



Red Scare: Television and the Cold War

Pre-Visit Activity:

Before your visit, familiarize your class with the following terms, people, and philosophies as they will be referenced in the class during your visit.

Vocabulary

Begin by asking students to define and discuss the following words. Students should become familiar with these words and concepts as they will be referenced in the class.

Blacklist: A list of persons who are disapproved of or are to be punished or boycotted. An entertainment industry-wide policy of refusing to hire alleged communists, former communists, and communist sympathizers, although formal blacklists were not permitted to exist.

Cold War: A conflict over ideological differences carried on by methods short of sustained overt military action and usually without breaking off diplomatic relations.

Communism: A theory advocating elimination of private property; a system in which goods are owned in common and are available to all as needed. A totalitarian system of government in which a single authoritarian party controls state-owned means of production; the final stage of society in Marxist theory in which the state has withered away and economic goods are distributed equally.

House Un-American Committee (HUAC): A congressional committee that held hearings on the film and entertainment industries in 1938, 1947, 1951–52, 1953–55, and 1957–58. The committee also looked into alleged pro-communist activities of teachers, professors, and other individuals and organizations.

McCarthyism: A term first coined in 1950 and later defined in 1954 as a public accusation of disloyalty unsupported by truth; also refers to an unfairness in investigative technique.

Senator Joseph McCarthy: United States Senator from 1946–1954 known for his extremist anticommunist pursuits.

Red Scare: Anticommunist fanaticism that flourished in the United States roughly between 1947 and 1960, representing the notion that “Reds”—communists—were an overwhelming present danger to the United States and its citizens.



Post-Visit Activity:

1. Read *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller.

Compare the Salem Witch Trials to the McCarthy Hearings.

What similarities are there between Puritan New England and 1950s America during the Red Scare?

How did greater society respond to each situation?

What themes are constant in both scenarios?

Further reading

Cool War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture, by Thomas Doherty (2003)

Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis, by Robert F. Kennedy (1969)

The Coldest War: A Memoir of Korea, by James Brady (2000)

2. Watch Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove* (1964; 93 minutes).

Atomic fear, having diminished somewhat after Hiroshima, increased dramatically after 1954 as hydrogen-bomb tests in the Pacific spread deadly radioactive fallout across North America. While activists demanded a test ban, novelists, magazine editors, science-fiction writers, and moviemakers publicized the threat. One product of this culture was Peter George's novel *Two Hours to Doom* (1958), the basis for Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*.

Think about ways in which you can impress upon students what it was like to live under the threat of nuclear war.

Choose several clips to screen for your students rather than screening the whole film and discuss with your class.

Suggested Discussion Questions

How do *Dr. Strangelove* and *The Twilight Zone*: "The Monsters Are Due on Maple Street" address real societal fears during the cold war?

How are they similar? How are they different in their approach?

Discuss present-day connections.

Select a character(s) to focus on. How does Stanley Kubrick use these characters to show different facets, beliefs, and philosophies of the Cold War?

Think about how *Dr. Strangelove* was received by "the powers-that-be" in the politically charged atmosphere (President Kennedy's assassination and the negative presidential campaigns of 1964) of the early 1960s.

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CLASS PROGRAM

Further Watching

Guilty by Suspicion (1990; 105 minutes)

Web Resources

The Cold War Museum:

<http://www.coldwar.org/>