

The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism

A lesson plan developed by the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and brought to you as part of an Una Chapman Cox Foundation project on American Diplomacy and the Foreign Service

High School Grades 9-12
Adaptable for Grades 7-8

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Define the second Red Scare and the major players that contributed to it
- Comprehend and critically analyze the historical context behind the event, from a global perspective
- Develop objective awareness
- Understand the effect the event had on the Foreign Service, American government, and diplomacy
- Comprehend and analyze primary sources
- Conduct outside research to draw conclusions about sources

Standards:

This unit is aligned with the following 2015 [Virginia Department of Education History and Social Science Standards of Learning](#)

- **United States History 1865 to the Present**
USII.1
- **The United States since World War II**
USII.8
- **Civics and Economics**
CE.1, CE.3, CE.4, CE.10
- **World Geography**
WG.1
- **World History and Geography: 1500 A.D (C.E.) to the Present**
WHII.1, WHII.12
- **Virginia and United States Government**
GOVT. 1, GOVT. 3, GOVT.11

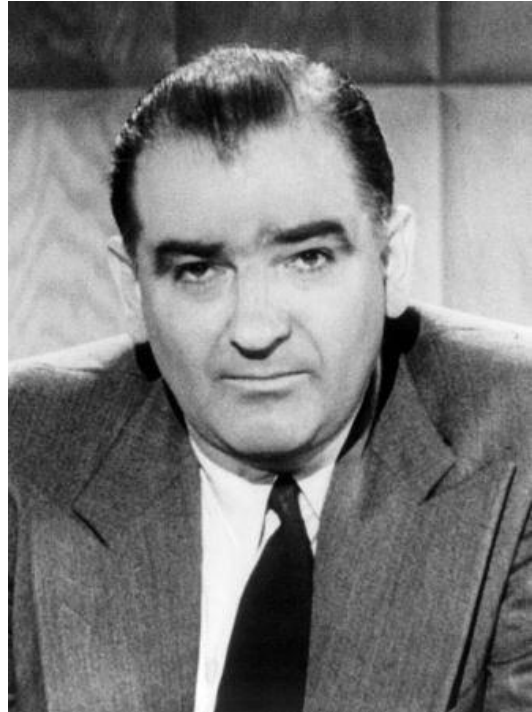
Time required:

- One to two 45-minute class periods

Background information:

The second Red Scare coincides almost entirely with the first years of the Cold War. Following World War II, the Soviet Union, which had just fought as U.S. allies against the Axis Powers, entered into a nearly fifty-year period of political and ideological tension known as the Cold War. While there was no physical combat between the two nations, the Soviet Union's agenda to create an ever-larger communist regime reignited the American fear of communist expansion into democratic nations and fear of the presence of the "Reds" in their own society.

The major voice behind the Red Scare was Joseph R. McCarthy, Republican senator from Wisconsin. Citing the presence of communist infiltration in the U.S. government, McCarthy claimed to have a list of State Department officials he identified as communists. McCarthy led a series of investigations and hearings on the alleged communists in the State Department. The senator's witch hunt for suspected communists and fear mongering on a national scale would become known as "McCarthyism."



[Joseph McCarthy](#) | United Press

[What is the State Department and what do they do?](#)

Lesson Preparation:

Materials:

- [Web page: About the U.S. State Department](#) | U.S. Department of State
- Oral History Red Scare Handout | Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
- [Video: The Cold War on TV](#) | Retro Report
- Caroline S. Service Oral History excerpt | Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
- John F. Melby Oral History excerpt | Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
- [Video: Joseph McCarthy's Downfall Was Accusing the Army of Communism](#) | Smithsonian Channel
- [Optional: Oral History Evaluation Sheet](#) | Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training

Resources:

"The Cold War." John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. [The Cold War | JFK Library](#). Accessed 9 April, 2021.

ADST Optional Further Reading

- [The State Department under the Red Scare: McCarthy's Campaign](#)
- [End of an Era: The August Coup and the Final Days of the Soviet Union](#)
- [Living through History with a Historian—Witnessing Monumental Societal Change in the Soviet Union from the '60s to the '90s](#)
- [The Red Scare Hits the Foreign Service Institute](#)
- [Atomic Age Uncertainty—Tension between the United States and the Soviet Union](#)

[McCarthyism and the Red Scare | Miller Center](#)

This source gives great insight into the response, or rather lack thereof, from the Executive Branch and President Eisenhower regarding Joseph McCarthy and the Red Scare. It may serve as a good indicator of how McCarthy's political power grew and why he was not stopped earlier.

[Lesson Plan: The Red Scare and McCarthyism | Share My Lesson](#)

This lesson plan from C-Span Classroom contains helpful clips exploring elements that contributed to the fear of communist infiltration and disloyalty in the United States, such as the Ethel and Julius Rosenberg case, as well as the "Hollywood Ten." This could be beneficial background information if looking for more specific examples relating to the foundation of McCarthyism.

Lesson Procedure:

Provide background and context to establish an initial understanding of the second Red Scare. Show [Retro Report video](#) with class for further explanation.

Witch Hunt Activity

- Introduce the activity by saying you are going to hand out pieces of paper to each student.
 - The paper will either say "Communist" or "Loyal."
 - The objective of the activity is to establish groups that do not contain any communists. At the end of the game, when it is revealed who is who, the largest group to contain no communists wins.
- What the students do not know is that all the papers say "Loyal."
- At the end of the game when the groups are established, have all the communists raise their hands.
 - When no one raises their hands, explain how the activity simulates the suspicion and division within the State Department caused by the Red Scare and how it wasn't based on actual threat but on McCarthy's agenda
 - Where have we seen suspicion and accusations before? **The Palmer Raids**. Believing the worst in others takes the pressure off of possibly having to defend ourselves from baseless accusations. Help students understand this response and how it is human nature to do what you can to protect yourself and your family. Also explain how we will further explore this theme in the ADST Oral History Activity.

ADST Oral History Activity

- Split the class into either two or four groups depending on the size. Groups of 4 recommended.
- Provide each group with an excerpt of either Caroline Service's or John F. Melby's oral histories from the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (see below).
- Explain what an oral history is and how it fits into the primary source discussion from Class One. Ask students to identify if these interviews would be considered primary or secondary sources. Identify possible bias/reliability issues.
- After reading the excerpt on their own, have the students discuss the questions below with their group. They can use the Red Scare Handout to organize their thoughts. If completing the plan with Middle School students, read through the questions with students to see if there are any questions they have regarding the activity.
- Following the group discussion, have each group share with the class a basic summary of the excerpt and the points they talked about with one another.
- Feel free to encourage outside research as students answer questions.

Caroline S. Service (Spouse) Oral History Excerpt

It was while we were in Berkeley with my parents that McCarthy gave his famous—maybe I should say infamous—speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, about card-carrying communists in the State Department. When I think of McCarthy the one word to describe him that comes to my mind is “Yahoo.” McCarthy had a list of over 100 names, so he said, of people in the State Department who were “communists,” or “card-carrying communists.” He gave no names, but each description of a “subversive person” had a number and a description. None of the descriptions fit Jack. Jack phoned the State Department to ask what we should do. Should he come back to Washington? We were booked on a freighter out of Seattle bound for Madras [India] on March 11. The Department said that Jack was not on McCarthy's list and that we should continue to India, which we did. On March 11 we sailed for a month-long trip to India via Japan and the Philippines. The passage across the north Pacific at that time of year was stormy...About halfway across the ocean the radio operator came to our cabin one evening and said to Jack that the news was talking about a man named Service that McCarthy was after. McCarthy was saying that Service had “lost China” and so on. So Jack rushed up to the radio room to listen and heard a lot more. The radio man had a friend in Los Angeles who was a ham operator, and our radio man was able to get more information from him about what was going on in Washington. The next day a cable

came to the ship from the State Department telling Jack to return to Washington from Japan. We were given the option of my staying in Japan with the children, returning to Washington with Jack, or going on...but he never got there. Everyone was more than helpful. Finally I decided that I was going to give a big party because I thought that Jack would get to Delhi by Christmas. He went through several more hearings in Washington and was always cleared. But that didn't make any difference. I think that by this time McCarthyism had become so all-pervasive that someone had to go.

Well because he had had a lot to do with the so-called "loss of China," in quotes...But even without that the China Hands, as they were called- Edmund Clubb, John Carter Vincent, and John Davies were easy targets. John Davies was finally fired out-of-hand, I think, right after the election of 1954. John Carter Vincent and Edmund Clubb, being over 50, were forced into retirement. It was because of China. Because China had gone communist...These people had "Lost China." It was so crazy. You can just tear your hair sometimes. The ironic thing is that it was Nixon who finally got John Davies fired. Dulles was the Secretary of State. The Republican Administration was determined to get people out of the Foreign Service who had been in the China service. You can't say it was a plot; it's just that politically it was a good drum to beat. They wanted to show the public that Republicans weren't "soft on communism."... it was as though the country was facing a great outside menace which was inside the country. It just drove people nuts to think that China was not pro-American anymore...It was like a red flag to a bull to mention China except in pejorative terms...McCarthy frightened Americans. He frightened the public. I was frightened. Now I'll tell you. I wasn't frightened in China. I wasn't frightened the year I spent alone in India. I wasn't frightened traveling around the world. But I was frightened by McCarthy. I thought what is he going to do to us? What is he going to do to our children?

Source: [Caroline S. Service Oral History, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training](#)

Questions:

1. How did McCarthy's vendetta disrupt Jack's foreign service duties? How did it affect his family? Identify evidence from the interview to support your answer.
2. What is Caroline referring to when she says McCarthy thought Jack "Lost China"?
3. According to Caroline, why did her husband's innocence not matter? Why didn't it "make any difference"?
4. What does Caroline's fear of McCarthy demonstrate about his effect on State Department employees?

Optional Question:

- Does McCarthy's attack on FSO Service abridge his freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution? What effects could this have on Service's worth and dignity?

John F. Melby (Foreign Service Officer) Oral History Excerpt

I first met Lillian [Hellman] in Moscow when I was there. Well, we had an affair. And it went on for 40 years. An association. And that was the only charge against me from the Department, that I had maintained an association with one Lillian Hellman, who is a member of the Communist Party, who is alleged to be a member. It didn't say she was. All I could say was, "Yes. It's true. So what?" It was out of the McCarthy era of suspicion. It was in the very early stages of it. The charges were made and the charges were laid. And I was informed of the charges but I was never allowed to know who had made the charges. I was never permitted to confront those who had accused me of this, or had accused her of anything. It was a true star chamber operation. And it would, many years later, after Bob Newman finally got the FBI reports, that there was no substance to the charges against Lillian. She had been accused by one of the FBI informants of being a communist, who later turned out to be a liar. He'd accused everyone in the world of it . . . They were a bunch of finks. They were McCarthy stooges, all of them . . . They didn't know what it was all about. They were administering what was, at this time, a new branch of law, namely administrative law. And most lawyers, except for two or three, four maybe; no lawyer had to have any experience with administrative law. There wasn't anything to go on. My lawyer was a very conservative, well-known practitioner before the Federal Communications Commission. And he just sat there, during my hearing, with his mouth hanging open. He didn't know what to say. He couldn't answer, he couldn't ask a question. He didn't understand what was going on. What kind of legal proceeding is this? And I was just sort of on my own, because he didn't know what to do. He had an assistant, a young man named Ted Barron, who was a little more knowledgeable and tried to salvage things.

In the end, finally, I was suspended. And I decided to get rid of Scharfeld and get another lawyer, who turned out to be Joseph Volpe who had been general counsel of the Atomic Energy Commission. He would handle all of the security problems for the

Atomic Energy Commission, including—who was the man who was then one of his clients, Robert Oppenheimer, one of the best men in the business. But by this time, it was too late. Joe did a magnificent job on it, but the board obviously wasn't even listening to him. You could tell from their questions. He would talk, put forth an oration, and they weren't even listening. They didn't care. They weren't interested. They had already made up their minds: I had not told the truth, I was lying. I was therefore a security risk. There was never any question of loyalty in my case. It was just pure security. I had lied. I hadn't told the truth. Therefore, I was not reliable...Lillian. She was a communist. And I'd said I didn't believe it. I was lying because their informants from the FBI said that she was. But they wouldn't let her testify. They wouldn't let me know who had made the charges against her. I didn't know what I was defending. I could either take their word for it, which turned out to be wrong, or I could recant. Well, I wasn't going to do that.

. . . there were hundreds [of investigations] going on. And nobody was talking to anybody else. You'd walk down the street and you'd see somebody who you knew charges were laid against; you'd cross the street so that you wouldn't have to speak to them. It was an incredible period. One of the charges that was laid against me was, "Mr. Melby, we get a report that you've been spending a lot of time hanging around hotel lobbies. Do you think that while you're going through this, it's wise for you to appear in public?" I said, "What are you talking about? Hotel lobbies are a public place. I'll go there anytime I want."

Source: [John F. Melby Oral History, Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training](#)

Questions:

1. Who was Lillian Hellman and why was she accused of being a communist?
2. What were the charges laid out against Foreign Service Officer John F. Melby?
3. How important were the hearings in proving his innocence?
4. What kind of environment did the Red Scare create in the State Department?

Optional Question:

- Does McCarthy's attack on FSO Melby abridge his freedoms guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution? What effects could this have on Melby's worth and dignity?

Wrap Up*:

*Note: For high school students, this “Wrap Up” is optional, and can be addressed later at the end of the Lavender Scare Lesson Plan. This specific “Wrap Up” is ideal for completing the unit with middle school students.

McCarthyism Ends:

Securing power through his investigations, McCarthy moved his target from the State Department to the United States Army, saying there were communists in their ranks. His baseless attack on this respected institution with no evidence would ultimately begin his demise; following the hearings, he was censured by the Senate and virtually ousted from the political world.

Play [Joseph McCarthy's Downfall Was Accusing the Army of Communism - YouTube](#)

Final Discussion Question: Can you connect McCarthy's witch hunt to any other periods of history in which people were accused and their reputations/lives destroyed? (The Salem Witch Hunts, Nazism, etc.) Can connections be made between McCarthy's bullying and attacks with today's cancel culture? How so?

Lesson Evaluation:

- When providing background information, are students taking notes that help them comprehend the material?
- During the witch hunt activity, are students actively participating, or are they letting selected leaders make choices for everyone? Do they demonstrate comprehension of the activity's greater message”?
- During the oral history activity, are students diligently reading the excerpts and discussing key points and questions with their group members? Do they point to specific evidence when explaining their responses to the class? Do they use the handout to organize their thoughts?

Credits:

Jacqueline Chianca and Bagul Mammedova

The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism Handouts:

Name _____

Date _____

The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism
Caroline Service Oral History Questions

1. How did McCarthy's vendetta disrupt Jack's foreign service duties? How did it affect his family? Identify evidence from the interviews to support your answer.

2. What is Caroline referring to when she says McCarthy thought Jack "Lost China"?

3. According to Caroline, why did her husband's innocence not matter? Why didn't it "make any difference"?

4. What does Caroline's fear of McCarthy demonstrate about his effect on State Department employees?

Name _____

Date _____

The Second Red Scare and McCarthyism
John F. Melby Oral History Questions

1. Who was Lillian Hellman and why was she accused of being a communist?

2. What were the charges laid out against Foreign Service Officer John F. Melby?

3. How important were the hearings in proving his innocence?

4. What kind of environment did the Red Scare create in the State Department?