

How was the US impacted by the CW?



Task: Complete the following tasks to learn more about the economic, social, and cultural impact of the Cold War on the US. As you go, take notes on your [comparison worksheets](#):

1. Introduction - How was the US impacted by the Cold War?

The Cold War impacted every aspect of US life - political, economic and social.

Task 1

Watch the following video, [Atomic Cafe](#), from 16.45 minutes in until 20.30 minutes. What can you learn from these excerpts about how the Cold War impacted on the US?

2. What was the economic impact on the US?

'Post-war America was not only prosperous, but also proud and boastful...the American people were in the grip of 'victory culture' - that is the belief that unending triumph was the nation's birthright and destiny. From the Classroom, the pulpit and the town hall, as well as from popular culture avenues came the self-congratulatory rhetoric about American's invincibility.. Americans believed that their nation was the greatest in the world, not only the most powerful but the most righteous'

M. Norton, et. al. (eds.) A People and a Nation, 2001, p 788

Task 2

Look at the graphs below. What can you learn about the military spending of the US in the 20th Century? From your knowledge of the Second World War and Cold War, can you explain the different trends that you have identified?



<https://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/TrendsInUSMilitarySpending.pdf>

A closer look at post-Second World War spending:



The US emerged from the Second World War much stronger economically (the only country involved in the fighting to do this). More than a million new businesses were set up. American farmers experienced much better times as the US exported food to help its Allies. The US government raised money to finance the war by raising taxes but also by selling bonds to the public; those buying the bonds were guaranteed their money back after a period plus a guaranteed rate of interest. By the end of the war, Americans had bought bonds totaling \$129 billion.

New industries developed through the demands for war production including advanced electronics, telecommunications, synthetic materials, pharmaceuticals and atomic energy. The most significant industrial growth, however, was in armaments and weaponry. In the 1930s between 2 and 3 per cent of GDP was spent on defence but by 1945 it had risen to 41 per cent. The war years saw the development of centres of armaments production - such as naval and aircraft production in the Northwest and California; desert areas became associated with military testing. Such developments brought prosperity to these regions.

Task 3

From what you have read so far, what factors put the USA in a strong position to compete economically and militarily with the USSR in conflicts post Second World War?

As you can see, the US was in a strong position in 1946 to take on the USSR in a new conflict. However, there was little expectation in the US that it was going to get involved in a global conflict. In fact there was rapid demobilisation. Defence contracts were canceled and returning service men were aided by the government to get back into work.

The developments in Europe, however, which saw Stalin extending control over the recently 'liberated' Eastern countries and the fear that communism might spread to western Europe, saw the US changing its position with the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Aid in 1947/8. The US economy was in a strong position to deal with this new situation and the Marshall Plan was key to rebuilding Western Europe in these years.

Task 4

Try watching episode 3 of the CNN Series 'The Cold War' which goes into depth about US economic policy during the early Cold War - [Cold War - Marshall Plan \[E3/24\]](#)

From this moment economics became an important part of the Cold War conflict. Key to fighting communism was the development of an international economic system conducive to economic prosperity. It was important for the US to keep countries free from communism so that it could pursue its free-trade policies; thus it gave aid, incentives and encouraged economic international co-operation through institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

It was also important for the US to show the world the benefits of capitalism through its own robust, free, market-orientated economy; economic policies, such as those that had been pursued by Roosevelt before the war which involved state funding, were avoided by Truman and Eisenhower as they were associated with left-wing policies. Advocates of New Deal style reforms were attacked for promoting programmes that seemed too close to the realm of socialism.

Task 5

Read the following source and answer the questions below:

"To win World War II, the U.S. became a high production, high savings economy. The United States essentially out-produced its enemies. To win the Cold War, the United States became a low-savings, high-consumption economy. It basically supported its allies in a recovery, development and growth

process that out-consumed the USSR and China. The United States exhausted the USSR and forced China to change its policies on domestic investment.

The matching consumption-led and export-led economics pursued by the United States and its Cold War allies were optimal for addressing the priority of winning the Cold War — but not for a non-war environment."

<https://www.theglobalist.com/cold-war-roots-of-u-s-economic-problems/>

1. According to this source, how was the US economy affected by the Cold War and how was this different to the economy that developed during the Second World War?
2. Why were these policies successful in the context of the Cold War?
4. Research further the 'consumption-led' economy in the 1950s and 1960s. What factors fuelled the consumer boom? What kinds of goods did Americans buy? What was the overall impact of this prosperity on American society?

As you have read, a key feature of the Cold War was the arms race. The graphs at the top of the page show a sharp drop in military spending at the end of the Second World War, but then a return to growth by 1948. 1950 saw the Korean War and the introduction of NSC 68 which trebled US military spending - thus militarising and globalising the Cold War.

So what was the effect of military spending on the economy? In fact the US economy was strong enough to cope with the average of 5 per cent of GDP that was spent during the Cold War years, though this did involve higher taxation for Americans. This of course was very different to the USSR where the already struggling economy was brought to its knees by the average of 14 per cent that was spent on weapons.

Nevertheless, the relatively large sums of money sent on the arms race affected the economy. It benefited a few large industrial corporations, such as General Electric and General Motors. In 1960, President Eisenhower warned about this 'the military-industrial complex'.

Task 6

Read Eisenhower's speech which you can find [here](#)

You can hear the section on the military-industrial complex on the clip here: [Eisenhower warns us of the military industrial complex.](#)

Explain in your own words the dangers that Eisenhower is explaining in this speech.

How far were the foundations for the military-industrial complex laid during the Second World War?

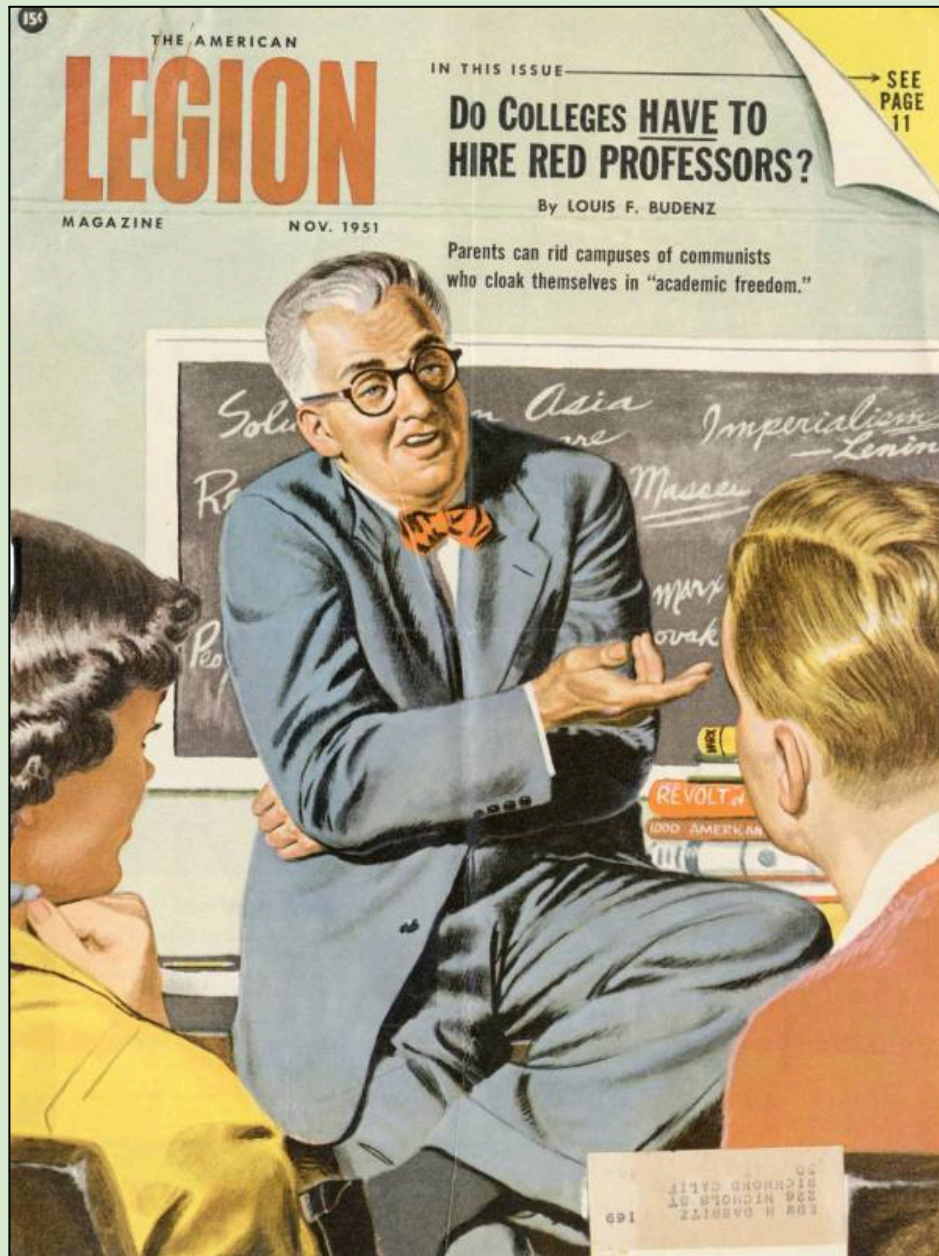
3. What was the impact on US society?

"The choice between Americanism and Communism was vital, without room for compromise."

[Thomas Aiello, University of Arkansas](#)

Task 7

What is the message of this cover of the magazine 'The American Legion'? Refer to specific details in the image to support your answer:



<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/coll/pauling/peace/pictures/1951n.26.html>

The US had long been opposed to communism as can be seen from the 'Red Scare' that took place in the 1920s. However in the years following the Second World War, the fear of communism grew dramatically. Communism was seen as a threat to the US way of life, its free market, consumer-led economy and also to the rights enjoyed by American citizens. When the Soviet Union established control over eastern European countries following the war, and as Europe became divided politically, militarily and economically, the fear of an expansionist Soviet Union became entrenched in American thinking. Many Americans believed that their nation's security depended on preventing the spread of communism, and this belief created an atmosphere of fear and suspicion in many parts of the country. This not only influenced the government's domestic economic policy (see above), it also profoundly impacted all aspects of American society.

Task 8

Watch the first section of the CNN Cold War episode, 'Reds' [which can be found here](#).

Answer the questions on the handout that goes with the video:

1. Who were the Hollywood Ten?
2. What happened to them?
3. What was Alger Hiss accused of?
4. What happened to Hiss?
5. Which future US President showed that he was a strong anti-communist?
6. Which two key events helped to harden America's attitudes towards Communism?
7. What did McCarthy believe was the problem with the US government?
8. What methods did the FBI use to find 'Communists'? What is significant about these methods?
9. How was McCarthy now influencing American politics?
10. What did the Rosenberg case show about the judicial system in America at this time?
11. What finally ended McCarthy's 'witch hunt'?

The final sentence in the commentary of this section of the video says that 'the spirit of McCarthyism....stained American democracy for decades'. What does this mean?

Task 9

Research further the role and the impact of HUAC, the Federal Loyalty Programme and the McCarran Act.

Also research further the role of the FBI in investigating suspected Communists. ([The BBC radio programme here](#) has some interesting information on the role of the FBI).

You will also find [this website](#) (Oxford Research Encyclopedia) useful in your research. [This BBC article](#) provides a lot of useful information on the impact of McCarthyism.

Joseph McCarthy was a senator for Wisconsin and he became increasingly influential as the Cold War gripped the US. The 'McCarthy' period lasted from 1947 until 1956. After the Second World War anti-Communist feeling was strong in the US and there were rumours of Soviet spies infiltrating all sectors of American society. The Alien Registration Act [1940] included the punishment of any person advocating the

overthrow of the US government and the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was a key organization that promoted the search for domestic communist activity.

HUAC's investigations led to rising public fear of 'reds within' and this led, in 1947, to the National Security Act that set up the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA); Truman also established a Federal Loyalty Program in the same year. The McCarran Act of 1950 gave the government further powers to investigate suspected communists.

In 1948 Truman ran for re-election. However, the Democrats had lost control of the House of Representatives and the Senate. His foreign policies had alienated some of the left of politics, and his support for civil rights had alienated those on the right. In addition, Truman's Democrat party was deeply divided and the Republican Party seemed to have the election won. After a hard campaign Truman was re-elected.

However, Truman's administration faced intense pressure in 1949 as the Soviets seemed to gain ground. In September, the USSR successfully tested its own atomic bomb and in October the Chinese Communists under Mao Zedong won the long civil war and established the People's Republic of China. McCarthy gave impassioned speeches decrying the 'loss of China' and accused Truman's government of handing victory to the communists after it cut aid to the Nationalists. In February 1950, McCarthy declared that there were over 205 Soviet spies in the State Department. He also claimed that all American liberals were Communist sympathizers

McCarthy's 'anti-Red' crusade intensified public opinion and McCarthy's supporters created an atmosphere of near-hysterical suspicion and fear. McCarthy's 'witch-hunt' included accusations of Red infiltration into not only the government but also the universities, Hollywood, Broadway and network television; indeed he presented long lists of 'Communists' whom he claimed were prominent in all walks of American life. As you will have seen from the CNN video this meant that people in all areas of society found themselves of being accused of 'red' sympathies; this in turn ruined many lives. In addition, neighbours were encouraged to spy on each other and to expose anyone thought to have communist sympathies.

McCarthy's accusations led to 'purges' and show trials of those accused of 'un-American' behaviour. Some historians have drawn parallels with the show trials in Stalin's purges of the 1930s. The most infamous trial of the period was that of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were convicted of spying for the Soviets and executed in 1953.

Task 10

Study the cartoons published by Herblock on the Red Scare which can be found [here](#).

In pairs discuss the meaning of each cartoon. Choose your favourite cartoon, print it out and annotate it to show the message.

As a result of the Red Scare, the words 'red', 'pinko', 'commie' and 'lefty' became synonymous with someone who was politically unsound, unpatriotic and therefore a threat to the US. This meant that those fighting for

what were seen as 'left-wing' causes such as women's rights, civil rights or workers rights were also seen as suspect. People stopped joining voluntary or civic organisations as any kind of 'activism' could be seen as controversial.

In addition traditional aspects of society were emphasised. Communism, it was believed, aimed to "destroy the American home and cause ... moral deterioration," (Baptist minister Billy Graham) which would leave the country exposed to communist infiltration. This meant that women were encouraged to return home after the war and religion was emphasised; those who did not conform to what was seen as the traditional American society and values, such as homosexuals, were vilified as being un-American. The attack on homosexuals became known as the 'Lavender scare'.

Religion was given a huge boost; communists rejected religion and were thus godless, while America saw itself as justified in its actions because it had God on its side. Religious leaders embraced the role of attacking Communism (see Billy Graham quotes above and below) and churches and religion grew in importance during this period as a result of its role in the Cold War conflict. 'American church membership, approximately 49 percent of the population in 1940 irrespective of denomination, increased to 65 percent by 1970, pushed in part by the absolutist rhetoric of Cold War American politicians and evangelicals.'

[Thomas Aiello](#). In 1952 the American Pledge of Allegiance, widely said by schoolchildren, was altered to include the words "under God".

Task 11

What can you learn from Billy Graham about the impact of the fear of communism on American society?

"While nobody likes a watchdog, and for that reason many investigation committees are unpopular, I thank God for men who, in the face of public denouncement and ridicule, go loyally on in their work of exposing the pinks, the lavenders and the reds who have sought refuge beneath the wings of the American eagle and from that vantage point try in every subtle, undercover way to bring comfort, aid and help to the greatest enemy we have ever known — communism."

Billy Graham, Radio Sermon, 1953

As with the economy, government social legislation was affected by the fear of socialist ideas; officials in government who advocated social policies involving regulation to help workers for example, or policies promoting equality or civil rights or more federal spending in health and education were silenced or removed by the federal loyalty programme mentioned in the source above.

Schools were directly affected as teachers often fell victim to ideological purges. In some places, such as Salupa, Oklahoma, books were burned for containing un-American themes. In Texas, orders were given to remove any books written by Soviet authors (Stuart J Foster, *The Red Scare: Origins and Impact*).

4. What was the impact of the Red Scare on the Civil Rights Movement?

As mentioned above, anyone advocating what were seen as 'liberal' or left-wing causes such as civil rights were seen as suspect in this political climate. In the South, those advocating integration were linked with communism; this resulted in what has been called a 'Southern red scare' where the language and the methods of McCarthyism were used to attack civil rights campaigners. This had a detrimental affect on the Civil Rights movement - many were imprisoned and the NAACP and Congress for Racial Equality were forced to break its ties with the Communist Party which had been one of the biggest supporters of the Civil Rights movement; it was impossible for them to both promote civil rights and then take aid from communists who were regarded by Americans as the greatest threat to civil rights.

However, the fact that the US was presenting itself as the leader of the 'free world', championing liberal democracy against the 'godless' Soviet Union, and promoting freedom in newly emerging post colonial nations of Asia and Africa, also meant that segregation in the US was an embarrassment. Indeed the Soviet Union was able to use the racial issue to turn such nations against the US. With the world watching with interest the civil rights protests of the 1960s, the US was under pressure to maintain its credibility. Historian Mary L. Dudziak argues that it was international pressure that played a key role in influencing the civil rights policies of Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy and in ensuring the passing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (*Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy*, Princeton University Press, 2000).

Task 12

Read this speech by Martin Luther King where he talks about communism. What point do you think he is trying to make in this speech?

"We believe in the Christian religion. We believe in the teachings of Jesus. The only weapon that we have in our hands this evening is the weapon of protest...And certainly, certainly, this is the glory of America, with all of its faults. This is the glory of our democracy. If we were incarcerated behind the iron curtains of a Communistic nation we couldn't do this. If we were dropped in the dungeon of a totalitarian regime we couldn't do this. But the great glory of American democracy is the right to protest for right...If we are wrong, the Supreme Court of this nation is wrong. If we are wrong, the Constitution of the United States is wrong. If we are wrong, God Almighty is wrong. If we are wrong, Jesus of Nazareth was merely a utopian dreamer that never came down to earth. And we are determined here in Montgomery to work and fight until justice runs down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Martin Luther King, Jr., 1955

5. What was the impact of the nuclear arms race on society?

Task 13

[Watch Atomic Cafe](#) from one hour until one hour five minutes. What would be the impact of such public information programmes on the US public?

From 1949, Americans lived in fear of a nuclear attack. When the USSR launched its Sputnik satellite in 1957, thus showing that they had the technology to allow Soviet missiles to reach the US, there was hysteria in the US. There was also consternation at the scientific abilities of the Soviets and that they were ahead in the 'space race' and also a mistaken belief that there was 'a missile gap' in favour of the USSR.

The national climate created by Sputnik and books such as *What Ivan Knows That Johnny Doesn't* (1961), forced government action. Eisenhower, in January 1958, called for matching educational programmes with national defense needs and recommended the federal government play an important part in this activity. The National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 provided state funding to improve education standards and to encourage students to take science and engineering programmes to ensure that there were enough qualified Americans to compete with the Soviets in the space race.

Fear of a nuclear attack pervaded US society. As you will have seen from the Atomic Cafe video, the government put out civil defense programs. Students regularly practised the 'Duck and Cover' drills. Following the launch of Sputnik, the Gaither Report advocated a massive building programme of fallout shelters to protect US citizens from nuclear attack.

Meanwhile, some individuals and organisations - particularly conservatives or libertarian thinkers, took matters into their own hands by preparing for a nuclear war by stockpiling food and supplies. This was known as 'survivalism'. Others joined protest movements against nuclear weapons.

Task 14

[Watch this CNN Cold War Video](#) which covers some of the key areas of conflict in the arms and space race between the US and the USSR up to 1959 and which gives a good overview of the impact of the arms and space race on America. The section between 22 minutes and 31 minutes is especially relevant to this theme.

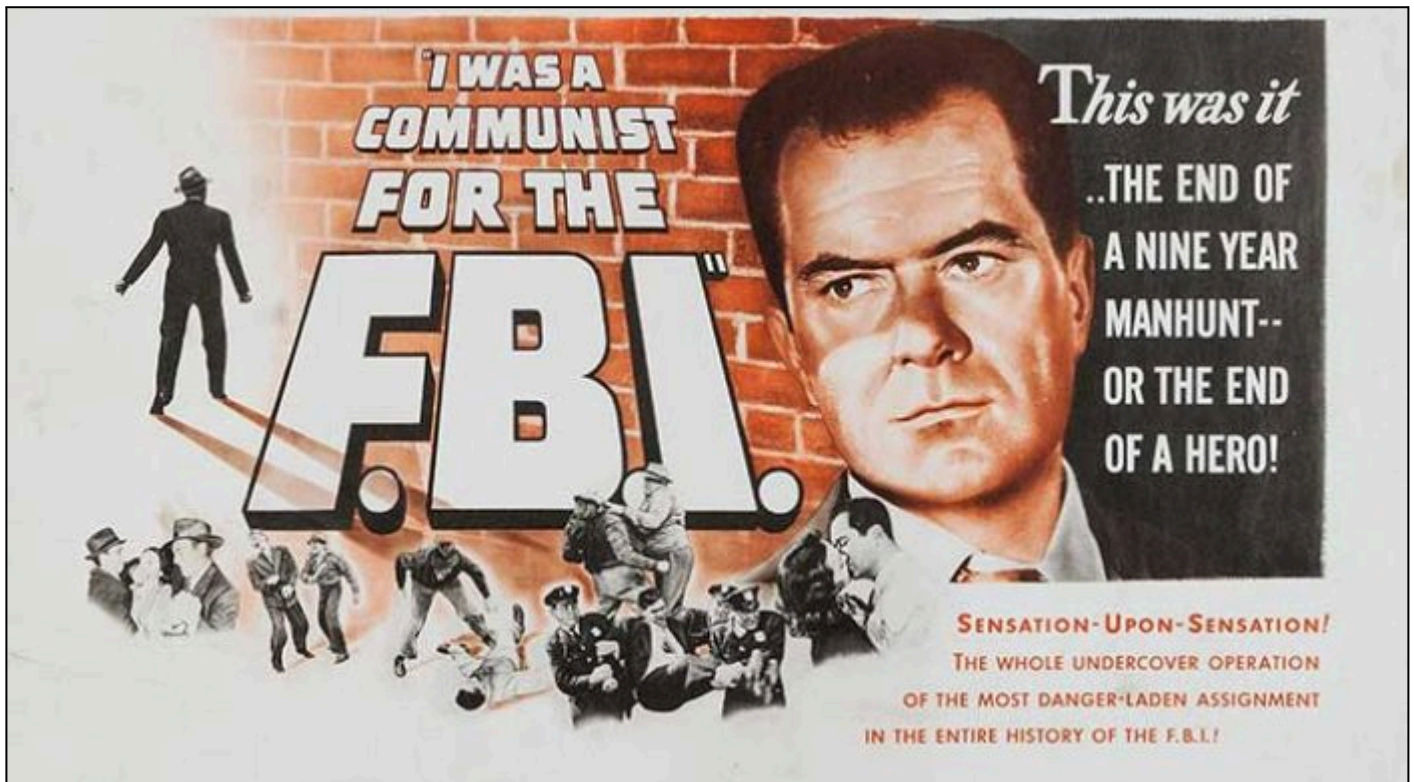
Research the growth of the anti-nuclear protest movement in the US.

Find examples of groups that were established to protest against nuclear weapons (for example Women Strike for Peace and the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW)); what were their aims and what actions did they take? What was the reaction of the US government to these groups and did this change over time?

6. What was the impact of the Cold War on culture in the US?

The arts were a key target for HUAC and McCarthy and so culture in the US was strongly affected by the Red Scare; many in the arts became victims of the McCarthy era; in addition all art forms showed the influence of the anti-Communist atmosphere in the work that was produced.

Perhaps a positive development for areas of the arts such as music and dance was that there was increased state funding as the US government competed with the USSR in this area as well. The US provided funds to allow musicians to tour the USSR, in an attempt to demonstrate how capitalism could excel in this area as well!



Cinema

Even before McCarthy started his witch hunts, HUAC had investigated the role of alleged communist influence in the American motion picture business. Ten prominent screenwriters and directors, who became known as the Hollywood Ten, publicly denounced the activities of HUAC. As a result they received jail sentences and were banned from working for the major Hollywood studios. Other members of Hollywood were also 'blacklisted'.

Task 15

Research one of the actors/screenwriters/directors persecuted by HUAC who had their lives profoundly changed by the Red Scare (you could divide the Hollywood Ten up among the class). Create a fact file for each individual. These websites will help you:

1. [Hollywood Reporter](#)
2. [History](#)
3. [History Hit](#)

Watch one of the films that dealt with the Red Scare and do a critique on it for your class. Discuss what it shows about US society in the 1950s and how valuable it is to a historian researching the Red Scare.

Use [this guide](#) from the University of Washington to help you find a film.

Hollywood responded by making movies which demonised Communism and which thus contributed to the overall paranoia about Communism and the Soviet threat. Other movies (fewer in number) attempted to highlight the damage caused by the Red Scare and to be more critical about the 'witch hunts'.

Television

Television relied on funding from advertisers; thus they had to ensure that they avoided any content that might be considered 'un-American', or using any writers or production staff who had been 'blacklisted' as this could result in sponsors withdrawing money.

Television shows promoted traditional American values and conservative family values. Anyone who was 'blacklisted' appeared in Counterattack: The Newsletter of Facts on Communism which was put together by the FBI and which listed names of employees in the broadcasting industry who had been involved in any cause or activity that was considered 'leftist' in nature. The FBI demanded that anyone in Counterattack should be fired immediately - and the publication was used by television producers to check on the suitability of anyone appearing on programmes.

The exception to this situation was Ed Murrow who began investigating anti-Communism on his television news programme called 'See it Now'.

Task 16

[Watch this speech](#) by Ed Murrow on McCarthy. What criticisms does Murrow make about McCarthy?

(Note that he ends with the phrase 'Good Night and Good Luck'. This is the title of a movie about Ed Murrow which we would also recommend that you watch!). **[Also watch this clip](#) where Murrow takes to pieces McCarthy's attack on him**

Writers

Writers of plays and literature were similarly investigated and many were 'black listed'.

Task 17

Read this source which is from a manual published by the US military in 1955 on 'How to spot a Communist'. With reference to its origin, purpose and content, what is the value of this source to a historian studying the impact of the Red Scare on US society?

"While a preference for long sentences is common to most Communist writing, a distinct vocabulary provides the more easily recognized feature of the "Communist Language." Even a superficial reading of an article written by a Communist or a conversation with one will probably reveal the use of some of the following expressions: integrative thinking, vanguard, comrade, hootenanny, chauvinism, book-burning, syncretistic faith, bourgeois-nationalism, jingoism, colonialism, hooliganism, ruling class, progressive, demagoguery, dialectical, witch-hunt, reactionary, exploitation, oppressive, materialist. This list, selected at random, could be extended almost indefinitely. While all of the above expressions are part of the English language, their use by Communists is infinitely more frequent than by the general public..."

http://www.openculture.com/2013/07/how_to_spot_a_communist.html

Arthur Miller is a good example of a writer who addressed the issues of McCarthyism in his work and was also investigated by HUAC.

Task 18

Investigate further the impact of the Red Scare on Arthur Miller and his writings.

If you can, watch the play or the film of the play called The Crucible. This is about the witch hunts of 17th Century Salem, Massachusetts, but the parallels with the McCarthy witch hunts are clear.

Task 19

In groups research other areas of the arts that were affected by the Red Scare. You could consider:

- Musicians: Pete Seeger
- Artists: Jackson Pollock
- Comics: Captain America