

There's More Online!

- ✓ **BIOGRAPHY** Alger Hiss
- ✓ **BIOGRAPHY** Julius & Ethel Rosenberg
- ✓ **GRAPHIC NOVEL** "Seeking Shelter"
- ✓ **IMAGE** House Un-American Activities Committee
- ✓ **PRIMARY SOURCE** Red Scare
- ✓ **VIDEO** Army-McCarthy Hearings
- ✓ **VIDEO** Cold War and American Society
- ✓ **INTERACTIVE SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



LESSON 3

The Cold War and American Society

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS • How did the Cold War shape postwar international relations? • How did Cold War tensions affect American society?

IT MATTERS BECAUSE

Fearing subversive activity, the government tried to root out Communists in government, Hollywood, and labor unions, while Americans learned to live with the threat of nuclear attack.

A New Red Scare

GUIDING QUESTION How did the post–World War II Red Scare compare and contrast with the one that followed World War I?

During the 1950s, rumors and accusations spawned fears that Communists were trying to take over the world. The Red Scare began in September 1945, when a clerk named Igor Gouzenko walked out of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, Canada, and defected. Gouzenko carried documents showing a Soviet effort to infiltrate government agencies in Canada and the United States, with the specific goal of obtaining information about the atomic bomb. The case stunned Americans. It implied that spies had infiltrated the American government. Soon the search for spies escalated into a general fear of Communist **subversion**, or effort to weaken a society and overthrow its government.

The Truman Loyalty Review Program

In early 1947, President Truman established a **loyalty review program** to screen all federal employees. Truman's action seemed to confirm suspicions that Communists had infiltrated the government and so added to fears that communism was sweeping the nation. Between 1947 and 1951, more than six million federal employees were screened for loyalty—a term difficult to define. A person might become a suspect for reading certain books, belonging to various groups, traveling overseas, or seeing certain foreign films. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) scrutinized some 14,000 people. About 2,000 quit their jobs, many under pressure. Another 212 were fired for “questionable loyalty,” despite a lack of actual evidence.

Reading HELPDESK



Academic Vocabulary

- manipulate • convince

Content Vocabulary

- **subversion**
- **loyalty review program**
- **perjury**
- **censure**
- **fallout**

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

Outlining As you read, summarize the lesson content by using the major headings to create an outline similar to the one below.

The Cold War and American Society

- I. A New Red Scare
 - A. The Truman Loyalty Review Program
 - B.
 - C.

HUAC and Anti-Communist Investigations

FBI director J. Edgar Hoover remained unsatisfied. In 1947 he went before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Formed in 1938 to investigate subversive activities in the United States, HUAC had been a minor committee before Hoover's involvement. He urged HUAC to hold public hearings on Communist subversion to expose not just Communists but also "Communist sympathizers" and "fellow travelers." Under Hoover's leadership, the FBI sent agents to infiltrate groups suspected of subversion and wiretapped thousands of telephones.

Hollywood on Trial One of HUAC's first hearings in 1947 focused on the film industry as a cultural force that Communists might **manipulate** to spread their ideas and influence. Future American president Ronald Reagan was head of the Screen Actors Guild at the time and, when called before HUAC, he testified that there were Communists in Hollywood. During the hearings, ten screenwriters, known as the "Hollywood Ten," used their Fifth Amendment right to protect themselves from self-incrimination and refused to testify. The incident led producers to blacklist, or agree not to hire, anyone who was believed to be a Communist or who refused to cooperate with the committee. The blacklist created an atmosphere of distrust and fear.

Alger Hiss In 1948 Whittaker Chambers, a magazine editor and former Communist Party member, told HUAC that several government officials were also former Communists or spies. One official Chambers named was Alger Hiss, a diplomat who had served in Roosevelt's administration, attended the Yalta Conference, and helped organize the United Nations. Hiss sued Chambers for libel, but Chambers testified that, in 1937 and 1938, Hiss had given him secret State Department documents. Hiss denied being either a spy or a member of the Communist Party, and he also denied ever having known Chambers.

The committee was ready to drop the investigation until California representative Richard Nixon **convinced** his colleagues to continue the hearings to determine who had lied. Chambers produced copies of secret documents, along with microfilm that he had hidden in a hollow pumpkin. These "pumpkin papers," Chambers claimed, proved Hiss was lying. A jury agreed and convicted Hiss of **perjury**, or lying under oath.

The Rosenbergs Another spy case centered on accusations that American Communists had sold secrets about the atomic bomb to the Soviets to help them produce a bomb in 1949. In 1950 the hunt for spies led the FBI to arrest Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, a New York couple who were members of the Communist Party. The government charged them with spying for the Soviets.

The Rosenbergs denied the charges but were condemned to death for espionage. Many people believed that they were simply victims caught in the wave of anti-Communist frenzy. Appeals and pleas for clemency failed, however, and the Rosenbergs were executed in June 1953.

Project Venona In 1946 American and British cryptographers, working for a project code-named "Venona," cracked the Soviet Union's spy code, enabling them to read approximately 3,000 messages between Moscow and the United States collected during the Cold War. These messages confirmed extensive Soviet spying and ongoing efforts to steal nuclear secrets. The government did not reveal Project Venona's existence until 1995. The Venona documents provided strong evidence that the Rosenbergs were indeed guilty.

subversion a systematic attempt to overthrow a government by using persons working secretly from within

loyalty review program a policy established by President Truman that authorized the screening of all federal employees to determine their loyalty to the U.S. government

manipulate to operate or arrange manually to achieve a desired effect

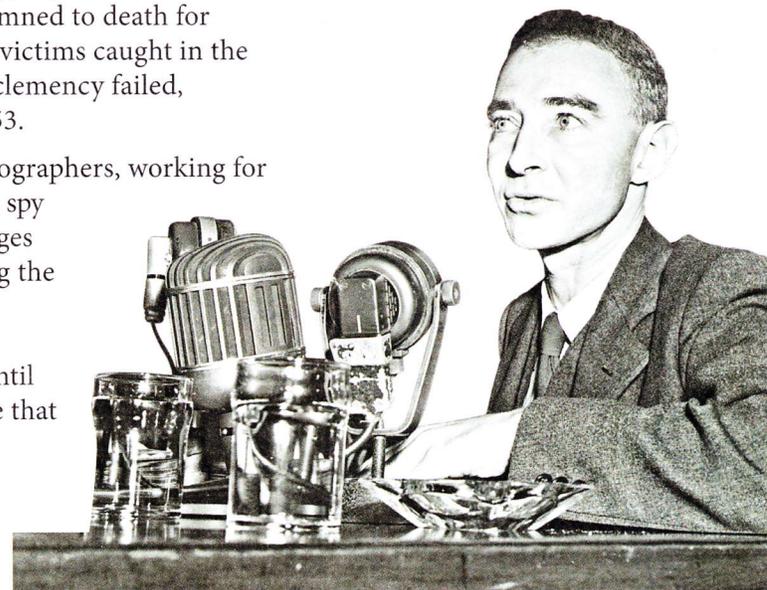
convince to bring to belief, consent, or a course of action

perjury lying when one has sworn under oath to tell the truth

Although he had led the effort to develop the atomic bomb, scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer's left-wing views and opposition to the hydrogen bomb led to the suspension of his security clearance and controversial public hearings.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Conclusions Why were people suspicious of Oppenheimer?





Joseph McCarthy (1908–1957)

When Wisconsin politician Joseph McCarthy first ran for Senate in 1946, he claimed his opponent was “communistically inclined.” His later accusations of Communist subversion made him a national figure. Between 1950 and 1954, McCarthy made headlines for his investigations of government departments and figures, despite his inability to build a solid case against anyone. His often wild accusations became the hallmark of McCarthyism.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Identifying Central Ideas What was the larger threat behind allowing McCarthyism to spread?

The Red Scare Spreads

Many state and local governments, universities, businesses, unions, churches, and private groups also began efforts to find Communists. The University of California required its faculty to take loyalty oaths and fired 157 who refused. Many Catholic groups became anti-Communist and urged members to identify Communists within the Church. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 required union leaders to take oaths saying that they were not Communists. Many union leaders did not object. Instead, they launched efforts to purge their own organizations, eventually expelling 11 unions that refused to remove Communist leaders.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Comparing and Contrasting What was one way that the Red Scare of the 1950s and the Red Scare of the 1920s were similar?

McCarthyism

GUIDING QUESTION *Why did many Americans believe Senator McCarthy’s accusations?*

In 1949 the Red Scare intensified as the Soviet Union successfully tested an atomic bomb, and China fell to communism. To many Americans, these events seemed to prove that the United States was losing the Cold War.

In February 1950, little-known senator Joseph R. McCarthy gave a speech to a Republican women’s group in West Virginia. Halfway through his speech, McCarthy made a surprising statement when he claimed:

PRIMARY SOURCE

“While I cannot take the time to name all the men in the State Department who have been named as members of the Communist Party and members of a spy ring, I have here in my hand a list of 205 that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department.”

—quoted in *The Fifties*, 1993

The Associated Press sent the statement nationwide. Reporters at an airport asked McCarthy to see his list. McCarthy replied that he would be happy to show it to them, but unfortunately, it was in his bag on the plane. In fact, the list never appeared. McCarthy, however, continued making charges.

McCarthy proclaimed that Communists were a danger at home and abroad. He distributed a booklet accusing Democratic Party leaders of corruption and of protecting Communists. McCarthy often targeted Secretary of State Dean Acheson, calling him incompetent and a tool of Stalin. He also accused George C. Marshall, former army chief of staff and secretary of state, of disloyalty. The prevailing anxiety about communism made many Americans willing to accept McCarthy’s claims.

The McCarran Act

In 1950, with McCarthy and others arousing fears of Communist spies, Congress passed the Internal Security Act, also called the McCarran Act. The act made it illegal to attempt to establish a totalitarian government in the United States, and required all Communist-related organizations to publish their records and register with the United States attorney general. Communists could not have passports and, in cases of a national emergency, could be arrested and detained. Unwilling to punish people for their opinions, Truman vetoed the bill, but Congress easily overrode his veto in 1950. Later Supreme Court cases limited the act’s scope.

McCarthy's Rise and Fall

In 1953 McCarthy became chairman of the Senate subcommittee on investigations, which forced government officials to testify about alleged Communist influences. Investigations became witch-hunts—searches for disloyalty based on weak evidence and irrational fears. McCarthy's tactic of damaging reputations with vague, unfounded charges became known as McCarthyism.

McCarthy's sensational accusations put him in the headlines, and the press quoted him often and widely. He badgered witnesses and then refused to accept their answers. His tactics left a cloud of suspicion that he and others interpreted as guilt. People were afraid to challenge him.

In 1954 McCarthy began to look for Soviet spies in the United States Army. During weeks of televised hearings, millions of Americans watched McCarthy question and bully officers, harassing them about trivial details and accusing them of misconduct. His popular support began to fade.

Finally, to strike back at the army's lawyer, Joseph Welch, McCarthy brought up the past of a young lawyer in Welch's firm who had been a member of a Communist-front organization while in law school. Welch, who was fully aware of the young man's past, exploded at McCarthy for possibly ruining the young man's career: "Until this moment, I think I never really gauged your cruelty or your recklessness. . . . You have done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?"

Spectators cheered. Welch had said what many Americans had been thinking. Later that year, the Senate passed a vote of **censure**, or formal disapproval, against McCarthy. Although he remained in the Senate, McCarthy had lost all influence. He died in 1957.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Assessing Why were people prepared to accept McCarthy's claims?

Life During the Early Cold War

GUIDING QUESTION How did fears of nuclear war affect American society?

The Red Scare and the spread of nuclear weapons had a profound impact on American life in the 1950s. Fears of communism and war affected both ordinary Americans and government leaders.

Facing the Bomb

Americans were shocked when the Soviets successfully tested the more powerful hydrogen bomb, or H-bomb, in 1953. The United States had tested its own H-bomb less than a year earlier. Americans prepared for a surprise

Watkins v. United States, 1957

In 1954 labor organizer John Watkins testified before HUAC. He agreed to discuss his connections with the Communist Party and to identify people who were still members, but refused to talk about those who were no longer members. Watkins received a misdemeanor conviction for refusing to answer questions "pertinent to the question under inquiry." In 1957 he appealed his case to the Supreme Court. In a 6-to-1 decision, the Supreme Court held that the activities of HUAC during its investigations were beyond the scope of the stated aims of the committee, as well as the authority of congressional powers.

DBQ DEFENDING What argument would you make in support of John Watkins's position?

Some Americans invested in personal bomb shelters stocked with food, believing it would allow them to survive a bomb blast.

CRITICAL THINKING

Interpreting Study the facial expressions of the members of this family. What can you interpret about the likely significance of the bomb shelter for this family?

PHOTO: Bettmann/CORBIS



censure to express a formal disapproval of an action

fallout radioactive particles dispersed by a nuclear explosion

Thinking Like a HISTORIAN

Determining Cause and Effect

The United States experienced two major Red Scares during the twentieth century: one during the 1920s, and one during the 1950s. Both of these scares occurred shortly after a major nation—first Russia, and later China—adopted a Communist form of government. As a historian, find the effect these scares had on American society and determine if they can be related.

Soviet attack. Schools created bomb shelters and held bomb drills to teach students to “duck-and-cover” to protect themselves from a nuclear bomb blast.

Although “duck-and-cover” might have made people feel safer, it would not have protected them from nuclear radiation. Experts have noted that for every person killed outright by a nuclear blast, four more would die later from **fallout**, the radiation left over after a blast. To protect themselves, some families built backyard fallout shelters.

Popular Culture in the Cold War

As worries about nuclear war and Communist infiltration filled the public imagination, Cold War themes soon appeared in films, plays, television, the titles of dance tunes, and popular fiction. Matt Cvetic, an FBI undercover informant who secretly infiltrated the Communist Party, captivated readers with reports in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1950. His story was later made into the movie *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951). Another film, *Walk East on Beacon* (1952), features the FBI’s activities in a spy case. In 1953 Arthur Miller’s thinly veiled criticism of the Communist witch-hunts, *The Crucible*, appeared on Broadway. The play remains popular today as a cautionary tale about how hysteria can lead to false accusations.

In 1953 a weekly television series, *I Led Three Lives*, about an undercover FBI counterspy who was also a Communist Party official, debuted. Popular tunes such as “Atomic Boogie” and “Atom Bomb Baby” played on the radio. The next year, author Philip Wylie published *Tomorrow!*, a novel describing the horrific effects of nuclear war on an unprepared American city. Wylie wrote his novel to educate the public about the horrors of atomic war.

One of the most famous and enduring works of this period is John Hersey’s nonfiction book *Hiroshima*. Originally published as the August 1946 edition of *The New Yorker* magazine, the book provides six firsthand accounts of the United States dropping the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan. Not only did it make some Americans question the use of the bomb, but *Hiroshima* also underscored the real, personal horrors of a nuclear attack.

At the same time, the country was enjoying postwar prosperity and optimism. That spirit, combined with McCarthyism, fears of Communist infiltration, and the threat of atomic attack, made the early 1950s a time of contrasts. As the 1952 election approached, Americans were looking for someone or something that would make them feel more secure.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing How did the Cold War affect popular culture in the 1950s?

LESSON 3 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

- Evaluating** What was the significance of Truman’s loyalty review program?
- Identifying Cause and Effect** What was the effect of the Senate’s vote of censure against McCarthy?

Using Your Notes

- Summarizing** Use the notes you completed during the lesson to write a paragraph summarizing how the early years of the Cold War affected American society.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- Comparing and Contrasting** How did the post–World War II Red Scare compare and contrast with the one that followed World War I?
- Drawing Inferences** Why did many Americans believe Senator McCarthy’s accusations?
- Describing** How did fears of nuclear war affect American society?

Writing Activity

- ARGUMENT** Consider the historical events surrounding the early Cold War era. Were HUAC and Senator McCarthy justified in investigating people who were suspected of being Communists?