

**SYNOPSIS**

Fort Repose, Florida, in the mid-twentieth century provides the setting for Pat Frank's timely novel about the after-effects of nuclear war. Frank describes with grim realism the obvious and the not-so-obvious changes that occur in a civilization coping with universal insanity.

Randy Bragg, thirty-two years old and a lifelong resident of the community, is somewhat prepared for the holocaust. His brother Mark, an Air Force colonel stationed with the Strategic Air Command in Omaha, Nebraska, has wired the fateful message of warning agreed upon several years before: *Alas, Babylon!* The message refers to a biblical passage which the boys had often heard quoted by their neighbor, preacher Henry, in his exhortations to his congregation at the First Afro Repose Baptist Church. It described the fall of the great city of Babylon; Randy and Mark had decided to use it as a nuclear disaster codeword should the necessity arise. Mark's position with SAC Intelligence gives him access to secret information, and he is able to warn Randy of the approaching confrontation between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Believing that the holocaust is imminent, Mark sends his wife Helen and two children, son Ben Franklin and daughter Peyton, from Omaha to the comparative safety of Fort Repose. Within hours a young American pilot mistakenly releases a missile which hits a Russian submarine base and initiates the disaster.

Meanwhile, Randy begins to stock supplies and alerts the woman he loves, Lib McGovern and her family, his friend Dr. Dan Gunn, as well as his neighbor, Malachai Henry. Before all preparations are even completed, *The Day* arrives, and the effects of nuclear attack begin to become clear.

An immediate problem is actual damage from the explosions. However, Fort Repose is out of the danger zone for the radiation. Young Peyton is blinded temporarily by the light from the detonation, but she is aided in her recovery by Dr. Gunn.

All electrical power is lost as the cities which are the sites for the generators are destroyed. Water pumping stations cease to function.

Money becomes useless, and bartering and swapping for needed commodities, such as food, gasoline, tools, and weapons, is initiated. Edgar Quisenberry, the banker, unable to cope with his mental image of the future, commits suicide.

Looters empty stores of their goods, drug addicts attack hospitals and doctor's offices, and modern highwaymen roam the countryside stopping people and cars, robbing and

killing. A new law called "survival" has taken over; civilization as known in Fort Repose becomes primitive.

Elderly people who live in resort areas such as the Riverside Inn suddenly find themselves abandoned without food, service, or medicines. Dr. Gunn does his best but eventually runs out of needed medical supplies and is forced to stand by while people die. Lavinia McGovern, Lib's mother, goes into a diabetic coma and dies from lack of insulin.

Fire destroys the Inn and other buildings, and without water and the needed men and equipment, little can be done to save them. The damaged water supply leaves the towns open to typhoid and other diseases.

Radiation sickness invades the area, too, as strangers from contaminated zones travel through, bringing valuables already contaminated. Dr. Gunn cannot save three men hoarding "deadly" jewels. The jewels and two of the men are buried after Randy takes command, organizes an enforced burial patrol of townspeople, and, in effect, becomes the law in Fort Repose. One of the men who becomes ill is Pete Hernandez, the brother of Randy's former girl friend Rita.

At the Bragg homestead, Dan Gunn, Lib and Bill McGovern, Florence Wechek, Alice Cooksey, Randy, Helen, the children, and the Henrys band into a tight community. Everyone finds vital work to do including the children. Ben Franklin learns to shoot and protect their animals from marauders, human or animal, and he discovers that armadillos make excellent eating. Peyton helps her mother and finds in the attic useful items which become indispensable, such as kerosene lamps, a treadle sewing machine, and a hand-crank phonograph and records. She also is able to catch fish using an old baiting trick and the neighbor's goldfish. When the lack of salt becomes a problem, Randy uses an old diary left by a long-dead relative to find a source. The men rig pipelines to supply artesian water to the house. Florence and Alice set up a system to continue the keeping of town records and provide educational and entertainment material for the entire town in the form of books from the town's library. One of the records they keep contains information concerning the eventual marriage of Randy and Lib.

Sam Hazzard, the town's retired admiral, provides what little information on the war he can glean from the few brief news broadcasts he is able to pull in on his short-wave system. The town learns that a minor cabinet official, Mrs. Vanbruuker-Brown, is President of the United States and has placed it under martial law. They know also that most of the country's major cities have been destroyed. Eventually,

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however, even the admiral's equipment loses its power and a news black-out descends on the area.

When Dan Gunn is ambushed and almost killed by highwaymen, Randy decides on a plan to capture them. He uses gasoline hoarded by Rita Hernandez to fuel a truck which Rita tells everyone is loaded with goods. They are successful in luring the killers into the open and kill three men and publicly hang the fourth in the park at Fort Repose. Unfortunately, Malachai Henry is also critically hurt in the fight, and Dan has few instruments or medicines to use to save him. In the course of Dan's recuperation, he and Helen fall in love, but she insists on waiting for word about Mark's survival.

Month's after *The Day*, a helicopter lands with men from the Decontamination Command who check the area for radiation. Finding none, they offer the survivors a chance to leave Fort Repose and give them up-to-date news on the war, which the United States has won. Denver is now the capital, and Omaha, where Mark was stationed, has been completely obliterated.

America has become a third-rate power with offers of help coming in from all over the world. For many generations to come its people will live in primitive survival conditions, and much of its territory will be uninhabitable for thousands of years due to radiation.

Still, the survivors of Fort Repose decide to stay and build. Randy and Lib, Dan and Helen and the others are determined to face the "thousand-year night" together.

### BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Pat Frank, born May 5, 1907, in Chicago, moved to Jacksonville, Florida, when he was six. His career as a news reporter began in 1923 when he worked for the *Jacksonville Journal* while he was still in high school. He attended the University of Florida for a year taking journalism courses. He took a position with the *New York Journal* and in 1938 became chief of the Washington Bureau of the Overseas News Agency. As a war correspondent from 1944 to 1946 he covered the action in Europe. The tremendous success of his first novel, *Mr. Adam*, enabled him to retire and write full time. Frank was a member of the United Nations mission to Korea in 1952. In 1961 he became a consultant to the Department of Defense.

### CRITIC'S CORNER

Pat Frank's novel, *Forbidden Area*, published in 1956, revolved about how a thermonuclear war might be fought. "But the story could not end there," Frank declared. "I began to wonder what would be the result of such a war." *Alas, Babylon* is his answer, "a mature study of the balance between good and evil, a revelation of the thin veneer of civilization that separates us from the laws of the jungle." It is an unusual and enthralling narrative, "a well wrought melodrama," part shocker, part mystery and part love story.

### GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the structure of a novel
2. To determine the mood and theme(s) of a novel
3. To recognize the importance of and the types of conflict in a novel
4. To note how an author develops characterization by action and dialogue
5. To examine the complexities of human reactions to the same problems

### SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the structure of Pat Frank's novel *Alas, Babylon*
2. To determine how Frank develops the mood and theme(s) in this novel
3. To recognize how Frank uses the outer conflicts of war to portray the inner conflicts of individuals
4. To note how all the characters are revealed by their actions and dialogue
5. To be aware of how few choices an individual may make when survival is at stake
6. To compare the reactions of each character to essentially the same challenges
7. To compare *Alas, Babylon* to other examples of Pat Frank's fiction as well as current literature dealing with survival

### MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences or thought units that have particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning each has in the book. Page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. highwaymen (p. 250; p. 279)  
[Those who rob people on the road. The term was originally applied to the reputedly chivalrous horsemen who robbed travelers on England's post roads in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. However, the highwaymen in *Alas, Babylon* do not conform to this romantic image. They not only waylay and rob people on the highways but are "human jackals" who frequently and wantonly murder their victims.]
2. artesian water (p. 50; p. 147)  
[Water that rises under pressure through a deep shaft driven through an impervious layer and into a water-bearing stratum. Randy's grandfather had drilled nearly a thousand feet to tap an artesian layer for water to irrigate his citrus groves. Since Randy and his neighbors no longer have running water, the

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*artesian well is a godsend providing them an unlimited supply of water untainted by either radiation or pollution.]*

3. *Alas, Babylon* (pp. 13-14; p. 24)

*[An allusion taken from Revelations 18: 9-10 describing the destruction of that mighty city of the ancient world. The image of Babylon symbolizes great wealth and decadence and might apply to America, which, in the opinion of some people, has grown too fat, too apathetic, and too dependent on material comforts.*

*Alas, Babylon is a family signal that was inspired by Preacher Henry's fiery sermons and that Randy and Mark Bragg have used since boyhood. It is "their private synonym for disaster." Mark Bragg, a colonel in SAC Intelligence, believes that a nuclear attack on the United States is a very real and present danger. He has made arrangements with Randy to take care of his wife and children if his fear is realized. Their private signal, Alas, Babylon, will be the code word indicating that an H-bomb attack is imminent.]*

4. a child of the atomic age (p. 67)

*[Thirteen-year-old Ben Franklin was born after the detonation of the first atomic bomb. He, having lived his whole life under the threat of atomic warfare, is fully aware of the terrible effects of an H-bomb explosion. When he says good-bye at the airport, he realizes that he will probably never see his father again. Ben Franklin has been conditioned to accept war as the normal state of things. His knowledge of the danger of flash burns and fallout and his quick thinking when the bombs actually fall indicate that he has not questioned the possibility of nuclear war. He is a true child of the atomic age.]*

5. "Survival of the fittest" (p. 175)

*[This refers to a part of Darwin's evolutionary theory set forth in his Origin of Species. In a natural environment the weak or diseased die early, and only those animals with superior survival characteristics—such as strength or speed or intelligence or adaptability—live to produce offspring. Thus nature insures that the best genes are passed on to future generations. Man and his technological civilization have made it possible for the weak to survive. Exotic pets, for example, can be bred merely for looks without any regard for survival characteristics. Modern science and medicine make it possible for many people to live who would have otherwise died in infancy or childhood. Now that the bombs have stripped away the protection of civilization, animals and people must cope with a savage, natural environment. Only those strong enough and adaptable enough will survive—only the "fittest."]*

6. "Nations are like people. When they grow old and rich and fat they get conservative." (p. 16)

*[Mark is generalizing from history and from his own observations. When nations or people are young, they are more concerned with building the future than with maintaining the status quo. Because they feel there is little to lose, they are risk-takers believing that any change will be for the better. Pioneer Americans, for example, risked hardship and death to settle the frontier. As Americans have become affluent, they have become increasingly conservative, less inclined to change and more concerned with preserving and enjoying the material comforts with which they have surrounded themselves. In Mark's opinion, this is against nature. He agrees with Toynbee who theorized that when civilizations or nations ceased to be dynamic, they stagnated and eventually fell. Some readers may take issue with Mark's opinion of Americans.]*

7. When you had the responsibility you also had the right to command. (p. 168)

*[Without realizing quite how it happened, Randy has begun giving orders to all the members of his little community. He has assumed leadership and now reflects on his right to command. His conclusion is that, by first assuming responsibility for the people, he has earned the right to give orders. It is analogous to an officer whose right to command grows out of his responsibility to his men. An analogy closer to home is that of parent and child. A parent has the right to tell his child what to do, because he is responsible for the child.]*

8. If Man retained faith in God, he might also retain faith in Man. (pp. 190-191)

*[Randy apparently believes that Man needs a faith in something higher than himself—that religion is necessary to be a man and not a beast. Without faith men degenerate into savagery, clawing for existence according to the law of the jungle. Many readers will agree with Randy that it is faith in God which separates Man from the beasts. Religion has always provided the basis for Man's moral and ethical values. Some have said that Man cannot believe in himself unless he believes that there is something more to life than mere grubbing for survival. It must be remembered, however, that some readers may disagree with the philosophy of this statement. They may contend that life is its own justification, and man does not need faith in God.]*

9. "In the Neolithic," Randy said, "a boy either grows up fast or he doesn't grow up at all." (p. 225)

*[The Neolithic—or Stone Age—was a period in Man's history of marginal existence. Every individual had to pull his own weight in order for the family or clan to survive. All energy was devoted to scratching out the most minimal existence. A child did not have the luxury to grow up leisurely, and a boy was expected to take on the duties of a man very early in adolescence.*

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*Because of its isolation, the community of Fort Repose is no longer in the twentieth century but is now in an era similar to that of the Neolithic Age. Ben Franklin at thirteen must take on the duties and hazards of manhood. He stands guard over the livestock and risks his life defending the domestic animals against the wild German shepherd. He acts coolly as a man would be expected to do and, therefore, survives.]*

10. "We're a second class power now. Tertiary would be more accurate." (p. 309)

*[A year has passed since the bombing when Paul Hart, a colonel in Decontamination Command, brings the community its first real news from the outside. He tells them that the United States now has an estimated population smaller than the population France used to have (approximately fifty million). The country has slipped from the status of super-power to a position of a second rate, even third rate, power. Formerly disadvantaged countries such as Thailand and Venezuela are sending aid. Scientists estimate that to bring back the contaminated zones to any degree of normalcy may take a thousand years. Areas of total destruction may never come back. The author's point is evident. Even if the United States wins a nuclear war and has a significant number of survivors, the country would be finished as a world power. Since this prediction is speculative, readers may agree or disagree that nuclear war would end America's major influence in international affairs.]*

### COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

#### Questions 1-5 Literal Level

1. How does the war begin? Who wins the war?

*[A Russian general has defected and brought the Soviet War Plan. (p. 31) The Soviet Union thinks that by delivering a massive first blow they can win the war and suffer minimal damage from retaliation. The incident that provides the Kremlin a casus belli—its excuse—involves an American fighter pilot, PeeWee Cobb, who fires an air-to-air rocket at a hostile reconnaissance jet. The rocket is deflected and blows up the Syrian port of Latakia where an important Red submarine base is located. (pp. 68-72) Within hours hydrogen bombs are dropped on the United States, but the Soviet Union has miscalculated. Massive retaliation destroys them. Technically the United States wins the war. As Paul Hart says, "We won it. We really clobbered 'em! . . . Not that it matters." (p. 312)*

2. What ceases to be important following *The Day*? What becomes more important?

*[The December Saturday when the bombs fell is known ever after as simply The Day. Time is now divided into two periods—before The Day and after The Day. (p. 123) The first commodity to become useless is money. Fort Repose's financial structure crumbles in a day, and the money system is replaced by the barter system. (p. 101) When the electric power goes off permanently, civilization in Fort Repose retreats a hundred years. (p. 143) Anything powered by electricity is now useless. Far more important is Peyton's discovery of nineteenth century relics in the attic—such things as an old-time sewing machine and kerosene lamps. (p. 198) When gasoline supplies dwindle, cars and trucks lose their value, and bicycles and Preacher Henry's mule are treasures. As the society of Fort Repose retreats to a primitive level, food, game, basic tools, and weapons become increasingly important for their survival value.]*

3. In what ways do the children, Ben Franklin and even young Peyton, contribute to the welfare of the community?

*[The children are expected to do their share of work for the community. Ben actually does a man's job helping in the defense against marauding animals. (p. 238) He also contributes on his own initiative, the best example being his discovery that armadillos, which have become a nuisance, are actually an excellent food source. (p. 289) Peyton tries to prove that she is fit for more than sewing, pot washing, and making beds. When the fish stop biting, she seeks advice from Preacher Henry and then goes out and catches some big bass. (p. 292)]*

4. What strategy does Randy employ to catch and execute the highwaymen?

*[During World War I Q-ships were used to lure German submarines to the surface. Pretending to be helpless, the Q-ship sailed the submarine lanes hoping that a U-boat would unmask its battery and sink the submarine. (pp. 250-251) Sam Hazzard conceives of a four-wheeled Q-ship to lure the highwaymen into the open. Randy borrows a panel truck and some of the last gasoline in the area from Rita Hernandez. She later lets it be known that her truck loaded with choice trade goods has been stolen hoping to provide an irresistible temptation for the highwaymen. (pp. 255-259) While Malachai Henry drives, Randy, Sam Hazzard, and Bill McGovern, armed and ready, hide in the back of the truck. The same four highwaymen, who robbed and beat Dan Gunn and killed Bill Hickey and his wife, attempt to ambush the truck. Three are killed outright and the fourth highwayman is hanged in Marines Park in Fort Repose. (pp. 272-279)]*

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5. What kind of future do Americans face following the restoration of law and order?

*[Even those Americans living in the clear areas face hardship, extreme shortages, and martial law for years, probably for the rest of their lives. Isolated communities like Fort Repose inside contaminated zones must continue to rely primarily on their own resources, most likely for generations. The large areas of total destruction are written off as unusable for thousands of years. Americans must struggle along as citizens of a third-rate nation. (pp. 307-309)]*

### Questions 6-8 Interpretive Level

6. In what way do the lives of Florence Wechek and Alice Cooksey change after *The Day*?

*[Before The Day Florence Wechek is Fort Repose's telegraph operator. Having become a frustrated old maid, her whole meager existence centers on her job and her pets. Florence's friend, Alice Cooksey, is the town's librarian, who has struggled for years with an inadequate budget and has tried unsuccessfully to compete with the mass media. After The Day the library becomes the town's cultural center as well as the repository of all official records. Not only does the library provide people with one of their few sources of recreation, but it also provides information invaluable for survival. Alice and her assistant Florence become key people in the community. As Lib explains, "You see, they're terribly busy. They've never worked so hard or accomplished so much in their whole lives. And I don't know what Fort Repose would do without them. They're practically our whole educational system, and they keep all the records." (p. 311) Alice's and Florence's lives are fuller and more purposeful now than they ever were before The Day.]*

7. Why does Randy Bragg take on the responsibility of leadership in Fort Repose?

*[Randy gradually assumes command, maturing as a man and growing into his role as leader. The first responsibility thrust upon him is for his brother's wife and children. Then he feels responsible for the tiny community of neighbors linked together by pipes from his artesian well. Later when Porky Logan dies with his lethal treasure of radioactive jewelry, he forces men from the town at gunpoint to help him bury Porky and the jewelry in a lead-lined coffin. Finally, acting in accordance with the proclamation of Mrs. Vanbruuker-Brown, Acting President of the United States, Randy declares martial law and assumes command of Fort Repose. (pp. 252-279) Some readers may point out that Randy has assumed command before the proclamation. The civil authorities of the town, unable to adjust, prove themselves to be incompetent to meet the challenge. Society, like nature, deplores a vacuum. There is a vacuum at the top of the isolated society that is Fort*

*Repose. If that society is to survive, it must have a leader; otherwise it will collapse into anarchy. One may conclude that Randy takes command because someone must, and no one else has proved his capacity to lead under the conditions that now exist.]*

8. How does Doctor Dan Gunn apply Toynbee's theory of challenge and response to individuals? Which people in the novel respond successfully to the challenge? Which do not?

*[In his Study of History Arnold Toynbee theorizes that a civilization grows out of a people's response to a challenge. This might involve coping with a hostile environment or with the disintegration of an earlier civilization. Isolated as they are, the people of Fort Repose are faced with a physical and social challenge to which they must respond successfully or die. Since societies are comprised of individuals, Dan Gunn extends the theory: "You remember what Toynbee says? His theory of challenge and response applies not only to nations, but to individuals. Some nations and some people melt in the heat of crisis and come apart like fat in the pan. Others meet the challenge and harden." (p. 132)]*

*Readers could refer to the following characters as examples of individuals who respond successfully to the challenge:*

*Randy Bragg, who leads a rather aimless and dissolute life until responsibility toughens him and he gradually assumes command of Fort Repose.*

*Dan Gunn continues to practice medicine even without adequate medical supplies or tools.*

*The Henrys—Malachai, Preacher, Two-Tone, Missouri—who before The Day were second-class Black citizens, are now admirable and invaluable people because of their skills in farming and in basic mechanics.*

*Sam Hazzard, a retired admiral, and Bill McGovern, a retired manufacturer, adapt to the new situation and apply those talents that made them successful men before The Day.*

*Alice Cooksey and Florence Wechek find new purpose in their lives. (Note Number 6 in this section of this guide.)*

*The children—Ben Franklin and Peyton Bragg and Caleb Henry—adapt quickly to the new life and become contributing members of the community.*

*Helen Bragg, Mark's widow, and Lib McGovern, who becomes Randy's wife, take care of the home without any complaint over the primitive conditions.*

*Some of those who fail to meet the challenge are: Porky Logan, a political hack; Bubba Offenhaus, the local undertaker and civil defense director; Pete Hernandez, a grocery clerk; Edgar Quisenberry, the town banker who blows his brains out when money becomes valueless; Lavinia McGovern, whose whole life is wrapped up in her fancy, expensive, and now useless house. None of these people can quite*

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comprehend that they are now facing a thousand-year night. They cling irrationally to the old ways and old values thinking that normalcy will miraculously return in the foreseeable future.]

### Questions 9 and 10 Critical Level

9. Is Randy Bragg the same man at the end of the novel that he was at the beginning or has he changed? Explain.

[At the beginning of the novel *Randy*, a veteran of the Korean War, seems to have lost his sense of purpose in life. Although not rich, he has sufficient money to drive a new car and live quite comfortably. Symptomatic of his life is the shot or two of bourbon he has every morning before breakfast. (p. 8) His first act following Mark's disaster warning is to revise his milk order upwards for his brother's children, a useless precaution showing that he is not prepared for the terrible reality. Readers may also note that many of his purchases are inappropriate to meet the emergency. He buys large quantities of frozen meat and ice cream when he should have foreseen that electric power would be lost early. (p. 5) However, as soon as disaster strikes, Randy begins to show the stuff of which he is made. Although he recognizes that his first duty is to those for whom he is directly responsible, he cannot abandon his ethical principles. A critical decision is reached when he chooses to stop on the road to see if he can help the woman whose car is wrecked. "Randy knew that he would have to play by the old rules. He could not shuck his code, or sneak out of his era." (p. 98) The decision foreshadows Randy's future assumption of wider and wider responsibility. As crisis follows crisis, Randy demonstrates a growing ability to meet the challenges of leadership successfully. At the end of the novel *Randy*, toughened but not brutalized by adversity, is prepared to lead his people in their struggle to survive the "thousand-year night."]

10. Is *Alas, Babylon* a believable or unbelievable novel? Give reasons for your opinion.

[If readers accept the possibility of nuclear attack, they will probably recognize the author's extensive use of realistic details to make the story believable. Pat Frank's experience as a reporter and war correspondent has no doubt helped him to develop a crisp, journalistic style which may add to the novel's credibility. Certainly his knowledge of world affairs during the 1950's and his familiarity with the offensive and defensive weapon systems of both the United States and the Soviet Union provide the book with a factual basis.

Some readers are aware that the world situation has changed somewhat since the publication of *Alas, Babylon*. Tensions between the United States and Russia have eased to some extent while other conflicts and trouble spots have developed. Events of

the past decade may have dated the novel a bit and reduced its believability. However, if readers keep in mind that the author's basic purpose is not so much to describe a nuclear war but the aftermath of such a war, they may admit that for the purpose of the story it is not too important to know how a nuclear strike is delivered or by whom. Readers will most likely agree that as long as nuclear arsenals exist the possibility of nuclear attack also exists. *Alas, Babylon* can then be judged on the basis of whether or not it is a realistic story of survival.]

### Question 11 Creative Level

11. If you were one of the few who knew that in twenty-four hours a massive H-bomb attack would be launched against the United States and nothing could be done to stop it, how would you prepare yourself? What choices would you make?

### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Write a description of Fort Repose one year after the Decontamination Command has arrived — 10 years after — 50 years after.
2. Write and dramatize a scene in which the International Red Cross arrives in Fort Repose with aid. The class should then critique.
3. Choose a few members of the class to do some role-playing as they react to the aftermath of a nuclear bombing which occurs while they are in their classrooms at school.
4. Compare *Alas, Babylon* with Frank's other novel, *Forbidden Area*.
5. Compare and contrast Pat Frank's novels with Neville Shute's *On The Beach* and John Hersey's "*Hiroshima*."

### ALTERNATIVES FOR STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Research the conditions that existed in Japan after the atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Use photographs if possible. Compare your findings with those of other class members.
2. Find pamphlets, articles, etc., dealing with the Civil Defense Program. Give a defense for its effectiveness, or write a rebuttal of its usefulness.
3. With what kind of people would you like to survive a nuclear attack? Write a description of their character traits as well as their talents and skills.
4. Topics for composition or discussion:
  - a. Adjustment
  - b. Courage
  - c. Ingenuity
  - d. Self-sacrifice

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### TEACHING NOTES

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### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

Match each underlined word with its definition listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. "When you don't deter them any longer, you lose."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. As Mark talked, his face became grave, almost gaunt . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. . . . the formlessness of what was to come overwhelmed her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Malachai's face was expressionless, but Randy sensed his apprehension.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. "Children are precocious these days, aren't they?"
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The first (explosion) obliterated the SAC base at Homestead, . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. . . . Florence and Alice had split a bottle of sherry, an unaccustomed dissipation, . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. These were painful luxuries, almost his only remnant of routine from before *The Day*.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Authority had disintegrated in Fort Repose.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. . . . Dan guessed him the most volatile and dangerous of the three (men).

- |                            |                        |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| a. maturing early          | g. wasteful indulgence |
| b. tidiness                | h. unknown shape       |
| c. unstable                | i. fragment            |
| d. willingness             | j. blotted out         |
| e. of a pinched appearance | k. prevent             |
| f. crumbled                | l. foreboding          |

#### Part II: True or False (10 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Randy Bragg is warned of a nuclear attack by his brother Mark.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Malachai, the town banker, refuses to cash Randy's check.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The war is caused by an Arab-Israeli conflict.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Peyton Bragg is Randy's wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Fort Repose townspeople elect Randy mayor during the crisis.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Randy and his family and friends are able to adjust fairly well to survival conditions due to their close cooperation with one another.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Dr. Dan Gunn is ambushed and injured by highwaymen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Sam Hazzard gives the townspeople information from any current news broadcasts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Unprepared, the United States is defeated by the Soviet Union.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. After they learn of Mark's death, his widow and Dan Gunn decide to marry.



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### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Complete each of the following sentences with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The Braggs learn about Babylon from (a) their father (b) the Strategic Air Command (c) Preacher Henry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Florence Wechuk thinks Randy is (a) a peeping Tom (b) a wonderful young man (c) a perfect mayor.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Lavinia McGovern dies when she (a) commits suicide (b) develops typhoid (c) goes into a diabetic coma.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The greatest enemy the survivors have to face is (a) Russian soldiers (b) looters and highwaymen (c) animals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Dan Gunn finds the greatest obstacle to his practice of medicine is the fact that he (a) lacks medical instruments (b) has had his glasses broken (c) is trusted by no one.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Helen and Lib distrust each other because (a) they both love Randy (b) Lib moves into Helen's house (c) they both love Dan.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Alice Cooksey is the town's (a) librarian (b) chief babysitter (c) mail clerk.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Brief news programs announce that (a) a woman is now President of the United States (b) the Soviet Union and China are allies (c) all attacks have been halted.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Ben Franklin kills (a) a highwayman (b) a wolf (c) a dog that is destroying their animals.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A pipeline is rigged to bring (a) electricity (b) water (c) oil into the house.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. The survivors discover a new food (a) alligator (b) aardvark (c) armadillo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. The community doesn't freeze that winter because (a) it's in Florida (b) there is plenty of wood for fires (c) Randy builds a power supply generator.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Randy temporarily spares the life of a highwayman because he (a) doesn't believe in killing (b) wants to see the man publicly executed (c) wants to get information from him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Mark's wife knows he is dead because (a) the War Department notifies her (b) his Omaha base has been obliterated (c) she hasn't heard from him in a year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. On hearing the news of the war's end, the community (a) decides to stay and rebuild (b) becomes grief stricken (c) moves farther south.

### Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Conflict is essential in any good novel. Explain and enumerate the kinds of conflict found in *Alas, Babylon*.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Describe how the same situation and problems cause some characters to react in a positive, even heroic, fashion and others to react in a negative way.

## ALAS, BABYLON

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

Match each underlined word with its definition listed below. Write the letter of the definition in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mark doesn't celebrate until he has a pen in his hand . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. . . . she continued to argue, although dispiritedly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. " . . . I suppose we'd have rationing like last time . . ."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. . . . they could preserve the Henry's pigs from marauders . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Secretly, he had considered Civil Defense a boondoggle, . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Life was ebbing from its last set of batteries.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. She was so solicitous it was sometimes embarrassing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Her fingers kneaded the back of his neck.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. He was tough as an antique ivory figurine which has withstood the vicissitudes of centuries, . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Her father came in, a thin and wan Caesar in his sandals and white robe.

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| a. lovely             | g. party            |
| b. roving looters     | h. pale             |
| c. anxiously caring   | i. valueless work   |
| d. lessening          | j. massaged         |
| e. hazards of fortune | k. fixed allowances |
| f. organize thoughts  | l. dejectedly       |

#### Part II: True or False (10 points)

In the space provided write **T** if the statement is completely true or write **F** if any part of the statement is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. *Alas, Babylon* is a code phrase warning of an impending nuclear attack.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Randy marries Lib McGovern, not Helen.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The government of the United States survives the war.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Randy is completely prepared for the attack and its aftermath.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Lack of gasoline and other fuel becomes a major problem to the survivors.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Ben Franklin is blinded by the light from the nuclear explosion.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Dr. Gunn saves Helen's life when she goes into a coma.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Rita Hernandez, Randy's ex-girlfriend, takes part in a plan to capture the highwaymen who are preying on travelers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The men of the town at first refuse to bury radiation contaminated bodies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The Braggs and their community decide to stay in Fort Repose.

## ALAS, BABYLON

### Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

Complete each of the following sentences with the best response. Indicate your choice by writing the letter of the appropriate response in the space provided.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mark Bragg warns his brother about the coming disaster by (a) telephone (b) telegram (c) letter.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The first person to know of Mark's message is (a) Florence Wechuk (b) Randy (c) Two-Tone Henry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The only one besides the Braggs to correctly interpret the warning is (a) Sam Hazzard (b) Porky Logan (c) Alice Cooksey.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. The war is begun when (a) the Chinese cross the Indian border (b) the Russians insult an Arab oil tycoon (c) an American missile destroys a Soviet submarine base.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Edgar Quisenberry dislikes Randy because (a) of a fight he had once had with Randy's father (b) Randy is a famous politician (c) Randy's mother had jilted him.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Ben Franklin and Peyton are (a) brother and sister (b) husband and wife (c) cousins.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Florence and Alice are happy because they (a) don't have to go back to boring jobs (b) are now essential to the life of their community (c) don't have to worry about money.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The respect the Braggs and Henrys have for one another is unusual in this town because (a) one family is white, the other black (b) they have always been enemies (c) one family is new to the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Randy finds the location of a salt source when he (a) comes upon it in a swamp (b) discovers cases of it in Pete Hernandez's locked basement (c) reads about it in an ancestor's diary.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The greatest effect of the loss of electricity is (a) the lack of refrigeration to preserve foods (b) the lack of air conditioning (c) the lack of radio communication.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Bill McGovern is (a) Lib's brother (b) a SAC colonel (c) Lib's father.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Randy becomes the leader in Fort Repose because (a) his father had been a judge there (b) he had assumed command when it became necessary (c) he had been the banker.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. The new capital of the United States is (a) Miami (b) Denver (c) Houston.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. After the war, the United States is (a) the most powerful country in the world (b) completely isolated (c) a third-rate power.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Frank's novel is timely because (a) it takes place in the twentieth century (b) it deals with events which could occur (c) it does not describe any old-fashioned scenes.

### Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

1. Comment on what you consider to be the central theme as well as any underlying themes in Pat Frank's novel.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Trace the development of Randy Bragg's character from the time of the warning to the coming of the Decontamination Command helicopter.

**ALAS, BABYLON**

**COMPREHENSION TEST A ANSWER KEY**

Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. K | 6. J  |
| 2. E | 7. G  |
| 3. H | 8. I  |
| 4. L | 9. F  |
| 5. A | 10. C |

Part II: True or False (10 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. F | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. F  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 9. C  |
| 2. A | 10. B |
| 3. C | 11. C |
| 4. B | 12. A |
| 5. B | 13. B |
| 6. A | 14. B |
| 7. A | 15. A |
| 8. A |       |

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.

**COMPREHENSION TEST B ANSWER KEY**

Part I: Vocabulary (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. D  |
| 2. L | 7. C  |
| 3. K | 8. J  |
| 4. B | 9. E  |
| 5. I | 10. H |

Part II: True or False (10 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. F  |
| 2. T | 7. F  |
| 3. T | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part III: Multiple Choice (30 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 9. C  |
| 2. A | 10. A |
| 3. C | 11. C |
| 4. C | 12. B |
| 5. A | 13. B |
| 6. A | 14. C |
| 7. B | 15. B |
| 8. A |       |

Part IV: Essay Questions (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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