The development of nuclear weapons during World War II proved that nations were starting to get involved in advanced forms of weaponry and technology. The Manhattan Project was the code name for the first atomic bomb project in the United States, with the main engineer of the bomb being Robert Oppenheimer. The project turned out to be a success, as there were three detonations. The first was a test detonation in the deserts of New Mexico by Alamogordo. The final two were the bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, code named “Little Boy” and “Fat Man.” The United States had acted quickly on the development of nuclear weapons because it feared that Germany was designing a nuclear weapon of its own it would launch in the middle of World War II.

With the introduction of nuclear weaponry in the world, the United States realized the potential threat on life it could have, especially when the Soviets announced their construction of nuclear technology in 1949, launching the nuclear phase of the Cold War. This led to the construction of various buildings that would protect people in the event of a nuclear attack. The first to be designed was a fallout shelter that would help protect those inside from falling debris or chemical reactions from a nuclear explosion. While the United States endorsed these, it still felt the need to explain to people what do to in the event there was not a fallout shelter present.
Characters:

Mr. Martinetti  Jason Adler  Kevin Miller  Narrator

The story starts out in a classroom during the 1950s in New York City. Due to the development of nuclear weapons, many people were worried about the United States getting bombed by the Soviets. Children in the classroom were worried, as were their parents, who had to tell the kids that everything would be all right when they went to school. Thankfully, Mr. Martinetti, one of the teachers, has received a film to help the children prepare in the event of an atomic attack.

Jason Adler: I heard that the Russians are building a bomb and that they are going to drop it on the United States!

Kevin Miller: That can’t be true. I thought only the United States would be able to build a bomb. Just like when the United States dropped the bombs on Japan. There is no way the Russians could do that.

At this point, the school bell rings and Mr. Martinetti walks into the classroom. All the students are still up and around the classroom talking about different things, such as the Little Orphan Annie program on the radio.

Mr. Martinetti: All right children, settle down, we have a lot of work to do today.

The children quickly take their seats. They are very nice and obedient to Mr. Martinetti.

Mr. Martinetti: Now as many of you might have heard, there have been talks about atomic bombs coming from the Soviet Union. Now can anyone here tell me where the Soviet Union is?

The students stare blankly for a minute before Jason Adler raises his hand to answer the question. Since he had been talking to Kevin Miller about it before, one would think he would know where Russia is.

Mr. Martinetti: Yes Jason.

Jason: The Soviet Union is located in the east in Asia.

Mr. Martinetti: That is correct Jason. The Soviet Union is located on the other side of the world, very far away from the United States. Many of you are wondering if the Soviets are going to be able to drop a bomb on us from this far away. Well, they can do that. They have bombers that can reach us.
The students now begin to worry. They thought it would not be possible for Russia to drop a bomb on them. With what Mr. Martinetti just told them, it is definitely a possibility now.

**Mr. Martinetti:** While I know a lot of you are not happy to hear this, there is a way for you to protect yourself in the event a bomb is dropped on us. I have a friend that works for the government who gave me this film.

*Mr. Martinetti shows the film to the class. The movie is called “Duck and Cover.”*

**Mr. Martinetti:** Now in this film, called “Duck and Cover,” you will learn how to protect yourself from an atomic bomb should one land close to the school. At the end of the reel, we will do a bomb drill, which is like a fire drill. I will make sure that all of you will be safe in the event a bomb does land on us. Kevin, would you please turn off the lights.

Kevin gets up from his seat and turns the light off. Mr. Martinetti puts the reel of film in the projector and pushes the button. The film portrays a turtle named Bert walking along when a monkey comes down from a tree holding a piece of dynamite. The dynamite is supposed to represent an atomic bomb. Bert would then duck in a certain way, while a chorus would be singing the lyrics as to what to do.

**Chorus:** (everyone) There was a turtle by the name of Bert, and Bert and turtle was very alert, when danger threatened him he never got hurt, he knew just what to do. He ducked! And covered! Ducked! And covered! He did what we all must learn to do. You. And you. And you. And you! Duck and cover!

The film then ended, with the projector screen going to white.

**Mr. Martinetti:** Kevin, would you please turn on the lights?

Kevin once again got up from his seat and turned the lights back on. Mr. Martinetti then made his way back up to the front of the class.

**Mr. Martinetti:** Thank you all for being quiet during the film. Now Bert the turtle had a lot of interesting things to show us. Can anyone tell me who Bert the turtle was supposed to be, or supposed to represent?

*Jason Adler quickly raises his hand again, showing that he knew the answer to the question.*

**Mr. Martinetti:** Yes Jason, who is Bert the turtle supposed to represent?
Jason: Bert is supposed to be like one of us, a person in the United States. I also know who the monkey is supposed to be.

Mr. Martinetti: Well, please Jason, share it with the class.

Jason: The monkey is supposed to be Russia and the stick of dynamite in his hand is an atomic bomb

*The students begin to clap, as they know that Jason is correct in all of his answers. Even Mr. Martinetti is impressed by what Jason had to say.*

Mr. Martinetti: That was exactly right, Jason. Good job! So now that everyone has seen what Bert the turtle has done, can anyone tell me what the main message of the film was?

Kevin Miller immediately raises his hand.

Mr. Martinetti: And what is the correct answer Kevin?

*Kevin playfully gets up from his seats, crouches down, and puts his hands over his head.*

Kevin: Duck and cover!

*The students laugh, thinking that Kevin looks foolish for what he is doing.*

Mr. Martinetti: There is no need for all of you to be laughing at Kevin right now. What Kevin is doing would save his life in the case of an atomic attack. And I am really glad that Kevin acted this out. What I would like all of you to do right now is to get up from your desks and stand by them.

*The students all get up from their seats and stand by their desks. Kevin stands up too and does the same. All of a sudden, Mr. Martinetti turns on a loud siren that he had positioned on his desk. The siren makes a loud noise, causing many of the students to put their hands over their ears.*

Mr. Martinetti: An atomic bomb has just gone off in the area! Duck and cover kids, duck and cover!

*The kids begin to scream and panic, running in different directions as the siren still continues to go off. Kevin and Jason, though, have done the right thing and hidden under their desks. The children are continuing to scream and run as Mr. Martinetti turns off the siren.*
Mr. Martinetti: Children, that was a test. A bomb really has not gone off in the area. This was just a test to see if you have learned anything from the movie about the “Duck and Cover” policy. I am glad to see that Kevin and Jason have both learned to use the policy. We will continue to have drills like this once a week. I will not tell you when they will be, so I want you to be prepared at all times.

The school bell rings, meaning that class has dismissed for the day. The students begin to line up at the front door:

Mr. Martinetti: Have a nice day children. I will see you all tomorrow.

The students begin to leave one by one from the doorway.

“Duck and Cover” had a profound impact in a majority of the school districts throughout the United States. The policy was used for the majority of the nuclear crisis between the United States and the Soviet Union. In reality, “duck and cover” would have been of little or no use in protecting anyone from an atomic bomb blast in a major urban area.
Duck and Cover

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the code name for the project of the first atomic bomb in the United States?

2. Where were the two places in Japan that the atomic bombs were dropped?

3. What was the purpose of the “Duck and Cover” video?
Duck and Cover

Discussion Questions:

1. What was the code name for the project of the first atomic bomb in the United States?  
   *The code name was the Manhattan Project.*

2. Where were the two places in Japan that the atomic bombs were dropped?  
   *The two places were in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.*

3. What was the purpose of the “Duck and Cover” video?  
   *A video was shown to children in schools, called Duck and Cover, explaining how a turtle name Bert would prepare for an atomic attack from a monkey hanging above him in a tree with a stick of dynamite. The dynamite was supposed to represent the atomic bomb that was being dropped.*