Fear and Evidence

Cold War investigations and their effects on American life

9-12.US2.26 "Examine the influence of the Cold War on United States politics and society. Including: • The House of Un-American Activities Committee • McCarthyism • The Alger Hiss Case • The Rosenberg Case"

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one official action in each of the four investigations or campaigns. Circle a political or social effect linked to each action so you can trace how Cold War fears shaped the United States.

When Suspicion Reached Home

1. In 1947, a Hollywood writer called before the House Un-American Activities Committee, or HUAC, faced a hard choice: answer questions about suspected communist ties or risk punishment for refusing. HUAC was a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, not a court. Its public hearings investigated alleged communist influence in government and entertainment. Witnesses who refused to answer could be cited for contempt of Congress, while people named in hearings could lose work even without a criminal conviction. During the Cold War, fear of Soviet spying made such investigations seem necessary to some Americans and threatening to others.

2. In 1948, former communist Whittaker Chambers accused former State Department official Alger Hiss of passing secret documents to Soviet agents years earlier. Hiss denied spying, but a jury convicted him in 1950 of perjury, or lying under oath, not espionage. The case sharpened arguments over whether officials had protected the nation or unfairly targeted suspects. Senator Joseph McCarthy later claimed that communists had entered the federal government. He often made accusations without presenting solid proof. His tactics, called McCarthyism, helped fuel loyalty investigations, damaged careers, and pressured people to avoid political views or friendships that might attract suspicion.

3. The Rosenberg case brought another question into American homes: how should the country respond to a real danger of espionage while protecting fair trials? Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were convicted in 1951 of conspiracy to commit espionage for the Soviet Union and executed in 1953. Their case intensified fears about secrets reaching a rival nation, while debate over the evidence and the severity of their punishment continued. Together, HUAC hearings, McCarthy's charges, the Hiss case, and the Rosenberg case shaped politics by pushing leaders to prove they were tough on communism. They also shaped daily life through suspicion, silence, and lost jobs.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could a HUAC hearing affect someone who had not been convicted of a crime?

2. How did the Hiss case affect arguments about investigations of suspected communists?

3. How did McCarthy's accusations affect people's work or behavior?

4. How did the Rosenberg case affect public concerns about security and justice?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you advise a congressional committee in the early 1950s. Write a 5- to 6-sentence recommendation for investigating suspected spying that uses two different examples from the passage, explains one political or social cost of investigations, and proposes a safeguard that protects rights while allowing investigations.

ANSWER KEY

Fear and Evidence

HIGH SCHOOL · 9-12.US2.26

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one official action in each of the four investigations or campaigns. Circle a political or social effect linked to each action so you can trace how Cold War fears shaped the United States. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could a HUAC hearing affect someone who had not been convicted of a crime?	**A person named in a hearing could lose work even without a criminal conviction.**
2	How did the Hiss case affect arguments about investigations of suspected communists?	**It sharpened disagreement over whether officials were protecting the nation or unfairly targeting suspects.**
3	How did McCarthy's accusations affect people's work or behavior?	**They helped fuel loyalty investigations, damaged careers, and pressured people to avoid views or friendships that might draw suspicion.**
4	How did the Rosenberg case affect public concerns about security and justice?	**It intensified fear that secrets could reach the Soviet Union and sustained debate about the evidence and the severity of the punishment.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Congress should investigate suspected spying, but it should require specific evidence before publicly naming anyone. HUAC hearings could cost people jobs even without criminal convictions, so private preliminary reviews would reduce that harm. The Hiss case shows that a jury could judge a specific charge, perjury, rather than treat suspicion as proof of espionage. Officials should let accused people answer allegations and make public only claims supported by documented evidence. This approach would still allow investigations while limiting fear and damage to people's reputations.

Accept recommendations that accurately use any two distinct examples from the passage, identify a political or social cost, and propose a safeguard compatible with investigating suspected spying.