



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative

2022 Volume II: American Global Power from Empire to Superpower

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## **Public Diplomacy and Consumerism during the early Cold War**

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During the Cold War, tensions moved from the nuclear age to the domestic front. Winning the "contest for the hearts and minds" of the American people became a challenge in the ideological campaign of mobilizing societies for a new kind of geopolitical rivalry. After the containment of the Soviet Union on the military and atomic front, economics and consumption played a prominent role in swaying public sentiment. The U.S. government aimed to combat Communism not with nuclear weapons but with automobiles, refrigerators, washing machines, and capitalism.

The unit will combine the historical facts of the Cold War and how consumerism and propaganda were used as a tool to sway Americans to buy goods and services. Students need to learn the way governments manipulate people. After World War II, Americans were ready to purchase many new devices and inventions, including the T.V. Spending on furniture and appliances increased by huge margins. Business and political leaders claimed consumerism was more than shopping as it promoted the benefits of capitalism. Using the famous kitchen debate to showcase these efforts, students will learn how the government manipulated its citizens through propaganda, consumption, and advertising. This unit will be taught in 10th grade U.S. History.

(Developed for U. S. History, grade 10; recommended for U. S. History and World History, grades 10-11)

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