

Name: _____
Period: _____

Mr. Saccullo & Ms. Rosenthal

THE COLD WAR Homework #4

The Red Scare



Throughout the 1940s and 1950s America was overwhelmed with concerns about the threat of communism growing in Eastern Europe and China. Capitalizing on those concerns, a young Senator named Joseph McCarthy made a public accusation that more than two hundred "card-carrying" communists had infiltrated the United States government. McCarthy went on to publicly attack many people alleged to be communists. Though eventually his accusations were proven to be untrue, and he was censured by the Senate for unbecoming conduct, his passionate campaigning ushered in one of the most repressive times in 20th-century American politics.

In 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) began investigating communist subversion in the nation. The committee questioned people about their knowledge of communists. Known as McCarthyism, the paranoid hunt for communist infiltrators was notoriously difficult on writers and entertainers, many of whom were labeled communist sympathizers and were unable to continue working. Some had their passports taken away, while others were jailed for refusing to give the names of other communists. The trials, which were well publicized, could often destroy a career with a single unsubstantiated accusation.

During this time there were few in the press willing to stand up against McCarthy and the anti-Communist machine. Among those few were journalist Edward R. Murrow, whose strong criticisms of McCarthy are often cited as playing an important role in his eventual removal from power. By 1954, the fervor had died down and many actors and writers were able to return to work. Though relatively short, these proceedings remain one of the most shameful moments in modern U.S. history.

1.) What was McCarthyism?

2.) What was the purpose of HUAC?



Julius and Ethel Rosenberg

Before McCarthy's crusade, numerous people were convicted for espionage and other activities related to communism. The most notorious were Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the only U.S. citizens executed for espionage during the Cold War. In 1950, the Rosenbergs, known communists, were arrested on suspicion of espionage and providing nuclear secrets to the Soviets. They steadfastly maintained their innocence but invoked their Fifth Amendment right to avoid incriminating themselves. The couple was convicted in 1951 and executed on June 19, 1953. It is believed that the information they provided to the Soviet Union led directly to its successful development of the atomic bomb.

3.) Why were the crimes of the Rosenbergs so harmful to the security of the United States?



4.) What do you think the cartoonist was saying about citizens' rights during the Red Scare?
