

red scare and mccarthyism handout

answer key

Red Scare and McCarthyism Handout Answer Key

The Red Scare and McCarthyism are pivotal events in American history that shaped the political landscape during the mid-20th century. This article will provide a comprehensive overview of these phenomena, highlighting their causes, key figures, major events, and lasting impacts. By understanding the Red Scare and McCarthyism, we can better appreciate the complexities of American political discourse, civil liberties, and the fight against perceived threats to national security.

Understanding the Red Scare

The term "Red Scare" refers to two distinct periods of intense anti-communist sentiment in the United States, primarily after World War I (1917-1920) and during the early Cold War (1947-1957). Both periods were characterized by fears of communist influence on American society and governance.

First Red Scare (1917-1920)

The first Red Scare emerged in response to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the spread of communism across Europe. Several factors contributed to the climate of fear:

1. **World War I Aftermath:** The end of the war led to economic instability, labor strikes, and social unrest in the U.S.
2. **Labor Movements:** Many Americans feared that labor strikes and demands for workers' rights were influenced by radical ideas.
3. **Immigration:** The influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe, many of whom were perceived as potential communists, heightened fears.

During this period, the U.S. government took drastic measures to combat perceived threats:

- Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer led raids against suspected radicals, known as the Palmer Raids, resulting in thousands of arrests.

- Legislation such as the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 restricted free speech and targeted dissenters.

Second Red Scare (1947-1957)

The second Red Scare arose in the context of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. The end of World War II and the beginning of the Cold War heightened fears of communist infiltration in American government and society.

Key elements of the second Red Scare included:

1. **Political Climate:** The Soviet Union's establishment of communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the successful testing of atomic weapons fueled fears of global communism.
2. **Espionage Cases:** High-profile espionage cases, such as those of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were convicted of spying for the Soviets, created a sense of urgency and paranoia.
3. **Media Influence:** Films, literature, and news reports often depicted communism as an existential threat to American values.

McCarthyism: A Key Player in the Second Red Scare

Named after Senator Joseph McCarthy, McCarthyism refers to the practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper evidence. It became synonymous with the anti-communist hysteria of the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Joseph McCarthy: Background and Rise

Joseph McCarthy, a Republican senator from Wisconsin, rose to prominence in the early 1950s by claiming that communists had infiltrated the U.S. government and other institutions. His tactics were characterized by:

- **Unsubstantiated Accusations:** McCarthy often made sweeping accusations against individuals in government, academia, and the entertainment

industry.

- **Fearmongering:** He exploited the fears of the American public by suggesting that communists were plotting to overthrow the government.
- **Public Hearings:** McCarthy conducted hearings that garnered significant media attention, further increasing his visibility and influence.

Key Events of McCarthyism

Several key events marked the era of McCarthyism:

1. **McCarthy's Speech (1950):** In a speech to a Republican women's group, McCarthy claimed to have a list of communists working in the State Department, igniting public interest.
2. **The Army-McCarthy Hearings (1954):** McCarthy's accusations extended to the U.S. Army, leading to televised hearings that exposed his tactics and lack of evidence.
3. **Decline of McCarthyism:** After the Army-McCarthy hearings, public opinion began to turn against McCarthy, leading to his censure by the Senate in 1954.

Impacts of the Red Scare and McCarthyism

The Red Scare and McCarthyism had profound and lasting impacts on American society, politics, and civil liberties.

Political Consequences

1. **Suppression of Dissent:** The fear of communism led to the suppression of dissenting voices, with many individuals losing their jobs or facing social ostracism due to unfounded accusations.
2. **Legislation:** The Red Scare prompted the passage of laws aimed at combatting perceived communist threats, including the McCarran Internal Security Act of 1950, which required communist organizations to register with the government.

Impact on Civil Liberties

1. Violation of Rights: Many individuals were denied their civil rights, such as the right to free speech and due process, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria.
2. Censorship: The entertainment industry faced significant censorship, with many artists and writers blacklisted for suspected communist affiliations.

Legacy of Fear and Distrust

The Red Scare and McCarthyism left a legacy of fear and distrust in American society. The repercussions of these events continue to be felt today, as they serve as a reminder of the dangers of political hysteria and the importance of protecting civil liberties.

Conclusion

The Red Scare and McCarthyism were defining moments in American history that highlighted the nation's struggle with issues of security, freedom, and the balance between the two. Understanding these events provides valuable lessons about the ramifications of fear-driven policies and the importance of safeguarding civil liberties against the backdrop of national security concerns. As we reflect on this turbulent period, it is crucial to remain vigilant against the resurgence of similar sentiments in contemporary society.

Frequently Asked Questions

What was the Red Scare?

The Red Scare refers to the period of intense fear of communism and radical leftism in the United States, particularly after World War I and during the late 1940s to early 1950s.

Who was Senator Joseph McCarthy?

Senator Joseph McCarthy was a U.S. senator known for his role in the second Red Scare, where he led investigations and hearings aimed at rooting out alleged communists in the government and other sectors.

What tactics did McCarthy use during his

investigations?

McCarthy used aggressive questioning, public accusations, and sensationalism to create a climate of fear, often without substantial evidence to support his claims.

What was the impact of McCarthyism on American society?

McCarthyism led to widespread paranoia, the blacklisting of individuals in various industries, and a chilling effect on free speech and political dissent in the U.S.

What was the significance of the Army-McCarthy Hearings?

The Army-McCarthy Hearings in 1954 were significant as they marked the decline of McCarthy's influence, revealing his tactics to the public and leading to his eventual censure by the Senate.

How did the Red Scare influence U.S. foreign policy?

The Red Scare influenced U.S. foreign policy by promoting anti-communist sentiment, leading to interventions in foreign countries and the establishment of policies aimed at containing communism globally.

What was the legacy of the Red Scare and McCarthyism?

The legacy includes a lasting caution against government overreach in the name of national security, as well as ongoing discussions about civil liberties and the balance between security and freedom.

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