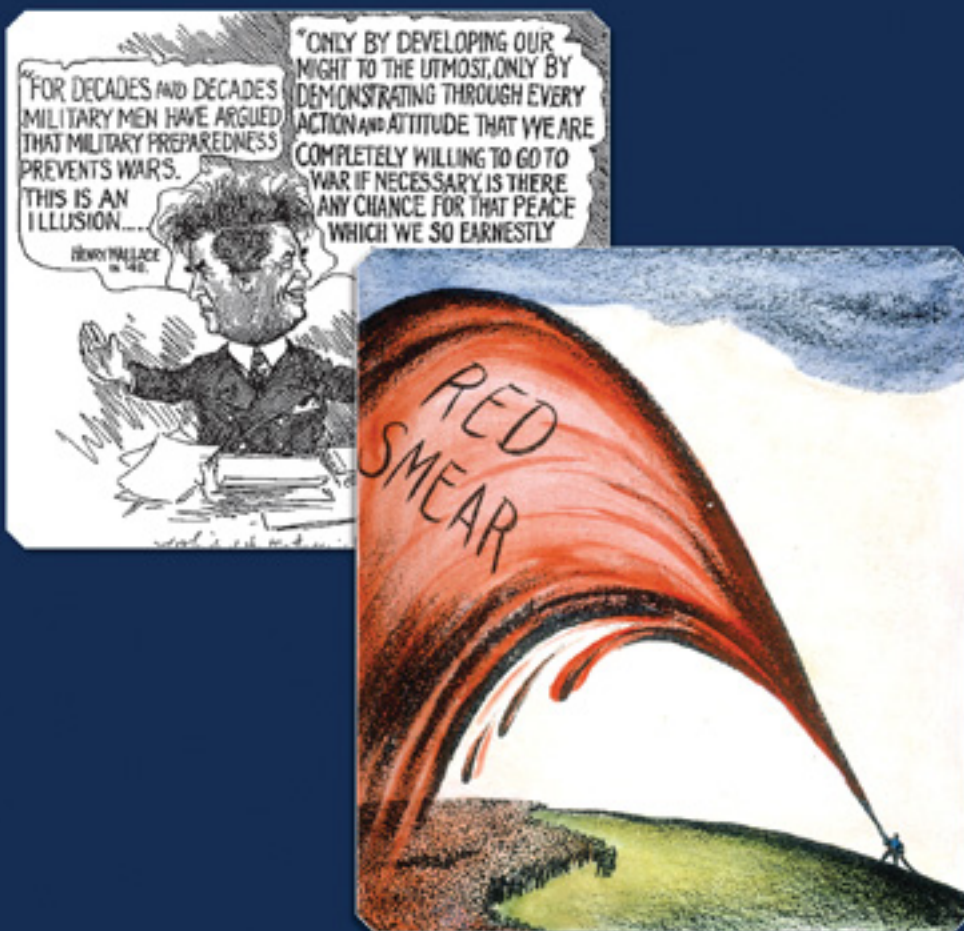


DOCUMENTS

Interpreting Alternative Viewpoints
in Primary Source Documents

Anti-Communism Mass Hysteria or Reasonable Fear?

*Was McCarthyism a witch hunt, or was there
a real domestic Communist danger in the late
1940s and early 1950s?*



Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.

Contents

Teacher Introduction	1
Suggestions to the Student	5
Introductory Essay	6
Domestic Communism Time Line	7
First Group of Documents	8
Study the Documents	10
Comparing the Documents	12
Comparison Essay	13
Second Group of Documents	14
Study the Documents	16
Comparing the Documents	18
Comparison Essay	19
Document-Based Question	20
Visual Primary Sources	21

Teacher Introduction

★ *Using Primary Sources*

Primary sources are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past era or historical event. They are the raw materials, or the evidence, on which historians base their “secondary” accounts of the past.

A rapidly growing number of history teachers today are using primary sources. Why? Perhaps it's because primary sources give students a better sense of what history is and what historians do. Such sources also help students see the past from a variety of viewpoints. Moreover, primary sources make history vivid and bring it to life.

However, primary sources are not easy to use. They can be confusing. They can be biased. They rarely all agree. Primary sources must be interpreted and set in context. To do this, students need historical background knowledge. *Debating the Documents* helps students handle such challenges by giving them a useful framework for analyzing sources that conflict with one another.



*“Multiple,
conflicting
perspectives are
among the truths
of history.
No single
objective or
universal account
could ever put an
end to this endless
creative dialogue
within and
between the past
and the present.”*

From the 2011 Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct of the Council of the American Historical Association.

INTRODUCTION

★ *The Debating the Documents Series*

Each *Debating the Documents* booklet includes the same sequence of reproducible worksheets. If students use several booklets over time, they will get regular practice at interpreting and comparing conflicting sources. In this way, they can learn the skills and habits needed to get the most out of primary sources.

Each *Debating the Documents* Booklet Includes

- **Suggestions for the Student and an Introductory Essay.** The student gets instructions and a one-page essay providing background on the booklet's topic. A time line on the topic is also included.
- **Two Groups of Contrasting Primary Source Documents.** In most of the booklets, students get one pair of visual sources and one pair of written sources. In some cases, more than two are provided for each. Background is provided on each source. *Within each group, the sources clash in a very clear way.* (The sources are not always exact opposites, but they do always differ in some obvious way.)
- **Three Worksheets for Each Document Group.** Students use the first two worksheets to take notes on the sources. The third worksheet asks which source the student thinks would be most useful to a historian.
- **One DBQ.** On page 20, a document-based question (DBQ) asks students to write an effective essay using all of the booklet's primary sources.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. Have students read “Suggestions for the Student” and the Introductory Essay.

Give them copies of pages 5–7. Ask them to read the instructions and then read the introductory essay on the topic. The time line gives them additional information on that topic. This reading could be done in class or as a homework assignment.

2. Have students do the worksheets.

Make copies of the worksheets and the pages with the sources. Ask students to study the background information on each source and the source itself. Then have them take notes on the sources using the worksheets. If students have access to a computer, have them review the primary sources digitally.

3. “Debate the documents” as a class.

Have students use their worksheet notes to debate the primary source documents as a class. Urge students to follow these ground rules:

- Use your worksheets as a guide for the discussion or debate.
- Try to reach agreement about the main ideas and the significance of each primary source document.
- Look for points of agreement as well as disagreement between the primary sources.
- Listen closely to all points of view about each primary source.
- Focus on the usefulness of each source to the historian, not merely on whether you agree or disagree with that source’s point of view.

4. Have students do the final DBQ.

A DBQ is an essay question about a set of primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, students write essays using evidence from the sources and their own background knowledge of the historical era. (See the next page for a DBQ scoring guide to use in evaluating these essays.)

The DBQ assignment on page 20 includes guidelines for writing a DBQ essay. Here are some additional points to make with students about preparing to write this kind of essay.

The DBQ for this Booklet (see page 20):

“Despite McCarthy’s excesses, America did face great dangers from Communism in those years, both at home and abroad.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?

- Analyze the question carefully.
- Use your background knowledge to set sources in their historical context.
- Question and interpret sources actively. Do not accept them at face value.
- Use sources meaningfully to support your essay’s thesis.
- Pay attention to the overall organization of your essay.

INTRODUCTION

★ *Complete DBQ Scoring Guide*

Use this guide in evaluating the DBQ for this booklet. Use this scoring guide with students who are already familiar with using primary sources and writing DBQ essays.

Excellent Essay

- Offers a clear answer or thesis explicitly addressing all aspects of the essay question.
- Does a careful job of interpreting many or most of the documents and relating them clearly to the thesis and the DBQ. Deals with conflicting documents effectively.
- Uses details and examples effectively to support the thesis and other main ideas. Explains the significance of those details and examples well.
- Uses background knowledge and the documents in a balanced way.
- Is well written; clear transitions make the essay easy to follow from point to point. Only a few minor writing errors or errors of fact.

Good Essay

- Offers a reasonable thesis addressing the essential points of the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least some of the documents and relates them to the thesis and the DBQ.
- Usually relates details and examples meaningfully to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some relevant background knowledge.
- May have some writing errors or errors of fact, as long as these do not invalidate the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Fair Essay

- Offers at least a partly developed thesis addressing the essay question.
- Adequately interprets at least a few of the documents.
- Relates only a few of the details and examples to the thesis or other main ideas.
- Includes some background knowledge.
- Has several writing errors or errors of fact that make it harder to understand the essay's overall argument or point of view.

Poor Essay

- Offers no clear thesis or answer addressing the DBQ.
- Uses few documents effectively other than referring to them in “laundry list” style, with no meaningful relationship to a thesis or any main point.
- Uses details and examples unrelated to the thesis or other main ideas. Does not explain the significance of these details and examples.
- Is not clearly written, with some major writing errors or errors of fact.

Suggestions to the Student

★ *Using Primary Sources*

A primary source is any record of evidence from the past. Many things are primary sources: letters, diary entries, official documents, photos, cartoons, wills, maps, charts, etc. They are called “primary” because they are first-hand records of a past event or time period. This *Debating the Documents* lesson is based on two groups of primary source documents. Within each group, the sources conflict with one another. That is, they express different or even opposed points of view. You need to decide which source is more reliable, more useful, or more typical of the time period. This is what historians do all the time. Usually, you will be able to learn something about the past from each source, even when the sources clash with one another in dramatic ways.

★ *How to Use This Booklet*

1. **Read the one-page introductory essay.**

This gives you background information that will help you analyze the primary source documents and do the exercises for this *Debating the Documents* lesson. The time line gives you additional information you will find helpful.



2. **Study the primary source documents for this lesson.**

For this lesson, you get two groups of sources. The sources within each group conflict with one another. Some of these sources are visuals, others are written sources. With visual sources, pay attention not only to the image’s “content” (its subject matter) but also to its artistic style, shading, composition, camera angle, symbols, and other features that add to the image’s meaning. With written sources, notice the writing style, bias, even what the source leaves out or does not talk about. Think about each source’s author, that author’s reasons for writing, and the likely audience for the source. These considerations give you clues as to the source’s historical value.

3. **Use the worksheets to analyze each group of primary source documents.**

For each group of sources, you get three worksheets. Use the “Study the Document” worksheets to take notes on each source. Use the “Comparing the Documents” worksheet to decide which of the sources would be most useful to a historian.

4. **As a class, debate the documents.**

Use your worksheet notes to help you take part in this debate.

5. **Do the final DBQ.**

“DBQ” means “document-based question.” A DBQ is a question along with several primary source documents. To answer the DBQ, write an essay using evidence from the documents and your own background history knowledge.

The Communist Threat: How Real?

As World War II ended in 1945, Americans longed for a peaceful world. Instead, a new global rivalry soon emerged. It would keep the world on the edge of panic for decades. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin's takeover of Eastern Europe in the late 1940s set the stage for this clash of the United States and the democratic nations of Western Europe versus the one-party Communist system of the Soviet Union and its allies. An "Iron Curtain" split the European land mass in two.

Fueling this rivalry was a terrifying nuclear arms race. The United States used the first atomic bombs on Japan to end World War II. The Soviets tested their first atomic bomb in 1949. That same year, Mao Zedong's Communists finally came to power in China. In 1950, Communist North Korea's invasion of South Korea threatened to turn the Cold War rivalry hot.

Meanwhile, many Americans also worried about the Communist Party USA's influence inside this country. The party was never popular here. Yet the hardships of the Great Depression in the 1930s made it appealing to a small but vocal number of Americans. Many admired its call for equality and a planned economy. Others liked its strong support for unions and the rights of blacks. This was especially true of many writers and other intellectuals who found the party's utopian promises attractive. They tended to overlook Stalin's terrible atrocities in his own country.

Most Communist Party members were loyal citizens who simply accepted the communist philosophy. But the party itself was funded and controlled by the Soviet Union and was deeply involved in spying for it. In the 1940s, several American Communists had key jobs in the U.S. Treasury Department, the State Department, and other parts of government. They worked in secret as spies for the Soviets.

A dramatic case involved charges by Whittaker Chambers that Alger Hiss was a spy. Chambers

was himself a former Communist. Hiss was a top State Department official who had accompanied Roosevelt to Yalta. Recently released records make it all but certain that Chambers told the truth. Julius Rosenberg led a spy ring that provided top secret military information to the Soviets, including some on the building of the atomic bomb. He and his wife were convicted of treason in 1951 in the most famous spy trial of the era. They were executed in 1953.

Communists held top positions in many large labor unions. And, in 1948, Communists had a good deal of control in the Progressive Party, whose presidential candidate was former U.S. Vice President Henry Wallace.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, investigations into Communist influence in government, labor unions, and the film industry did uncover some actual Communists. Yet they also unfairly stigmatized a great many others and ruined the lives of some. By 1950, few actual Communists were left in the government. But Cold War tensions were at a high point. In this setting, Senator Joseph McCarthy began his crusade. He claimed that a large number of U.S. officials were Communist spies. His numbers kept changing, and he never offered any real proof of his charges. He appeared on radio and TV, and he held hearings. He used unidentified informers, and he ruined many careers with his reckless claims.

For a time, a mood of hysteria swept the nation. Some call it a witch hunt. They say the Communist Party USA never posed any real threat to the nation. Others disagree. They say that unlike witches, Communists did exist and did threaten the nation both from within and without. Despite excesses, these people say the anti-Communist crusade was justified.

What do you think? The sources for this lesson should help you better understand this issue and make up your own mind about it.

Domestic Communism Time Line

1943

• • • The U.S. Army's Signal Intelligence Service begins a secret program, later code-named "Venona," to decode encrypted Soviet diplomatic messages to the U.S.

1945

• • • The Yalta Conference is held. It is often seen as the start of the Cold War. In August, the U.S. drops the first atomic bombs, ending the war with Japan. The FBI interviews Elizabeth Bentley, who controls a Soviet spy network in the U.S. She implicates many others and becomes known as the "blond spy queen."

1946

• • • In a famous speech, Winston Churchill says an "Iron Curtain" now divides Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe from Western Europe.

1947

• • • The "Truman Doctrine" pledges to aid nations fighting Communism. The Marshall Plan of aid to Europe is announced. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) calls 41 witnesses to investigate Communists in Hollywood. This includes the "Hollywood 10," who are jailed for contempt. Many of their film industry supporters are later blacklisted in Hollywood. The Taft-Hartley Act requires union officials to take an oath pledging they are not Communists. Many unions act forcefully to remove Communists from leadership positions.

1948

• • • Communists take over in Czechoslovakia. In June, the Berlin Blockade begins. Truman establishes the Federal Employee Loyalty Program to review background on two million federal employees. Henry Wallace receives over a million votes running for president for the Progressive Party, in which Whittaker Chambers accuses Alger Hiss of being a Communist even while a State Department official at Yalta. Hiss is indicted for perjury. A first trial ends with a hung jury, but a second trial convicts him in 1950.

1949

• • • The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is founded as a large alliance to contain the Soviet Union. The Berlin Blockade ends in May. In September, Mao Zedong takes control of China, and the Soviets announce their first atomic bomb test.

1950

• • • At a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy says he has the names of 205 Communists in the State Department. In follow-up speeches, the number keeps changing. A Senate committee investigates the charges, and McCarthy attacks some on it who are up for reelection. In June, the Korean War begins. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are arrested on espionage charges. The McCarran Internal Security Act (passed over Truman's veto) requires Communist-front organizations to register with the Attorney General and prohibits Communists from working in national defense.

1951

• • • The Rosenbergs are tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. McCarthy charges former Secretary of State George Marshall with aiding the Soviets.

1953

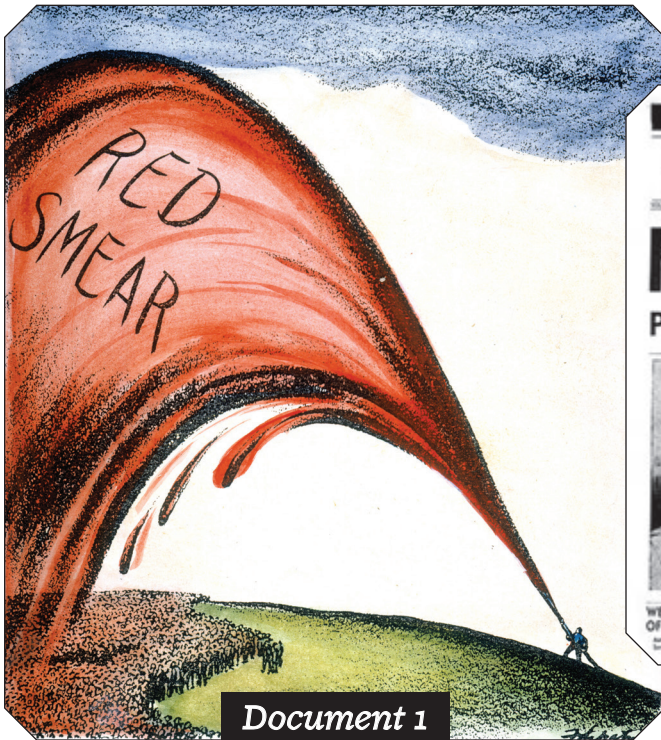
• • • The Rosenbergs are executed on June 19. In July, the Korean War ends.

1954

• • • At the Army-McCarthy hearings, McCarthy claims the Army is acting to keep him from exposing Communists within its ranks. The hearings last for 36 days and are televised. McCarthy's behavior turns public opinion against him. Later that year, he is condemned (not censured) by the Senate.

DOCUMENTS 1 & 2

Visual Primary Source Documents 1 & 2



Document 1

The Granger Collection, New York



Document 2

The Granger Collection, New York

Information on Documents 1 & 2

Document 1. In some versions, this cartoon had the following caption: “On the Just and Unjust.” The cartoon is by D. R. Fitzpatrick, and it was published in 1949. It comments on the random, hit-or-miss nature of charges of disloyalty often lodged by the U.S. government against many of its employees. The cartoon was published before Joseph McCarthy began his famous investigations.

Document 2. This headline from the *Los Angeles Times* (June 20, 1953) reports on the previous day's execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg for spying. The Rosenbergs were convicted of passing secret information about the atomic bomb project to the Soviet Union in the 1940s. Ethel's brother-in-law David Greenglass worked in Los Alamos, where the first atomic bomb was being built. David Greenglass admitted to his and his wife's part in the spy operation. Many at the time said the trial was unfair and the punishment far too cruel.