# One Attack, Wider Threat

Evaluating the Oklahoma City bombing as domestic terrorism

**USH.C.8.4.C** "Evaluate the rise of domestic terrorism as exemplified by the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline two details that show political motive or civilian harm, then circle the sentence that limits what one attack can prove about a rising threat.

### The Oklahoma City Bombing

1. On April 19, 1995, a truck bomb tore through the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The blast killed 168 people, including 19 children, and injured hundreds more. Timothy McVeigh, a U.S. citizen, carried out the attack with help from Terry Nichols. The building held federal offices but also a day care center. The choice of a government target and the deaths of ordinary people show how political violence can reach far beyond its intended symbol.

2. Domestic terrorism uses violence inside a country to pursue political or ideological goals. McVeigh wanted to strike the federal government, which he saw as abusive. He cited federal actions at Ruby Ridge in 1992 and Waco in 1993 as grievances. Those events did not justify killing civilians. During the 1990s, some antigovernment extremists spread claims that federal power threatened freedom. Their views did not represent all people who criticized the government or joined militia groups.

3. Investigators traced the bomb to McVeigh and Nichols, and both were convicted of federal crimes. The attack drew national attention to the danger posed by violent extremists within the United States, not only threats from abroad. Its enormous death toll made domestic terrorism harder to dismiss as a minor danger. Still, one bombing cannot prove how often such attacks occurred over time. To evaluate a rise in terrorism, historians also compare incidents across years and examine the motives and effects of each.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do McVeigh's target and stated goal show that this was domestic terrorism?

2. How should you use McVeigh's grievances when evaluating the attack?

3. Why did the bombing draw attention to the threat of domestic terrorism?

4. Why does the bombing alone not prove that domestic terrorism was becoming more frequent?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 60 to 85 word museum label that uses two passage details to evaluate the domestic terrorism threat shown by the bombing. Explain one limit of this evidence, and end with a question historians could investigate.

ANSWER KEY

# One Attack, Wider Threat

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.8.4.C

## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show political motive or civilian harm, then circle the sentence that limits what one attack can prove about a rising threat. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | How do McVeigh's target and stated goal show that this was domestic terrorism? | **McVeigh, a U.S. citizen, attacked a federal building to strike the government for political reasons.** |
| 2 | How should you use McVeigh's grievances when evaluating the attack? | **His grievances help explain his motive, but they do not justify killing civilians.** |
| 3 | Why did the bombing draw attention to the threat of domestic terrorism? | **An extremist within the United States killed 168 people, showing that a domestic attack could cause enormous harm.** |
| 4 | Why does the bombing alone not prove that domestic terrorism was becoming more frequent? | **One event cannot establish a trend. Historians would need to compare incidents across years.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The Murrah Building housed federal offices and a day care center. McVeigh attacked a government symbol, but his bomb killed 168 people, including 19 children. That reach shows how an antigovernment extremist could harm civilians far beyond the officials he opposed. The attack made a domestic threat impossible to ignore, yet one event cannot show whether attacks were becoming more frequent. How did the number of politically motivated attacks inside the United States change during the 1990s?

Accept responses that connect political motive and harm to the domestic threat while recognizing that one bombing does not establish a trend. Do not accept claims that McVeigh's grievances justified the attack.