

## **HUAC and the Cold War**

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**Overview**

At the close of World War II, America faced a whole new concept of waging war and another enemy, the Soviet Union. With the defeat of Germany by the allies, and the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, perhaps America might have enjoyed a few peaceful years, but that was not to be. Instead, ushering in the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, America embarked on a new type of warfare – one where shots between the two main opponents are not fired – at each other – but where a build up of weapons and ideological disputes develop for decades to come and impact every aspect of life as we know it. And while many Americans seem to enjoy an end to World War II and a rise in consumerism, others fall victim to a sinister campaign known as the witch hunts. Several members of the United States government begin the campaign to rid the country of its suspected internal opponents – the communists, their sympathizers, and/or their liberal defenders. Many of those caught up in the anti-communist hysteria sweeping the country are Americans who may or may not have been guilty of any crime. After studying the Cold War period and becoming familiar with the main issues and terminology, students will be given the opportunity to look at the House Un-American Activities Committee hearings – the main arm of the anti-communist fighters, and the trials of Alger Hiss, and Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. This unit is written to supplement the study of U.S. History or American Government classes and is meant to enhance students' understanding of the Bill of Rights, the role of the U.S. Constitution, and several relevant trials of the Cold War period.

## Rationale

America in the 1950s is noted for color TV, the first Peanuts cartoon, Rock ‘n Roll, the official end of WWII, Hula Hoops, Lego Toys, Disneyland, American Bandstand, Roy Rogers, Dale Evans, Grace Kelly, Drive-In movies, Barbie Dolls, blue jeans and poodle skirts. In medicine, DNA is discovered, along with the first organ transplant, and a cure for polio. Perhaps there’s not a high school student today who doesn’t recognize “Fonz” or “Elvis” as fifties icons. Almost everyone has seen the film, *Grease*, based on fifties culture, or can lip sync its theme song. The fifties brought us progressive writers and literary greats such as Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation, Tennessee Williams, and Arthur Miller, Science Fiction and Sputnik, and it brought us a new kind of war – based on an ideological disagreement and even hatred of communism that resulted in shooting wars across the planet. This *Cold War* often took the form of shooting wars abroad – as in Vietnam and Korea -- espionage and intrigue and an overthrow of governments, as in Iran and Guatemala, and it too often resulted in an out and out mugging of civil liberties at home. And of course, the fifties are noted for *McCarthyism*, a term coined after Joseph McCarthy, the “junior senator from Wisconsin,” who convinces millions of Americans via the television that his crusade against the communists are justified because they are deeply embedded in the government. McCarthy’s stated goals were to save America from our most dangerous opponent – totalitarian Russia.

The Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution allows for certain political rights and liberties that have been challenged at various times throughout U.S. History. In certain historical periods, challenges to the guaranteed political freedoms were more menacing and serious than at other times. The fifties was one such historical period when political freedoms and liberties were far from secure and were threatened by government interference and involvement in the lives of untold numbers of Americans – whether they were famous Hollywood icons or union organizers.

After fighting against fascism in Europe and Japanese military conquests in the Far East how and why did so many Americans lose their civil liberties? What motivated the government to ignore the Constitutional guarantees to civil rights and was it justified in doing so? These are some of the questions my students of U.S. History and American Democracy will discuss and analyze throughout the course of teaching this unit.

Under the direction of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), representatives of the federal government and their attorneys unleashed a concentrated campaign to overturn gains made during the New Deal period and to create an atmosphere where civil rights were put on ice. While political

association is a Constitutional guarantee and membership in the Communist Party was not illegal, those who were members— and those who were accused of sympathizing with the organization – came under increasing surveillance. Many lost their jobs, some committed suicide, others were jailed, untold numbers expatriated, and at least two, as in the case of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, lost their lives. It was in this atmosphere that playwright Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible*, a play that appeared on Broadway, and using the Salem witch trials as his backdrop, Miller offered *The Crucible* as a veiled critique of McCarthy and his accusers. Undoubtedly, the impact of the Cold War on domestic politics is reminiscent of the Dark Ages – a time when rational thinking took second stage to totalitarianism. In particular, this unit is intended to present the trials of Alger Hiss, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and the Hollywood Ten, writers and actors who were forced to appear before HUAC and will focus on students developing an understanding of the role that the Bill of Rights plays in guaranteeing civil liberties and freedom of thought and association.

When I decided on a topic for the Pittsburgh Teachers Institute Law & Order seminar, I considered the value of having my students study one of the more controversial trials in America – that of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. But the more I researched the trial, the more apparent it became that their stories can't be told, studied and evaluated, without a solid understanding of Cold War America and politics. And so, this unit begins with a discussion of the Cold War – its cause and effects and its impact on global politics.

After World War II, the overriding theme in world politics was the so-called war between the two remaining superpowers, the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Not only did this *war without weapons* influence all aspects of global development – reaching into every corner of the world from Latin America to Africa to the Far East, but it also influenced all social, economic, political and cultural issues at home. And while the Cold War is thought of as a war without weapons, the truth is that the U.S. and Russia fought their ideological war on other people's soil. Simultaneously, fear of the spread of communism, of access to the atomic bomb, and fear of revolutions in Latin America and Africa – as happened in China in 1948 – led the U.S. government to carry out a domestic spy campaign that shredded First Amendment rights and civil liberties. The same paranoia dictated the types of films Hollywood would create, the sort of literature that would be written and read, whether or not the Pledge would be recited in every classroom in the country everyday or not. During the Cold War period, workers would sign anti-communist clauses before being hired on the job, and be fired if it was found out that they might have associated with communists, or for that matter, participated in the legal organization of labor unions.

The Cold War fifties were the beginning of a period of East-West rivalry and competition where tension and conflict short of full-scale war between the two superpowers boiled slowly and steadily, and sometimes over as in Korea and Vietnam. Hot wars erupted across the globe and millions died - be it Korea, Vietnam or Indonesia - because these wars were fought by U.S. or Soviet allies rather than the Super Powers themselves and where competition for influence in the Third World, and a major superpower arms race, often took place. The period was marked by common perceptions of hostility between military-political alliances or blocs, and on several occasions erupted in bloody civil wars as in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Hungary. These conflicts became known as “proxy wars” where millions died, millions more were wounded, and untold numbers of lives and property were destroyed. (These wars – in Vietnam and Korea, for example, were the result of U.S. or Soviet attempts to influence the Third World, albeit for reasons of resources or ideology.)

## HUAC

In order to successfully carry out an aggressive foreign policy in its fight against communism, the U.S. government campaigned to curtail civil liberties at home. The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was originally established in 1937 under the chairmanship of Congressman Martin Dies to investigate un-American and subversive activities, including fascist groups in America. HUAC investigated both left-wing and right wing political groups, but Dies, a supporter of the Ku Klux Klan, defended the Klan against investigation. Instead, the committee went on to scrutinize ordinary Americans and Hollywood celebrities, the most notable, being the case of the Hollywood Ten. HUAC gained a reputation for investigating individuals accused of spying for the Soviets, and in the midst of cold war hysteria, tried and convicted Alger Hiss, a State Department employee who had worked for FDR’s New Deal legislation.

## The Rosenbergs

Indisputably, the most well-known case associated with the 1950s witch hunt period – is the trial and execution of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg – the only two to be executed as a result of their affiliation with communist politics and their alleged activities during this period. Volumes, both fiction and non-fiction, have been written about the case, and many artists of all mediums – poets and painters alike, have added their creative signatures to the debate.

Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were two working class individuals, most-likely members of the American Communist Party, who were accused of passing atomic-energy secrets to the Soviet Union. On June 19, 1953, the Rosenbergs went to the gallows proclaiming their innocence and leaving two small children

behind. Despite the worldwide campaign to save them from the executioners' hands or to win their release from prison and despite flimsy and circumstantial evidence presented to the jury, in the end they were struck down by the state. The main eyewitnesses against the Rosenbergs were none other than David Greenglass and his wife, Ruth, Ethel Rosenberg's younger brother and sister-in-law. In exchange for their testimony, the Greenglasses were granted immunity from prosecution. But were the Rosenbergs guilty of conspiring to sell secrets to the Soviets? And if they were guilty, did their fate meet the crime for which they were accused, or did their conviction result from the witch hunt and hysterical atmosphere that gripped America?

It's not possible to understand the atmosphere surrounding the Rosenberg trial without developing a greater understanding of the political period. One needs to understand the role of HUAC and how it became a tool of the government to spy on, and disrupt the lives and organizations of average Americans. Although historians differ as to the start of the Cold War, whether it began when the Soviet Union refused to recognize the Marshall Plan or when the U.S. dropped its bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, nonetheless, it's clear that the HUAC was used to spy on Americans who might be friendly to communist ideas, labor organizations, or liberal ideology.

## Hollywood

Prior to the committee's assault on the screenwriters and actors of Hollywood for their alleged communist sympathies, the Roosevelt administration encouraged the film industry to make at least one film critiquing American isolationism and defending Stalin's version of the Soviet purges. This was done during the war years when the Soviet Union and the U.S. were allied against German fascism, and when the U.S. administration needed to convince Americans that it was in their interests to fight the fascist threat. Producer Jack Warner answered Roosevelt's call to arms and made the film, *Mission to Moscow* (1943) – a film that gave tribute to the New Deal, honored the war against fascism, and accepted the Stalinists' official version of the Soviet purges. Warner considered himself a patriot in creating such a film – and that film, along with communism, and 'liberalism' was to haunt Hollywood and First Amendment rights for years to come.

At the close of WWII which resulted in the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, implementation of the Marshall Plan and the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. Administration, under the leadership of President Harry Truman does an about face. No longer is Stalinist Russia an ally, the U.S. collaboration with the communist regime comes to an abrupt end as the fight against fascist Germany ends in victory for the allied forces. Fascism is defeated and the Soviet Union,

the United States, Britain and France are to divide up the spoils of war – first in Berlin, and later, if not a geographic division, then at least an ideological and economic one. And while the war against communist ideology and influence is being carried out abroad in the form of the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine and the shooting war in Korea and later Vietnam and elsewhere, the propaganda war at home shifts from one that campaigns for war against the fascist to one that campaigns for an ideological war against communism and communists – both abroad and at home.

### The Hollywood Ten

In 1947, 19 people were subpoenaed to appear before HUAC because the committee wanted to prove that Communist party members dominated Hollywood and that they were successfully introduced subversive pro-Soviet propaganda into films. Ten out of the 19 subpoenaed actually appeared in front of the committee including Dalton Trumbo, John Howard Lawson and Ring Lardner, Jr., Albert Maltz, and Edward Dmytryk. Before their appearance, the “Hollywood Ten” had agreed to invoke their first amendment rights as their defense and to decline to answer the question, "Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?" Membership in the Communist Party was not illegal and the Ten believed strongly that their rights and the rights of all Americans were being violated by the committee.

The hearing itself - held on October 27. - was vividly described by a correspondent from Newsweek in the edition of November 10, 1947:

"The hearing room by now was in turmoil. Thomas, Stripling [investigator], and Lawson were all shouting at once. His face and neck flaming red, Thomas kept banging his gavel, but the screen writer ignored him. The 400 men and women in the audience...booed and cheered. The six newsreel cameras hummed. The 30 newspaper photographers scurried around, exploding flashbulbs." (Newsweek, November 10, 1947)

Because the Ten had refused to cooperate with the committee, they were held in contempt and sentenced to prison terms. But not only was HUAC to impose unreasonable and undemocratic demands, others in Hollywood gathered to add insult to injury. For example, in November 1947, at a gathering at the Waldorf-Astoria in New York City of fifty prominent film barons declared that they would not hire or they would fire anyone who was suspected of having communist sympathies. The Ten were all held in contempt and in 1948 they were sentenced to up to a year in prison.

The floodgates opened and actors, directors, producers and screenwriters marched to the Committee hearings to pledge their allegiance to the government and to denounce the “communist threat” wherever it was perceived to rear its ugly and treacherous head. Film veteran, Adolphe Menjou was one of many to cooperate with the committee. “I make no bones about it. I’d like to see them all in Russia. I think a taste of Russia would cure them,” he informed the committee. Naming names, he continued, “Anyone attending any meeting at which Paul Robeson appears, and applauds, can be considered a Communist.”(Time magazine, November 3, 1947)

The bodies pile up. According to John Charles Moffitt, Esquire’s Movie Critic, “44 out of 100 plays produced on Broadway since 1936 ‘have continued material to further the communist line.’”

Novelist Rupert Hughes states emphatically, “Any Communist is an enemy spy or agent.”

How do you know? “You can’t help smelling them!”

Lela Rogers, Ginger’s mother, cites the film “None But the Lonely Heart,” as filled with “despair and hopelessness” and therefore Communist propaganda.

Number 47275

Not all witnesses capitulated to HUAC. In fact, one such witness, John Howard Lawson, refused four times to answer questions about whether or not he had ever been a member of the Communist Party. In response to Lawson’s steadfast opposition to the hearings, Chairman Representative J. Parnell Thomas produced copies of Communist registration cards for the year 1944. Number 47275 belonged to Lawson. As a result, contempt proceedings against Lawson were pursued by the committee.

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/blacklist.html>

Paul Robeson, a prominent actor and singer, became yet another victim of the HUAC hearings, and all the while, remaining a steadfast defender of civil liberties and African-American rights. While it remains unclear as to whether Robeson was a member of the Communist party, it’s clear from the historical record that he defended the Soviet Union against the witch hunters in America. For this, he paid dearly. Robeson was blacklisted and exiled from the American stage and screen. He consequently faced isolation, loss of valuable friendships, and ultimately, his own mental health.

<http://www.africanamericans.com/PaulRobeson.htm>

Another controversial and heatedly disputed case of this period is that of former State Department employee, Alger Hiss, a Harvard University trained attorney, and New Deal Democrat, who served in the Roosevelt Administration. Hiss was accused of being a Communist by Whittaker Chambers, a prominent editor of *Time* magazine. At the time of the accusations against him, Hiss had already resigned from government service, and was serving as president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Eventually, Hiss was accused of lying to HUAC investigators and served several years in prison. Both Whittaker Chambers and Alger Hiss, maintained throughout their lifetimes that they were telling the truth – one declaring guilt; the other his innocence. Both swore to the world that either Hiss was a Communist spy or an innocent frame-up by anti-Liberal and Right-wing hysteria – depending upon which version of the story one believes.

<http://homepages.nyu.edu/~th15/>

## **Objectives**

At the completion of this unit, students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of events and activities relative to the Cold War and how these events impacted civil liberties. Since the study of the Cold War already exists in the curriculum, teachers may use this unit to increase and deepen an understanding of this period in U.S. politics. Students will study the Cold War and the Red Scare of the 1940s and 1950s and, in addition, research how key figures were called to testify about their associations and membership in organizations before the government committee – HUAC. Students will have the opportunity to research and evaluate the testimonies of "friendly" witnesses – those that supported the efforts of Congress in its hunt for communists and sympathizers, and will also learn about those who objected to the hearings and how they suffered the consequences of their actions. Students will analyze primary source documents and discuss *point of view* – that is, study history through the eyes of those who lived it.

Students will conduct research by using the internet or other library resources to consider transcripts of HUAC hearings, the trial of Alger Hiss and the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg. Students will explain how the HUAC hearings fueled the Red Scare and what impact these hearings had on the curtailment of civil liberties. Students will have the opportunity to work in groups assigned by the teacher and will research the trial transcripts and organize mock trials to be presented to the class.

## Strategies

Beginning the unit on the Cold War, students will be assigned to read the text and become familiar with the politics and social conditions that led up to this period in U.S. history. Students should also be well-versed and have a clear understanding in how the Bill of Rights protects individual and political freedoms. Following a discussion about the Cold War, students will deepen their understanding by learning keywords and terminology associated with this period and will complete an assignment that lists the main events and activities of this time period. For example, students will need to define keywords such as, The Manhattan Project, or the Smith Act. Students will then create a timeline of the period and list what they consider to be the most important events. Depending upon the level of the class, students can include photographs, artists' depictions, poems or drawings. This will help students become more familiar with the complexities of the Cold War and how it impacted the lives of Americans of all walks of life. Students will then be assigned an individual who participated in the HUAC hearings and research their role in the hearings. Students will be given a list of questions that will help them develop a deeper understanding of their character and explain why they may have acted the way they did. Finally, students will participate in a mock trial group activity.

## Classroom Activities

### Activity One

Students will complete this assignment by adding additional **persons/places/things and events** in the box below and defining each item. Depending upon the class level, the instructor may decide to have students accompany this activity having the students create a test question for later use.

## The Cold War Quiz

<b>Person, Place, Thing, Event</b>	<b>What or Who is this (Person, Place, Thing, Event)?</b>	<b>Why was this (Person, Place, Thing, Event) important?</b>
The Manhattan Project		
Smith Act		
HUAC		
Algers Hiss		
Ethel & Julius Rosenberg		
Arthur Miller		

Cold War		
Paul Robeson		
Hollywood Ten		

### Activity Two

After completing activity one, each student will create a timeline of the major events. Depending upon the level of the class, students can be elaborate by including photographs, quotes, documents and other visual aids or they can simply create a time line of their ten events and share this information in groups with other students. One option is for the students to prepare a multiple choice question about the events to be added to a test at the completion of the unit.

### Activity Three

Students will conduct research about one of the individuals involved in the HUAC hearings and analyze their role. Students should explain whether or not their subject was an investigator, a lawyer for the defendants, a friendly or unfriendly witness, and they should also explain what happened to them as a result of the hearings. For example, as a result of their testimony were they given jail time? Did they expatriate (as in the case of Bertoldt Brecht)? Did they ‘name names’ and were they offered government protection? Were they blacklisted from Hollywood or industry and were their careers destroyed?

Included in this unit are testimonies or news accounts of several of the witnesses, but depending upon the level of the class and the students’ experience with research methods, they should be encouraged to conduct their own research into an individual who participated in the hearings. Ideally, students should be able to do their own research and with teacher assistance, choose a character that interests them. Students will then prepare an oral report for the class and/or a written paper to accompany their report. The following questions can be completed by the students to help with their reports.

Students will answer the following questions in written form about their character:

- Who is the individual and what role did they have in the hearings? (Background information must be included.)
- What events or activities motivated him or her to act the way they did? Did they represent the government? Did he or she hold membership in the Communist party? Were they a friendly or unfriendly witness?
- What strategies or method did the character use in the hearings? Were their strategies justified? Explain.
- Do your ideas and values conflict or are they compatible with your character? Explain.
- Note to the students: Always include supporting evidence and examples of your perspective.
- Do you agree with how your character behaved? Do you believe they acted correctly? What if they were called to report to a government agency, similar to HUAC today? Should they act in the same way? Why or why not? Do their actions hold up in the current political or social climate?

#### Activity Four: Mock Trial – Group Activity

Mock trials help students gain a practical understanding of the way the legal system operates and especially applied to the past, will help students understand the broader implications of what happened during the Cold War. With this activity, the students will have the opportunity to learn the details of the trial process and procedures, study the Bill of Rights, and apply it to other legal situations and cases. They will also participate in an activity that will help develop their critical thinking and analytical skills. Students will be obligated to be objective, to listen to each other and present oral arguments. They will be required to role play a part – and maintain a serious posture while doing so. This activity provides an active learning opportunity for students and requires a high level of cooperation among participants.

Teachers will need to adapt this activity to the size of the classes and grade levels. Students will need to have a thorough understanding of Constitutional Rights and Responsibilities before undertaking this activity.

Students can replicate any number of Cold War/Red Scare trial scenarios for this assignment including the Alger Hiss Case, the Trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, or the Hollywood Ten. Students can also decide to place the HUAC investigators on trial if they deduce that there was an abuse of governmental power and that there is a basis for charging them with violating constitutional or criminal law.

Students may feel they need to add roles, or work in legal teams, for example, but there are several roles that are necessary for the successful completion of this assignment including, but not limited to the following.

Court Officials:

Judges

Prosecuting Team

Defense Team

Court Witnesses.

Other roles that can be added include: journalists, court reporters, and court clerks

Teacher instructions:

Have the students research the assigned court case and develop an argument to present to the class. In presenting their case, students will review the facts, discuss the issues, and present prior cases if possible.

Several HUAC witnesses were tried and convicted of crimes during this period.

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

The Manhattan Project

<http://nuclearweaponarchive.org/Usa/Med/Lbfm.html>

The Alger Hiss Trial (primary source)

<http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/hiss/huachearings.html>

Website containing documents relating to Cold War America

<http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/coldwar.htm>

Communists should not be allowed to teach in American Colleges (primary source)

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/raymond-allen.html>

Higher Education's Responsibility

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/education.html>

Supreme Court Case: Dennis et al vs. U.S.

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/black-dennis-dissent.html>

Harvard University's Cold War Site

<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~hpcws/links.htm>

This website explains how Hollywood was regulated by the government

<http://www.moderntimes.com/palace/huac.htm>

This website includes a history of the Hollywood Ten and how they were called to appear in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee. Its point of view is that there were men and women in Hollywood who supported communism and were, therefore, a threat to the U.S.

<http://www.moderntimes.com/palace/blacklist.htm>

Ayn Rand's testimony to the HUAC committee

<http://www.noblesoul.com/orc/texts/huac.html>

Naming Names - HUAC

<http://www.stud.hum.ku.dk/rikkebj/hu.htm>

Arthur Miller on the HUAC hearings

<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/miller-mccarthyism.html>

Eisenhower Backs Supreme Court Decision

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/fromthearchive/story/0,12269,980982,00.html>

"Execution of the Rosenbergs: "Enemies of Democracy", Saturday June 20, 1953

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/>

Paul Robeson

[http://www.africawithin.com/clarke/clarke\\_on\\_roberson.htm](http://www.africawithin.com/clarke/clarke_on_roberson.htm)

Paul Robeson's testimony to HUAC

<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6440>

## Appendix 1

Testimony of Friendly Witnesses

Example #1

<http://www.twcnet.edu/cschutz/history-page/Consensus/Reagan-huac-testimony.html>

### **House Un-American Activities Committee Testimony Ronald Reagan**

**October 23, 1947**

*Reagan was president of the Screen Actors Guild at this time. His interest and involvement in politics was really only beginning. He was, however, a committed anti-Communist, and here cooperated with HUAC in commenting on the alleged activities of communists in Hollywood and the Screen Actors Guild.*

CHAIRMAN J. PARNELL THOMAS: The record will show that Mr. McDowell, Mr. Vail, Mr. Nixon, and Mr. Thomas are present. A subcommittee is sitting. Staff members present: Mr. Robert E. Stripling, chief investigator; Messrs. Louis J. Russell, H.A. Smith, and Robert B. Gaston, investigators; and Mr. Benjamin Mandel, director of research.

STRIPLING: When and where were you born, Mr. Reagan?

RONALD REAGAN: Tampico, Illinois, February 6, 1911.

STRIPLING: What is your present occupation?

REAGAN: Motion picture actor.

STRIPLING: How long have you been engaged in that profession?

REAGAN: Since June 1937, with a brief interlude of 3 1/2 years -- that at the time didn't seem very brief.

STRIPLING: What period was that?

REAGAN: That was during the late war.

STRIPLING: What branch of service were you in?

REAGAN: Well, sir, I had been for several years in the Reserve as an officer in the United States Cavalry, but I was assigned to the Air Corps.

STRIPLING: That is kind of typical of the Army, isn't it?

REAGAN: Yes, sir. The first thing the Air Corps did was loan me to the Signal Corps.

MCDOWELL: You didn't wear spurs?

REAGAN: I did for a little while.

CHAIRMAN: I think this has little to do with the facts we are seeking. Proceed.

STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, are you a member of any guild?

REAGAN: Yes, sir, the Screen Actors Guild.

STRIPLING: How long have you been a member?

REAGAN: Since June 1937.

STRIPLING: Are you the president of the guild at the present time?

REAGAN: Yes, sir.

STRIPLING: When were you elected?

REAGAN: That was several months ago. I was elected to replace Mr. (Robert) Montgomery when he resigned.

STRIPLING: When does your term expire?

REAGAN: The elections come up next month.

STRIPLING: Have you ever held any other position in the Screen Actors Guild?

REAGAN: Yes, sir. Just prior to the war I was a member of the board of directors, and just after the war, prior to my being elected president, I was a member of the board of directors.

STRIPLING: As a member of the board of directors, as president of the Screen Actors Guild, and as an active member, have you at any time observed or noted within the organization a clique of either communists or fascists who were attempting to exert influence or pressure on the guild?

REAGAN: Well, sir, my testimony must be very similar to that of Mr. (George) Murphy and Mr. (Robert) Montgomery. There has been a small group within the Screen Actors Guild which has consistently opposed the policy of the guild board and officers of the guild, as evidenced by the vote on various issues. That small clique referred to has been suspected of more or less following the tactics that we associate with the Communist Party.

STRIPLING: Would you refer to them as a disruptive influence within the guild?

REAGAN: I would say that at times they have attempted to be a disruptive influence.

STRIPLING: You have no knowledge yourself as to whether or not any of them are members of the Communist Party?

REAGAN: No, sir, I have no investigative force, or anything, and I do not know.

STRIPLING: Has it ever been reported to you that certain members of the guild were communists?

REAGAN: Yes, sir, I have heard different discussions and some of them tagged as communists.

STRIPLING: Would you say that this clique has attempted to dominate the guild?

REAGAN: Well, sir, by attempting to put their own particular views on various issues, I guess you would have to say that our side was attempting to dominate, too, because we were fighting just as hard to put over our views, and I think, we were proven correct by the figures -- Mr. Murphy gave the figures -- and those figures were always approximately the same, an average of 90 percent or better of the Screen Actors Guild voted in favor of those matters now guild policy.

STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, there has been testimony to the effect here that numerous communist-front organizations have been set up in Hollywood. Have you ever

been solicited to join any of those organizations or any organization which you considered to be a communist-front organization?

REAGAN: Well, sir, I have received literature from an organization called the Committee for a Far-Eastern Democratic Policy. I don't know whether it is communist or not. I only know that I didn't like their views and as a result I didn't want to have anything to do with them.

STRIPLING: Were you ever solicited to sponsor the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee?

REAGAN: No, sir, I was never solicited to do that, but I found myself misled into being a sponsor on another occasion for a function that was held under the auspices of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee.

STRIPLING: Did you knowingly give your name as a sponsor?

REAGAN: Not knowingly. Could I explain what that occasion was?

STRIPLING: Yes sir.

REAGAN: I was called several weeks ago. There happened to be a financial drive on to raise money to build a badly needed hospital called the All Nations Hospital. I think the purpose of the building is so obvious by the title that it has the support of most of the people of Los Angeles. Certainly of most of the doctors. Some time ago I was called to the telephone. A woman introduced herself by name. I didn't make any particular note of her name, and I couldn't give it now. She told me that there would be a recital held at which Paul Robeson would sing, and she said that all the money for the tickets would go to the hospital, and asked if she could use my name as one of the sponsors. I hesitated for a moment, because I don't think that Mr. Robeson's and my political views coincide at all; and then I thought I was being a little stupid because, I thought, here is an occasion where Mr. Robeson is perhaps appearing as an artist, and certainly the object, raising money, is above any political consideration: it is a hospital supported by everyone. I have contributed money myself. So I felt a little bit as if I had been stuffy for a minute, and I said, "Certainly, you can use my name." I left town for a couple of weeks and, when I returned, I was handed a newspaper story that said that this recital was held at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles under the auspices of the Joint Anti-Fascist Refugee Committee. The principal speaker was Emil Lustig, Robert Burman took up a collection, and the

remnants of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade were paraded on the platform. I did not, in the newspaper story, see one word about the hospital. I called the newspaper and said I am not accustomed to writing to editors but would like to explain my position, and he laughed and said, "You needn't bother; you are about the 50th person who had also been listed as sponsors of that affair."

STRIPLING: Would you say from your observation that that is typical of the tactics of the communists, to solicit and use the names of prominent people to either raise money or gain support?

REAGAN: I think it is in keeping with their tactics, yes sir.

STRIPLING: Do you think there is anything democratic about those tactics?

REAGAN: I do not, sir.

STRIPLING: As president of the Screen Actors Guild, you are familiar with the jurisdictional strike which has been going on in Hollywood for some time?

REAGAN: Yes, sir.

STRIPLING: Have you ever had any conference with any of the labor officials regarding this strike?

REAGAN: Yes, sir.

STRIPLING: Do you know whether the communists have participated in any way with this strike?

REAGAN: Sir, the first time that this word "communist" was ever injected into any of the meetings concerning the strike was at a meeting in Chicago with Mr. William Hutchinson, president of the carpenters' union, who were on strike at the time. He asked the Screen Actors Guild to submit terms to Mr. (Richard) Walsh, and he told us to tell Mr. Walsh that, if he would give in on these terms, he in turn would break run this Sorrell and the other commies out -- I am quoting him -- and break it up. I might add that Mr. Walsh and Mr. Sorrell were running the strike for Mr. Hutchinson in Hollywood.

STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, what is your feeling about what steps should be taken to rid the motion picture industry of any communist influences?

REAGAN: Well, sir, 99 percent of us are pretty well aware of what is going on, and I think, within the bounds of our democratic rights and never once stepping over the rights given us by democracy, we have done a pretty good job in our business of keeping those people's activities curtailed. After all, we must recognize them at present as a political party. On that basis we have exposed their lies when we came across them, we have opposed their propaganda, and I can certainly testify that in the case of the Screen Actors Guild we have been eminently successful in preventing them from, with their usual tactics, trying to run a majority of an organization with a well organized minority. In opposing those people, the best thing to do is make democracy work. In the Screen Actors Guild we make it work by insuring everyone a vote and by keeping everyone informed. I believe that, as Thomas Jefferson put it, if all the American people know

all of the facts they will never make a mistake. Whether the party should be outlawed, that is a matter for the government to decide. As a citizen, I would hesitate to see any political party outlawed on the basis of its political ideology. However, if it is proven that an organization is an agent of foreign power or in any way not a legitimate political party -- and I think the government is capable of proving that -- then that is another matter. I happen to be very proud of the industry in which I work; I happen to be very proud of the way in which we conducted the fight. I do not believe the communists have ever at any time been able to use the motion picture screen as a sounding board for their philosophy or ideology.

CHAIRMAN: There is one thing that you said that interested me very much. That was the quotation from Jefferson. That is why this committee was created by the House of

Representatives: to acquaint the American people with the facts. Once the American people are acquainted with the facts there is no question but what the American people will do the kind of job that they want done: that is, to make America just as pure as we can possibly make it. We want to thank you very much for coming here today.

REAGAN: Sir, I detest, I abhor their philosophy, but I detest more than that their tactics, which are those of the fifth column, and are dishonest, but at the same time I never as a citizen want to see our country become urged, by either fear or resentment of this group, that we ever compromise with any of our democratic principles through that fear or resentment. I still think that democracy can do it.

## Appendix 2

<http://coursesa.matrix.msu.edu/~hst203/documents/disney.html>

**The Testimony of Walter E. Disney  
Before the House Committee on Un-American Activities  
24 October, 1947**

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Introductory Note from Uploader:

Please be advised that I am uploading this transcript exactly as it OCR'd (with some minor reformatting) from my source document. That document is, as was previously mentioned, Peary & Peary's anthology, "The American Animated Cartoon," copyright 1980, published by Dutton, ISBN 0-525-47639-3, now long out of print.

I have stripped out Peary & Peary's introductory comments (one page of text) because their comments are copyrighted, whereas the transcript itself is a public document, part of the public record, and is not capable of being protected by copyright law.

Since my source document for this transcript was not a copy of the original government document but was, instead, a reprinting of that document's contents, I must rely on the Pearys' affirmation that what is contained herein is the complete, original, unedited testimony of Walter E. Disney on 24 October, 1947.

If anyone has the time to access the original government documents and can determine that the Pearys have edited the original in any way (which they swear they have not done), I would be extremely interested in hearing about it.

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[ROBERT E.] STRIPLING [CHIEF INVESTIGATOR]: Mr. Disney, will you state your full name and present address, please?

WALTER DISNEY: Walter E. Disney, Los Angeles, California.

RES: When and where were you born, Mr. Disney?

WD: Chicago, Illinois, December 5, 1901.

RES: December 5, 1901?

WD: Yes, sir.

RES: What is your occupation?

WD: Well, I am a producer of motion-picture cartoons.

RES: Mr. Chairman, the interrogation of Mr. Disney will be done by Mr. Smith.

THE CHAIRMAN [J. PARNELL THOMAS]: Mr. Smith.

[H. A.] SMITH: Mr. Disney, how long have you been in that business?

WD: Since 1920.

HAS: You have been in Hollywood during this time?

WD: I have been in Hollywood since 1923.

HAS: At the present time you own and operate the Walt Disney Studio at Burbank, California?

WD: Well, I am one of the owners. Part owner.

HAS: How many people are employed there, approximately?

WD: At the present time about 600.

HAS: And what is the approximate largest number of employees you have had in the studio?

WD: Well, close to 1,400 at times.

HAS: Will you tell us a little about the nature of this particular studio, the type of pictures you make, and approximately how many per year?

WD: Well, mainly cartoon films. We make about twenty short subjects, and about two features a year.

HAS: Will you talk just a little louder, Mr. Disney?

WD: Yes, sir.

HAS: How many, did you say?

WD: About twenty short subject cartoons and about two features per year.

HAS: And some of the characters in the films consist of

WD: You mean such as Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs [1938], and things of that sort.

HAS: Where are these films distributed?

WD: All over the world.

HAS: In all countries of the world?

WD: Well, except the Russian countries.

HAS: Why aren't they distributed in Russia, Mr. Disney?

WD: Well, we can't do business with them.

HAS: What do you mean by that?

WD: Oh, well, we have sold them some films a good many years ago. They bought the Three Little Pigs [1933] and used it through Russia. And they looked at a lot of our pictures, and I think they ran a lot of them in Russia, but then turned them back to us and said they didn't want them, they didn't suit their purposes.

HAS: Is the dialogue in these films translated into the various foreign languages?

WD: Yes. On one film we did ten foreign versions. That was Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.

HAS: Have you ever made any pictures in your studio that contained propaganda and that were propaganda films?

WD: Well, during the war we did. We made quite a few-working with different government agencies. We did one for the Treasury on taxes and I did four anti-Hitler films. And I did one on my own for air power.

HAS: From those pictures that you made, have you any opinion as to whether or not the films can be used effectively to disseminate propaganda?

WD: Yes, I think they proved that.

HAS: How do you arrive at that conclusion?

WD: Well, on the one for the Treasury on taxes, it was to let the people know that taxes were important in the war effort. As they explained to me, they had 13,000,000 new taxpayers, people who had never paid taxes, and they explained that it would be impossible to prosecute all those that were delinquent and they wanted to put this story before those people so they would get their taxes in early. I made the film, and after the film had its run the Gallup poll organization polled the public and the findings were that twenty-nine percent of the people admitted that had influenced them in getting their taxes in early and giving them a picture of what taxes will do.

HAS: Aside from those pictures you made during the war, have you made any other pictures, or do you permit pictures to be made at your studio containing propaganda?

WD: No; we never have. During the war we thought it was a different thing. It was the first time we ever allowed anything like that to go in the films. We watch so that nothing gets into the films that would be harmful in any way to any group or any country. We have large audiences of children and different groups, and we try to keep them as free from anything that would offend anybody as possible. We work hard to see that nothing of that sort creeps in.

HAS: Do you have any people in your studio at the present time that you believe are Communist or Fascist, employed there?

WD: No; at the present time I feel that everybody in my studio is one-hundred-percent American.

HAS: Have you had at any time, in your opinion, in the past, have you at any time in the past had any Communists employed at your studio?

WD: Yes; in the past I had some people that I definitely feel were Communists.

HAS: As a matter of fact, Mr. Disney, you experienced a strike at your studio, did you not?

WD: Yes.

HAS: And is it your opinion that that strike was instituted by members of the Communist Party to serve their purposes?

WD: Well, it proved itself so with time, and I definitely feel it was a Communist group trying to take over my artists and they did take them over.

CHAIRMAN: Do you say they did take them over?

WD: They did take them over.

HAS: Will you explain that to the committee, please?

WD: It came to my attention when a delegation of my boys, my artists, came to me and told me that Mr. Herbert Sorrell

HAS: Is that Herbert K. Sorrell?

WD: Herbert K. Sorrell, was trying to take them over. I explained to them that it was none of my concern, that I had been cautioned to not even talk with any of my boys on labor. They said it was not a matter of labor, it was just a matter of them not wanting to go with Sorrell, and they had heard that I was going to sign with Sorrell, and they said that they wanted an election to prove that Sorrell didn't have the majority, and I said that I had a right to demand an election. So when Sorrell came, I demanded an election. Sorrell wanted me to sign on a bunch of cards that he had there that he claimed were the majority, but the other side had claimed the same thing. I told Mr. Sorrell that there is only one way for me to go and that was an election and that is what the law had set up, the National Labor Relations Board was for that purpose. He laughed at me and he said that he would use the Labor Board as it suited his purposes and that he had been sucker enough to go for that Labor Board ballot and he had lost some election-I can't remember the name of the place-by one vote. He said it took him two years to get it back. He said he would strike, that that was his weapon. He said, "I have all of the tools of the trade sharpened," that I couldn't stand the ridicule or the smear of a strike. I told him that it was a matter of principle with me, that I couldn't go on working with my boys feeling that I had sold them down the river to him on his say-so, and he laughed at me and told me I was naive and foolish. He said, you can't stand this strike, I will smear you, and I will make a dust bowl out of your plant.

CHAIRMAN: What was that?

WD: He said he would make a dust bowl out of my plant if he chose to. I told him I would have to go that way, sorry, that he might be able to do all that, but I would have to stand on that. The result was that he struck. I believed at that time that Mr. Sorrell was a Communist because of all the things that I had heard and having seen his name appearing on a number of Commie front things. When he pulled the strike, the first people to smear me and put me on the unfair list were all of the Commie front organizations. I can't remember them all, they change so often, but one that is clear in my mind is the League of Women Shoppers, The People's World, The Daily Worker, and the PM magazine in New York. They smeared me. Nobody came near to find out what the true facts of the thing were. And I even went through the same smear in South America, through some Commie periodicals in South America, and generally throughout the world all of the Commie groups began smear campaigns against me and my pictures.

JOHN MCDOWELL: In what fashion was that smear, Mr. Disney, what type of smear?

WD: Well, they distorted everything, they lied; there was no way you could ever counteract anything that they did; they formed picket lines in front of the theaters, and, well, they called my plant a sweatshop, and that is not true, and anybody in Hollywood would prove it otherwise. They claimed things that were not true at all and there was no way you could fight it back. It was not a labor problem at all because-I mean, I have never had labor trouble, and I think that would be backed up by anybody in Hollywood.

HAS: As a matter of fact, you have how many unions operating in your plant?

CHAIRMAN: Excuse me just a minute. I would like to ask a question.

HAS: Pardon me.

CHAIRMAN: In other words, Mr. Disney, Communists out there smeared you because you wouldn't knuckle under?

WD: I wouldn't go along with their way of operating. I insisted on it going through the National Labor Relations Board. And he told me outright that he used them as it suited his purposes.

CHAIRMAN: Supposing you had given in to him, then what would have been the outcome?

WD: Well, I would never have given in to him, because it was a matter of principle with me, and I fight for principles. My boys have been there, have grown up in the business with me, and I didn't feel like I could sign them over to anybody. They were vulnerable at that time. They were not organized. It is a new industry.

CHAIRMAN: Go ahead, Mr. Smith.

HAS: How many labor unions, approximately, do you have operating in your studios at the present time?

WD: Well, we operate with around thirty-five-I think we have contacts with thirty.

HAS: At the time of this strike you didn't have any grievances or labor troubles whatsoever in your plant?

WD: No. The only real grievance was between Sorrell and the boys within my plant, they demanding an election, and they never got it.

HAS: Do you recall having had any conversations with Mr. Sorrell relative to Communism?

WD: Yes, I do.

HAS: Will you relate that conversation?

WD: Well, I didn't pull my punches on how I felt. He evidently heard that I had called them all a bunch of Communists-and I believe they are. At the meeting he leaned over and he said, "You think I am a Communist, don't you," and I told him that all I knew was what I heard and what I had seen, and he laughed and said, "Well, I used their money to finance my strike of 1937," and he said that he had gotten the money through the personal check of some actor, but he didn't name the actor. I didn't go into it any further. I just listened.

HAS: Can you name any other individuals that were active at the time of the strike that you believe in your opinion are Communists?

WD: Well, I feel that there is one artist in my plant, that came in there, he came in about 1938, and he sort of stayed in the background, he wasn't too active, but he was the real brains of this, and I believe he is a Communist. His name is David Hilberman.

HAS: How is it spelled?

WD: H-i-l-b-e-r-m-a-n, I believe. I looked into his record and I found that, number 1, that he had no religion and, number 2, that he had spent considerable time at the Moscow Art Theatre studying art direction, or something.

HAS: Any others, Mr. Disney?

WD: Well, I think Sorrell is sure tied up with them. If he isn't a Communist, he sure should be one.

HAS: Do you remember the name of William Pomerance, did he have anything to do with it?

WD: Yes, sir. He came in later. Sorrell put him in charge as business manager of cartoonists and later he went to the Screen Actors as their business agent, and in turn he put in another man by the name of Maurice Howard, the present business agent. And they are all tied up with the same outfit.

HAS: What is your opinion of Mr. Pomerance and Mr. Howard as to whether or not they are or are not Communists?

WD: In my opinion they are Communists. No one has any way of proving those things.

HAS: Were you able to produce during the strike?

WD: Yes, I did, because there was a very few, very small majority that was on the outside, and all the other unions ignored all the lines because of the setup of the thing.

HAS: What is your personal opinion of the Communist Party, Mr. Disney, as to whether or not it is a political party?

WD: Well, I don't believe it is a political party. I believe it is an un-American thing. The thing that I resent the most is that they are able to get into these unions, take them over, and represent to the world that a group of people that are in my plant, that I know are good, one-hundred-percent Americans, are trapped by this group, and they are represented to the world as supporting all of those ideologies, and it is not so, and I feel that they really ought to be smoked out and shown up for what they are, so that all of the good, free causes in this country, all the

liberalisms that really are American, can go out without the taint of communism. That is my sincere feeling on it.

HAS: Do you feel that there is a threat of Communism in the motion-picture industry?

WD: Yes, there is, and there are many reasons why they would like to take it over or get in and control it, or disrupt it, but I don't think they have gotten very far, and I think the industry is made up of good Americans, just like in my plant, good, solid Americans. My boys have been fighting it longer than I have. They are trying to get out from under it and they will in time if we can just show them up.

HAS: There are presently pending before this committee two bills relative to outlawing the Communist Party. What thoughts have you as to whether or not those bills should be passed?

WD: Well, I don't know as I qualify to speak on that. I feel if the thing can be proven un-American that it ought to be outlawed. I think in some way it should be done without interfering with the rights of the people. I think that will be done. I have that faith. Without interfering, I mean, with the good, American rights that we all have now, and we want to preserve.

HAS: Have you any suggestions to offer as to how the industry can be helped in fighting this menace?

WD: Well, I think there is a good start toward it. I know that I have been handicapped out there in fighting it, because they have been hiding behind this labor setup, they get themselves closely tied up in the labor thing, so that if you try to get rid of them they make a labor case out of it. We must keep the American labor unions clean. We have got to fight for them.

HAS: That is all of the questions I have, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Vail.

R. B. VAIL: No questions.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. McDowell.

J. MCDOWELL: No questions.

WD: Sir?

JM: I have no questions. You have been a good witness.

WD: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN: Mr. Disney, you are the fourth producer we have had as a witness, and each one of those four producers said, generally speaking, the same thing, and that is that the Communists have made inroads, have attempted inroads. I just want to point that out because there seems to be a very strong unanimity among the producers that have testified before us. In addition to producers, we have had actors and writers testify to the same. There is no doubt but what the movies are probably the greatest medium for entertainment in the United States and in the world. I think you, as a creator of entertainment, probably are one of the greatest examples in the profession. I want to congratulate you on the form of entertainment which you have given the American people and given the world and congratulate you for taking time out to come here and testify before this committee. He has been very helpful. Do you have any more questions, Mr. Stripling?

HAS: I am sure he does not have any more, Mr. Chairman.

RES: No; I have no more questions.

CHAIRMAN: Thank you very much, Mr. Disney.

## Mock Trial Worksheets

adapted from read-write-think

Time limits should be monitored by the Court Clerks (approximately two days)

1. Prosecution: presentation of arguments and witnesses  
Approximately 15 minutes
2. Defense: presentation of arguments and witnesses  
approximately 15 minutes
3. Prosecution: cross-examination of defense witnesses or return to prosecution witnesses for rebuttal  
approximately 10 minutes
4. Defense: cross-examination of prosecution witnesses or return to defense witnesses for rebuttal  
approximately 10 minutes
5. Prosecution: summary of arguments and closing statements  
approximately 10 minutes
6. Defense: summary of arguments and closing statements  
approximately 5 minutes
7. Jury: open discussion among jurors, with any questions being discussed  
approximately 15 minutes
8. Jury: time to fill out Juror Verdict Form  
approximately 5 minutes

## **THE CONTENT STANDARDS**

### Citizenship

1. All students demonstrate an understanding of major events, cultures, groups and individuals in the historical development of Pennsylvania, the United States and other nations, and describe the patterns of historical development.
2. All students demonstrate understanding of themes and patterns of geography, know the location of major bodies of water, landmasses and nations, and describe the relationships between geography and historical, economic and cultural development.
3. All students describe the development and operations of economic, political, legal and governmental systems in the United States, assess their own relationships to those systems, and compare them to those in other nations.
4. All students examine and evaluate problems facing citizens in their communities, state, nation and world by incorporating concepts and methods of inquiry of the various social sciences.
5. All students develop and defend a position on current issues, confronting the United States and other nations, conducting research, analyzing alternatives, organizing evidence and arguments, and making oral presentations.
6. All students explain basic economic concepts and the development and operation of economic systems in the United States and other nations, and make informed decisions about economic issues.
7. All students demonstrate their skills of communicating, negotiating and cooperating with others.
8. All students demonstrate that they can work effectively with others.
9. All students demonstrate an understanding of the history and nature of prejudice and relate their knowledge to current issues facing communities, the United States and other nations.
10. All students demonstrate an understanding of the various roles they can play as citizens through participation in a community service project.

11. All students demonstrate the ability to resolve conflicts in peaceful ways, including but not limited to peer mediation, anger management, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving.