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Handout

The Story of Project Orion

Vocabulary exercise :

For the vocabulary exercise, we chose to put the sentences containing the words to have a context.

- Nuclear bomb-propelled

This was a project to build a 4,000-ton *nuclear bomb-propelled* ...

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- Fall out

My father was not going to take his children, that was one of the reasons we sort of had a *falling out* for a few years.

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- ARPA

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- Manifesto

Two days later, the space traveler's *manifesto* explaining why ...

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- Yield

These are five-kiloton **yield** bombs, about the size of small Volkswagens

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- Pulse-system yield

And **pulse-system yield**: we're looking at 20-kiloton yield ...

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- Retaliatory strikes

There's another version there that sends **retaliatory strikes** at the Soviet Union.

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- Thrust

We're looking at 20-kiloton yield for an effective **thrust** of 10 million newtons.

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- Sub-woofers

Personnel compartment noise: that's not too bad; it's very low frequencies, it's basically like these **sub-woofers**.

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- Ground-hazard assessment

And now we have **ground-hazard assessments** when you have a blow-up on the pad.

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- Bunks & storm cellars

This is a 20-man version for going to Jupiter: **bunks, storm cellars**, exercise room.

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Comprehension questions :

1. How did Dyson know about the project?
2. When did the project take place?
3. How many tons of nuclear bombs were needed for the ship to function?
4. Where did the project take place?
5. What was the size of the ship compared to?
6. Which organization funded the project?
7. What were the possible departure dates of the spaceship?
8. How did Dyson get the documents about the project?
9. Did the NASA end the project?

Discussion questions :

- What do you think about nuclear bomb-propelled spaceships?
- Do you think that this project should have been made public at the time?