

The Year of the Bomb Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about Paul and his friends Oz, Arnie, and Crank? The boys are so different; why are they such good friends? What unusual groups of friends have you seen in your own life?
2. Why do you think Paul and his friends love horror movies? Why do you think there are so many 1950s horror movies? How are they different from present-day horror movies?
3. What happens in their town of Sierra Madre that thrills and excites the boys? What kind of movie would you like to be made in your hometown? How would you respond? How would the people in your town respond?
4. Paul's teacher, Mrs. Kramer, tells the class, "Now we're in another war, a cold war." What does she mean? How does the cold war affect Paul and his classmates? How would you feel if your class had drop drills?
5. What does Paul's father do for a living? Why does he refuse to talk about it?
6. What do the boys learn about the actor named Darryl? What is Darryl doing on the set, and why do the boys become interested?
7. Why is Darryl checking up on Richard Feynman? Why are the boys interested, and how do they go about learning more? Why do they think he's a spy?
8. What was the Manhattan Project? Why was it kept secret? What was Richard Feynman's job there?
9. Who is Klaus Fuchs? What do the boys learn about him? What does Feynman think of Fuchs, and why?
10. What do the boys find in Feynman's office? What does it mean? What do they think it means?
11. Paul's father says, "I never wanted that job." Why does he say this? How do you think it makes Paul feel?
12. What do the boys learn about Laura? How do they find out? How does it make them feel? How would you have felt?
13. When Darryl and Laura confront Feynman, how does he explain the letter? How does he explain the code he used at Los Alamos?
14. The boys jump to a conclusion about Feynman, and it is wrong. Have you ever jumped to an incorrect conclusion about someone? How did you find out you were wrong? How did it make you feel?

15. Richard Feynman was a real person, and he played an important role when the space shuttle *Challenger* exploded. What was Feynman's role? What did he learn? What did his demonstration show us about Richard Feynman?