

Preparing for an Interview

At this stage of the inquiry, even though students had begun lining up experts to help them, we had not yet done a whole class lesson on planning and conducting an interview. This conversation with Daniel reminded us to put that lesson on our agenda for the next day.

SMOKEY: *Hey, Daniel. We did find a physicist from Los Alamos who's going to come for you and Devin to interview.*

DANIEL: *Really?*

SMOKEY: *Yeah.*

DANIEL: *Cool! When is he coming?*

SMOKEY: *Next Tuesday. His name is Dr. Eisenstein. We're still working on the exact time. Since you guys have gotten everyone interested in this topic, I thought you two could interview him in front of the whole class, and after you've gotten your inquiry questions answered, then the other kids could talk to him also.*

DANIEL: *Cool. I've been working on my interview questions. Can you take a look?* (He hands over list of 10 questions about nuclear weapons.)

SMOKEY (Reading): *Great, lots of good ones here. (Reading) "What are the effects of an atom bomb?"—that's a complicated one.*

DANIEL: *Yeah it's kinda like dropping a big rock on a bunch of ants.*

SMOKEY: *Really? How do you mean?*

DANIEL: *Well, it's like you kill so many of them at once.*

SMOKEY: *Hmm. Does an atom bomb act like a rock when it is dropped?*

DANIEL: *No, no—there's much more that happens, it reaches out much farther.*

SMOKEY: *What do you mean?*

DANIEL: . . . *Well there's flash of light . . .*

SMOKEY: *Uh-huh. . . .*

DANIEL: . . . *and radiation, and heat and the shock wave . . .*

SMOKEY: *Is that the order things happen?*

DANIEL: *Uh, I think so. Maybe. I better look at my articles again.*

SMOKEY: *Remember that David Bodanis book I gave you called $E=MC^2$?*

DANIEL: *Yeah.*

SMOKEY: *In Chapter 9, I think it is, the author gives you a step-by-step account—sometimes it's millisecond by millisecond—of what happens in a nuclear explosion. Remember that thing with the trip wires on the plane? So you can get the sequence there.*

DANIEL: *OK, thanks.*

SMOKEY (Still reading questions): *I notice that you are kind of going from factual questions to bigger, more open-ended ones toward the end.*

DANIEL: *We tried to do that. Like we talked about in class—big, fat, juicy questions.*

SMOKEY: *Yeah, I heard you talk about some questions in the group that aren't on the list. Like whether using atom bombs is OK or not. You were talking about the morality. . . .*

DANIEL: *Right, I don't know why I forgot that stuff.*

SMOKEY: *Well, there is so much to think about. Why don't you go ahead and add some of those big questions to the list?*