwar science and technology augmented United States economic strength, transformed daily life, and influenced the world economy and politics.

9.12.11 The student will describe how international policies contributed to the end of the Cold war, including recognition of China, détente, disarmament treaties, the Strategic Defense Initiative, and solidarity.

Social Responsibility and Change – The Modern World

H3.[9-12].18 The student will evaluate the worldwide implications of advancements in nuclear, electronic, and computer and medical technologies.

Guidelines for middle school and high school instructors:

The Nevada Test Site Oral History Project is a research archive comprised of oral histories. A central goal of the project was to gather and disseminate insights about an array of questions and themes related to U.S. Cold War nuclear weapons programs through interviews with a wide range of people associated with the NTS. However, the interview transcripts are not fully representative samples of all individuals and groups participating in or affected by activities at the test site.

The website offers several points of access to the transcripts. The home page features three categories: *Chronology of Development*, *Communities of Voices*, and *Contested Landscape*.

Chronology of Development provides a timeline of major events in the history of nuclear testing and the Nevada Test Site. Because this is a basic chronology, there is room for students to research further dates and add them to their own timeline.

Communities of Voices provides eight useful categories in which transcripts are organized. They are Labor and Support, Protest and Peace Groups, Retirees and Reunions, Diverse Experiences, Scientists and Engineers, NTS Administration, Women and the NTS, and the Military. These are not discrete groups and many transcripts are listed under multiple categories. They are useful for students researching general subjects and perspectives. For example, students researching the different perspectives on nuclear testing between test site workers and protestors could click on each category and read the transcripts of several interviewees in these groups.

Contested Landscapes provides maps and video clips. It is organized around three general themes—Outdoor Laboratory, Sacred Places, and Surrounding Communities—each represented by a map and discussed in the video clips. This section is useful to students researching the ways in which the test site is geographically situated in relation to other areas of Nevada.

The best way to learn all that is contained in an oral history transcript is to read it from beginning to end. Unlike books and articles that are organized around themes or chronology, oral histories often move back and forth through time and contain information about the same event in various parts of the transcript. The transcripts begin with a table of contents describing major themes. This is the best way to access subject matter within the transcript because it directs researchers to the entire topical section. In addition to interviewee transcripts, audio clips are provided so that researchers have a better understanding of interviewee voices.

Each interview page contains a pdf of the transcript and a list of terms called metadata. The metadata listed with each transcript describe the contents of the interviews using uniform term lists for tests and experiments, agencies, individuals, locations and subjects. These fields function as a means to search within the transcript itself using the pdf find function and as a collection-wide index to identify interview records containing the same descriptive terms by clicking on terms in the metadata to retrieve transcripts in which the same theme is discussed. The collection-wide list of metadata is available in eight categories under the advanced search function. They are Tests and Experiments, Agencies, Treaties, Laws and Legislation, Key Individuals, Locations at the Nevada Test Site, Related Locations, Subjects, and Local Subjects. By clicking on a metadata term in one of these categories, students can find all transcripts relating to topics listed respectively such as the Baneberry test, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Limited Test Ban Treaty, Edward Teller, Yucca Flat, Las Vegas, nuclear fallout, and radiation exposure. Through the metadata, students can research specific topics of United States history in the late twentieth century.

It is important for students to understand that these oral histories are the remembrances of individuals who experienced some aspect of nuclear testing. Oral histories are excellent sources for illustrating historical events because they provided qualitative and quantitative descriptions of first-hand experiences. Oral histories are records of individual interviewees but not of the subjects discussed within them.