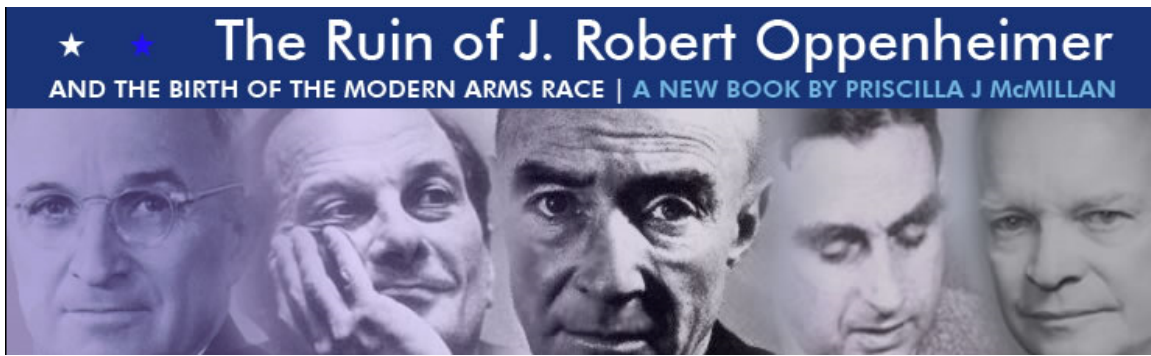


Study Guide

To some of these questions there is no right or wrong answer. They are matters of opinion.

1. The Soviet A-bomb test of August 1949 shocked the United States because it broke our atomic monopoly. What other events of 1949 and 1950 fed U.S. fears of Communism?
2. In October 1949 the General Advisory Committee of the Atomic Energy Commission, chaired by Robert Oppenheimer, voted 8-0 against the proposed "crash" program to develop the hydrogen bomb. What did the committee give as its reasons? And what were its recommendations regarding fission weapons?
3. On Jan. 31, 1950, President Truman ordered U.S. scientists to proceed on a "crash" basis with their efforts to develop a hydrogen bomb. As a political matter, do you believe he could have made a different decision? And what was the outlook for development of a hydrogen weapon at that time?
4. When did Soviet scientists start research on a hydrogen bomb? When did they make their first breakthrough? And when did they first test a thermonuclear device?
5. Following President Truman's H-bomb decision, Admiral Lewis Strauss, physicist Edward Teller and others came to suspect Robert Oppenheimer of sabotaging the H-bomb program. What actions did they attribute to Oppenheimer?
6. The first test of the Teller-Ulam concept was scheduled for the fall of 1952, a few days before the U.S. Presidential election. Several prominent scientists – Hans Bethe, Vannevar Bush, James Conant – hoped for postponement of the test. What arguments did Bethe give in his September, 1952, letter to AEC Chairman Gordon Dean in favor of postponement? Do you think he may have hoped for another attempt at negotiation with the Russians before onset of the thermonuclear age?



7. In December, 1953, Lewis Strauss informed Robert Oppenheimer that his security clearance had been revoked pending investigation of charges against him. Give a general description of the charges. Do you think Oppenheimer could have refused a hearing and simply walked away?
8. Most people feel that Oppenheimer did not defend himself effectively at the hearing. Supposing that he had succeeded in mounting a better defense, what obstacles was he facing? Do you think he could have achieved vindication?
9. Why did President Eisenhower and FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover decide to pursue the Oppenheimer case? Was there a way in which the President could have dropped the case without Senator McCarthy's exposing secrets of the atomic energy program?
10. In which roles do you think Oppenheimer casts the longer historical shadow, as the hero of Los Alamos or as victim of the security hearing?
11. What was the effect of the Oppenheimer hearing on relations between the government and the scientific community? Did some scientists decline to work on the nuclear weapons program and, if so, did all of them do so directly?
12. Describe the relationship between scientists and the Bush Administration today? What are some of the principal areas of disagreement?

