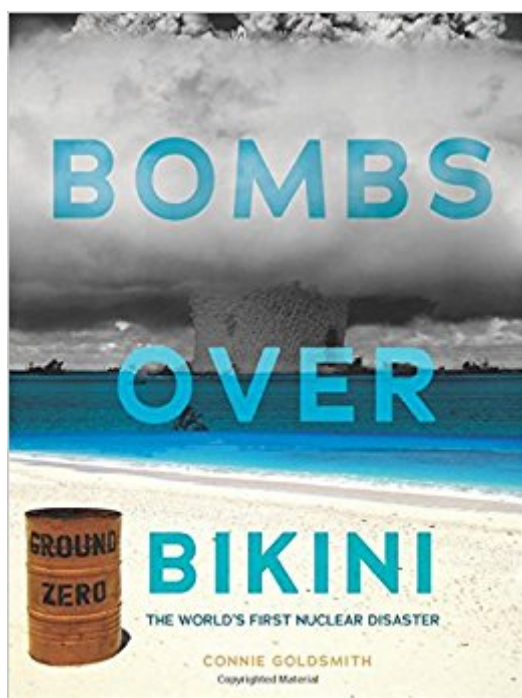


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# Bombs Over Bikini: The World's First Nuclear Disaster (Nonfiction - Young Adult)



## Synopsis

In 1946, as part of the Cold War arms race, the US military launched a program to test nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands of the Pacific Ocean. From 1946 until 1958, the military detonated sixty-seven nuclear bombs over the region's Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. The twelfth bomb, called Bravo, became the world's first nuclear disaster. It sent a toxic cloud of radiation over Rongelap Atoll and other nearby inhabited islands. The testing was intended to advance scientific knowledge about nuclear bombs and radiation, but it had much more far-reaching effects. Some of the islanders suffered burns, cancers, birth defects, and other medical tragedies as a result of radiation poisoning. Many of the Marshallese were resettled on other Pacific islands or in the United States. They and their descendants cannot yet return to Bikini, which remains contaminated by radiation. And while the United States claims it is now safe to resettle Rongelap, only a few construction workers live there on a temporary basis. For *Bombs over Bikini*, author Connie Goldsmith researched government documents, military film footage, and other primary source documents to tell the story of the world's first nuclear disaster. You'll meet the people who planned the test operations, the Marshall Islanders who lost their homes and suffered from radiation illnesses, and those who have worked to hold the US government accountable for catastrophically poor planning. Was the new knowledge about nuclear bombs and radiation worth the cost in human suffering? You decide.

## Book Information

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[Reference > History > Modern](#)

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 6 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up "As soon as the war ended, we located the one spot on Earth that hadn't been touched by war and blew it to hell" (Bob Hope, 1947). Thus begins this chronicle of the period after World War II when the United States detonated 67 nuclear bombs over the Marshall Islands, specifically the Bikini and Enewetak Atolls. Three bombs are discussed in some detail—Able, Baker, and Bravo—but this is not a scientific journal. The decisions of the U.S. to evacuate (or not) the inhabitants of the islands, the countdown, the fallout, the cleanup, and the effects of radiation on the inhabitants and military personnel are all included. The author's focus is on the negative effects of the detonations on the people of the islands and considers that the U.S. knowingly put the lives of the islanders in danger in order to advance the study of radiation. The book ends with a discussion of the money that was awarded to the inhabitants of the islands affected and how most of it still has not been paid. The black-and-white period photos are an excellent accompaniment to the text. A well-written book about a painful piece of history, this is an excellent addition.—Stephanie Farnlacher, Trace Crossings Elementary School, Hoover, AL

On March 7, 1946, the population of the Bikini Atoll bade their home good-bye. They did it for "the welfare of all men," but they were also promised by the U.S. government that they would get their islands back once nuclear testing was completed. Four months later, the navy exploded Able, a fusion bomb meant to test the effect of an airdrop on warships. Later Baker, a nuke placed underwater, was exploded for observation. The damage done by Baker alone made the islands uninhabitable, but test number 12 (Bravo, a fusion bomb with 1,000 times the explosive capacity of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima) created the first nuclear disaster, as fallout settled upon the nearby unevacuated island populations of Rongelap. With deft, well-researched precision, Goldsmith explores the ethical implications of nuclear testing, which rendered portions of the Marshall Islands unsafe for generations, as well as the ongoing fight of the Bikinese and Rongelapese peoples in the Supreme Court for fiscal compensation. A stirring addition to any classroom discussion about the environment. Grades 7-10. --Courtney Jones

Bombs Over Bikini provides a powerful account of a lesser known human-caused disaster that remains with us today. After World War II, there was still a lot that the military and scientists didn't

know about nuclear bombs. As a result, a program was set up to test what happens when a nuclear bomb goes off under a variety of circumstances. Unfortunately, due to a series of poor decisions and the manipulation of native peoples the results contaminated a number of islands in the Bikini Atoll. Even today several of the islands remain uninhabitable. This book reminded me strongly that using such power needs to be done responsibly and in a thoughtful manner. The book is beautifully designed with photographs, side notes of interest, and crisply written text. The source notes, works cited page, glossary, and additional resources provide evidence that the author has clearly done her work well. The publisher also provides additional resources for those who want to use the book in education. A great nonfiction account on a controversial topic.

This book is like reading a suspenseful novel, except tragically everything in it is a true, tragic event in history. Connie Goldsmith does an excellent job of presenting the facts leading up to the countdown that set off the nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands after World War II. I was saddened by the suffering of the islanders and the loss of their beloved homes. The deadly radiation fallout was a lesson for the world, but at a great cost to the Marshall Islanders who to this day cannot return to Bikini which is still contaminated with radiation. The photos in the book provide a chilling view of these bombs.

The book should have been written for school age children 50 years ago to let them know what our government has done & why. Connie wrote this for 6th and up, I do not know how well a 6th grader will understand the truth she gives them, but they will be able to read it. The book is not very long but packed with information that I did not know or have forgotten. This book is good for all ages so do not let the 6 grade hold you back from getting a copy. It will wake you up!

This non-fiction book details the nuclear bombing that occurred in the 1940s and 1950s in the Marshall Islands. The United States was thick into the Cold War and wanted to have an advantage over opposing nations. Because of the numerous bombings, the islands and their people suffered greatly. Their health and agriculture were affected from the fallout, as well as their living conditions whenever they were evacuated. Most of the animals used during testing died soon after. It was alarming to read about all the illnesses and deaths. The bombings, with the description of temperatures, clouds, and radiation levels, were scary. With pictures, captions, and other helpful text features, this book is informative and educational.

From the first toxic "snowflakes" to the stark reality of our country's first nuclear disaster, *Bombs Over Bikini, the World's First Nuclear Disaster*, is a provocative, timely record of the United States Nuclear Testing Program at the Marshall Islands. Goldsmith's narrative walks us through the chain of events leading up to nuclear testing equivalent to 7,200 Hiroshima bombs to the ongoing struggle of the displaced people of the Bikini Islands. Goldsmith has paid meticulous attention to detail, providing a glossary and exhaustive references that are invaluable to students of modern history. The book is straightforward and easy to absorb, loaded with photos, news articles from the day, and first hand accounts of the people who were transplanted from their homes and still live with the tragic results of nuclear testing in 1945. *Bombs Over Bikini* is well deserved Spring 2014 Junior Library Guild Selection.

Connie Goldsmith brings to life the chilling consequences of the US nuclear bomb testing program in the Marshall Islands in the mid-20th century. We watch the military strategize before the testing begins. We're there for the countdown of the first bomb and for its dramatic aftermath. We hear the voices of the displaced Bikini islanders, all of whom lost their ancestral homes and some of whom lost their health or their lives to radioactive fallout. This is an important book, meticulously researched and beautifully written. One chapter begins, "From space Rongelap Atoll looks like a puzzle piece waiting to be slipped into the blue and white jigsaw of the Pacific Ocean." All these decades after the testing was terminated, the lands are still contaminated and the injustice has yet to be redressed. Perhaps this book will be a catalyst, awakening readers to the moral obligation our country owes to the people of the affected islands.

A brilliantly written true story behind the nuclear disaster in the Marshall Islands. Peaceful islands weren't bombed by an enemy--but their own country. And Connie Goldsmith brings this shocking story to life. *BOMBS OVER BIKINI* is jam-packed with fascinating information from factual resources including; accounts from survivors, military records, film footage and government documents. Readers will be amazed at the facts behind this little-known tragedy. Bikini Island is still contaminated by radiation over 50 years later. Island descendants await the day they may return. Librarians, teachers and parents--this book is a must-have resource for young readers. **ORDER IT NOW!!!** Don't miss this **AMAZING** true account of the world's first nuclear disaster.

Way before the Fukushima, Chernobyl and Three Mile Island nuclear disasters there was America's

nuclear bomb testing program in the Marshall Islands. Connie Goldsmith gives young readers a balanced, detailed, and engrossing account of both the political background of the testing program and its military goals as well as the impact of the testing on the local islanders, who are still suffering from the aftermath of the nuclear testing. The well-chosen period photos bring it all home. A wonderfully written, thought-provoking book.

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