

Teaching American History Project  
Analyzing Political Cartoons of the McCarthy Era  
By: Karen Diaz

**Grade:** 9-12

**Length of Period:** 1 class period

- **Inquiry:** Students will be asked to analyze political cartoons by Herblock (Herbert Block) in order to assess one of the varied responses to how the Cold War was being “fought” at home and abroad. This will be one of the last lessons in a short four day unit on the beginnings of the Cold War in America. Students will be answering the essential question: According to what you have learned so far, assess our government’s Cold War decisions and their impact on our domestic and foreign policies.

**Objectives:**

Students will know and be able to:

- Recall information learned about the second Red Scare in America
- Observe and analyze the political cartoons
- Determine the intended audience of the sources
- Discuss how Herblock portrayed the Cold War hysteria and who was responsible

**Materials:** attached below and available at

- [http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon\\_analysis\\_worksheet.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/worksheets/cartoon_analysis_worksheet.pdf)
- <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/fire.html>

**Activities:**

- Recall information already learned about the Second Red Scare
- Students will be placed in groups of three
- Handout the Cartoon Analysis Worksheet to each student
- Handout one Herblock cartoon to each group
- Students will answer the questions on the worksheet. (They have used this before so no guided practice is needed)
- Class will reconvene after approximately 10 minutes where then each group will present their cartoon analysis

- During the presentations I will ask questions and display background information on the cartoons. See doc. <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/swann/herblock/fire.html>
- Students will be encouraged to share questions and comments of their own to help further the sharing of information and analysis
- Closure: Once all groups have presented each student should answer the following question to be turned in before they leave class.  
Exit questions: According to your knowledge of the second Red Scare and these cartoons, what is the domestic impact of the Cold War policies?
- Homework: Reading in the text on the Korean War. Answer the following questions: Why and how did Korea become a major source of conflict for the Soviet Union and the US? Describe the negotiations to end the fighting in Korea. **Assessment:**
- Informal assessment comes from observation of students working with partners and then individually on analyzing the documents.
- Participation in partner and full group discussion
- Individual questions from students
- The worksheets will be collected at the end of the lesson for a formal assessment
- Students will receive a test which in addition to objective questions and Short Answers they will be required to answer the following question in essay form: According to what you have learned so far, assess our government's Cold War decisions and their impact on our domestic and foreign policies.

#### **CT State Standards:**

- Cite evidence from a source to determine as author's purpose and intended audience
- Analyze and explain multipurpose visual materials
- Compose a thesis statement using primary and secondary sources
- Ask relevant questions related to social studies/history to initiate, extend or debate a point of view during a discussion
- Use evidence to form an interpretation of a historical event
- Evaluate primary and secondary interpretations of a historical event



4/11/50  
"IT'S OKAY --- WE'RE HUNTING COMMUNISTS"



HERBLOCK  
©1947 THE WASHINGTON POST CO.

495  
328

2 cal + 3 cal  
#4720

5711

**"FIRE!"**



HERBLOCK  
©1962 THE WASHINGTON POST CO.



**"YOU MEAN I'M SUPPOSED TO STAND ON THAT?"**









"I HOLD IN MY HANDS"

"I HAVE HERE IN MY HAND ----"



470  
302

3 col + 2 col

"STAND FAST, MEN --- THEY'RE ARMED WITH MARSHMALLOWS"



# Cartoon Analysis Worksheet

<b>Level 1</b>	
Visuals	Words (not all cartoons include words)
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List the objects or people you see in the cartoon.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify the cartoon caption and/or title.</li> <li>2. Locate three words or phrases used by the cartoonist to identify objects or people within the cartoon.</li> <li>3. Record any important dates or numbers that appear in the cartoon.</li> </ol>
<b>Level 2</b>	
Visuals	Words
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Which of the objects on your list are symbols?</li> <li>3. What do you think each symbol means?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Which words or phrases in the cartoon appear to be the most significant? Why do you think so?</li> <li>5. List adjectives that describe the emotions portrayed in the cartoon.</li> </ol>
<b>Level 3</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Describe the action taking place in the cartoon.</li> <li>2. Explain how the words in the cartoon clarify the symbols.</li> <li>3. Explain the message of the cartoon.</li> <li>4. What special interest groups would agree/disagree with the cartoon's message? Why?</li> </ol>	