

Name _____



Date _____

American Terrorist - The Oklahoma City Bombing

By Beth Beutler

On April 19, 1995, a tragedy rocked America at the core. No one expected it would happen here, initiated by one of our own. It was an act of American terrorism in the interior of the United States - Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Oklahoma City, and America itself, will never be the same.

Any act of terrorism tears at the fiber of all American citizens. To have a foreign enemy attack our shores is bad enough. When a fellow American causes mass destruction, the heartbreak and anger is fiercer still.

That is what happened that bleak day. Even now, one cannot visit the site, with its museum honoring those injured and killed, and not feel emptiness over what was lost that day.

It started out as a typical day at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, a building that housed a credit union, several governmental offices, and even a daycare for the children of many of the people who worked there. Citizens went in and out of the building, conducting business at the various agencies. However, at 9:02 a.m., something went terribly wrong.

Earlier that morning, Timothy McVeigh drove a rented truck to the site. Unbeknownst to others, it was full of explosives. McVeigh left the truck at the front of the building, and a huge explosion erupted at 9:02 a.m. One entire side of the building was destroyed, along with the lives of 168 people. The impact on those left behind, and all of America, is immeasurable. One mother lost both her young boys, after dropping them off at the daycare center and going to work at another building nearby. Others lost parents, children, and friends who had simply gone to work or to do an errand.

No one can really determine why Timothy McVeigh felt the need to commit such a horrible act. However, Dan Herbeck, co-author of "American Terrorist," had some thoughts. He tells of various difficulties McVeigh went through as a young person, and McVeigh's strong feelings that the American government was infringing on individual liberty, especially the right to keep and bear arms. McVeigh seemed to feel that his act, done with the cooperation of another man, Terry Nichols, was a message to the American government. He has claimed, "One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist." Various theories also exist about McVeigh's possible ties to anti-government groups. There are even conspiracy theories about government involvement in the bombing itself. Whatever the truth, McVeigh's decision changed the life of America forever, and ended his own life prematurely.

McVeigh was executed by lethal injection for his crimes on June 11, 2001, after being convicted on June 2, 1997. The last criminal executed by the federal government was Victor Feguer in 1963. McVeigh had the dubious distinction of being the first criminal to be executed by the federal government in more than 30 years. However, the results of his actions will last far longer than that.



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Questions

1. When did the Oklahoma City bombing take place?

_____ 2. True or false. One possible reason for Timothy McVeigh's actions was to send the government a message about not infringing on liberty.

- A. False
- B. True

3. How many people died as a result of this tragedy?

4. The Alfred P. Murrah building housed a _____ center.

_____ 5. Which of the following statements did McVeigh make?

- A. "I am a proud citizen."
- B. "One man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist."
- C. "I did not mean to kill all those people."
- D. "The government made me do it."

6. Which right did McVeigh feel the government was particularly infringing upon?

7. How was McVeigh executed?
