# Signals of Security

Nuclear fears and the early space race

**USH.C.6.3.A** "Examine the impact of the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the resulting nuclear arms race on public perceptions of security, including the goals of the NASA program and the beginnings of the space race prompted by Sputnik's launch."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** As you read, underline two causes of public fear, circle two attempts to increase security, and number the Sputnik launch and the concern it raised 1 and 2.

### A Satellite and a Sense of Safety

1 By the early 1960s, a family listening to the radio might hear two kinds of news: the United States and the Soviet Union were building nuclear arsenals, and more nations were acquiring nuclear weapons. The United States first tested an atomic bomb in 1945; the Soviet Union did so in 1949. Britain tested one in 1952, and France followed in 1960. Supporters of larger arsenals argued that the threat of retaliation could stop an enemy from attacking. Yet each new weapon also raised fears of accidental war or a surprise strike. For many families, the promise of protection came with a new sense of danger.

2 On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite to orbit Earth. Its radio signals were harmless, but the launch changed how many Americans judged their safety. A rocket powerful enough to put a satellite in orbit suggested that Soviet rockets might also carry nuclear warheads across continents. Americans already knew that long-range missiles were being developed, so Sputnik made a distant threat feel immediate. Some people demanded stronger defenses and better science education. Others practiced civil defense, including shelter plans, even though such preparations could not guarantee safety in a nuclear war.

3 Congress created the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA, in 1958 as a civilian agency for space research and exploration. Its goals included advancing flight and space technology and expanding knowledge of space. NASA did not run the military's nuclear missile program, but its missions could demonstrate American scientific skill. In the space race that followed Sputnik, successful launches offered some Americans hope that the United States could keep pace with the Soviet Union. Still, sending people and machines into space could not remove the risk of nuclear attack. Space achievements and fallout shelters became different answers to the same public question: What would make us safer?

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why could a growing number of nuclear weapons make families feel less safe, even if leaders said those weapons could prevent attacks?

2. How did Sputnik change some Americans' view of the nuclear threat?

3. How did NASA's purpose differ from a nuclear missile program, and why might its missions still have reassured some Americans?

4. Why might shelter plans have offered some comfort without ending families' worries?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you are giving a short radio message in 1961 to neighbors choosing whether to support a new fallout shelter or a local space-science program. In one paragraph, recommend one choice, explain how both choices connect to nuclear fears, and support your view with at least two historical details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

# Signals of Security

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.6.3.A

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

As you read, underline two causes of public fear, circle two attempts to increase security, and number the Sputnik launch and the concern it raised 1 and 2. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Why could a growing number of nuclear weapons make families feel less safe, even if leaders said those weapons could prevent attacks? | **Leaders argued that the threat of retaliation could prevent an attack, but more weapons also raised fears of accidental war or a surprise strike.** |
| 2 | How did Sputnik change some Americans' view of the nuclear threat? | **Its launch showed that Soviet rockets could reach space, suggesting they might also carry nuclear warheads across continents. That made the threat feel more immediate.** |
| 3 | How did NASA's purpose differ from a nuclear missile program, and why might its missions still have reassured some Americans? | **NASA was a civilian agency for space research and exploration, not the military's nuclear missile program. Its missions could show that American science could keep pace with the Soviet Union.** |
| 4 | Why might shelter plans have offered some comfort without ending families' worries? | **Shelter plans gave families a way to prepare, but the passage says they could not guarantee safety in a nuclear war.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Neighbors, I would support a local space-science program, though a shelter might help families prepare for an attack. Sputnik's launch in 1957 suggested that Soviet rockets could carry nuclear warheads across continents. That danger makes both preparation and scientific learning important. NASA was created in 1958 to expand knowledge of space and improve flight and space technology. A local program could help students develop similar skills. I favor learning because it could help us keep pace with the Soviet Union, but neither choice can guarantee safety from a nuclear strike.

Accept either recommendation if the response connects both choices to nuclear fears and accurately uses at least two details from the passage. Students should not describe NASA as the agency that ran the military's nuclear missile program.