

Lesson Plan

# Nuclear Proliferation: Introduction

## Length

Two 45-minute periods

## Grade Level

High School

## Learning Objectives

- Students will understand the basics about the development of nuclear weapons and the impact on international relations since the end of World War II.
- Students will evaluate past and present nuclear threats and reflect on why these threats have changed over time.

[Nuclear Proliferation: Introduction](#)



[Guided Reading Handout](#)



[Presentation](#)



[Worksheet: Nuclear Threats Past and Present](#)



## Homework

- Students will complete Part 1 + 2 of the guided reading handout.

## Class One

1. **(5 Minutes) Homework Debrief:** Briefly discuss the key takeaways about nuclear proliferation. Questions may include: What is nuclear proliferation? What is the NPT? What are some of the concerns about proliferation today? What is required to build nuclear weapons?
2. **(20 Minutes) Jigsaw:** Break students into four groups. Distribute Understanding Past and Present Nuclear Threats Worksheet (SEE BELOW) and have students preview the handout. Assign each an era from *The History of Nuclear Proliferation*. Each group is responsible for reading and taking notes on their section of the timeline in Part 3 of the Guided Reading Handout, keeping in mind the questions they will be answering on the Understanding Past and Present Nuclear Threats Worksheet. When complete, have individuals from each group merge and share notes.
  - Group 1: 1938-62: The Nuclear Age Begins
  - Group 2: 1968–75 Nuclear Nonproliferation Goes Global
  - Group 3: 1986–2000 End of the Cold War Improves Nonproliferation Efforts
  - Group 4: 2003–Present Progress and Threats
3. **(10 Minutes)** Students will complete the Understanding Past and Present Nuclear Threats Worksheet in pairs. Have each pair discuss their top three threats and be ready to defend.
4. **(10 Minutes)** Lead a class discussion on any patterns that emerge or disagreements among the groups.

## Homework

- Students will complete Part 4 of the guided reading handout.

## Class Two

1. **(5 Minutes) Debrief Homework**
2. **(30 Minutes) Primary Source Analysis:** Break students into groups. (Five groups are suggested with each group getting one page of primary sources to read and discuss).
  - **Group 1:** Documents A, B
  - **Group 2:** Documents C, D, E
  - **Group 3:** Documents F, G, H
  - **Group 4:** Documents I, J
  - **Group 5:** Documents K, L
  - Have students read their assigned document excerpts and consider one or more of the following questions: How have concerns about proliferation changed over time? What strategies did world leaders try to implement? What nuclear issues were leaders most worried about during the Cold War? After the Cold War? Why the change?
  - Have students meet and discuss with classmates who read other excerpts. (Blending students into a mixed group is the most efficient.)
3. **(10 Minutes) Debrief Primary Source Analysis:** Ask students to share their key takeaways from the various primary sources related to nuclear proliferation.

## Vocabulary

alliance

an official partnership between two or more parties based on cooperation in pursuit of a common goal, generally involving security or defense.

atomic

relating to an atom, a microscopic particle that forms the smallest unit of an element. The term also refers to the energy released using nuclear fission. An “atomic bomb” (using fission) is one type of nuclear weapon. Another type is the hydrogen bomb, which uses the fusion of two varieties of hydrogen to release energy.

centrifuge

a mechanical device used for nuclear enrichment that contains rotors that spin quickly to separate different forms of the radioactive element uranium.

disarmament

the renunciation of given weapons, or all weapons, by states or other entities that possess them. One provision of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) calls for countries with nuclear weapons to take steps “in the direction of nuclear disarmament,” or the elimination of their nuclear arsenals.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

a military alliance among thirty-two countries on both sides of the Atlantic. Article 5 of the treaty that created NATO establishes its core principle of collective defense,” which commits member countries to defend each other if attacked.

Outer Space Treaty

a 1967 treaty, officially called the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, that defines space as a global commons, free for exploration and peaceful use by all.

nuclear reactor

a container in which a controlled nuclear chain reaction can occur. Nuclear reactors form the core of nuclear power plants but can also be used to make radioactive material for medical use, research, or nuclear weapons.

sanction

a tool of statecraft, frequently involving economic measures such as asset freezes and trade restrictions, used to exact a certain behavior or outcome from another party.

Six Party Talks

a series of multilateral negotiations over North Korea's nuclear program, chaired by China and attended by Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Russia, and the United States. The talks began in 2003 as a result of North Korea's withdrawal from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Six rounds of negotiations occurred, spanning more than five years and aimed at nuclear disarmament, trade normalization, and improved diplomatic relations. The talks came to a halt in 2009 when North Korea violated previous agreements by engaging in multiple nuclear and missile tests.