



Public Diplomacy and Consumerism during the early Cold War

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Introduction

During the 1920s, American consumerism increased due to technical advances and innovative ideas and inventions in communication, transportation, and manufacturing. Americans moved from the avoidance of debt to the concept of buying goods on credit. The operating assumption was that the more items people purchased, the happier and more fulfilled they would feel. Americans were willing to buy new devices and inventions, and spending increased dramatically. The U.S. supported a consumer culture as capitalism and materialism molded the average person to buy more goods and improve their standard of living. Political and business leaders claimed consumerism was more than shopping as it defined the benefits of capitalism. The basis for a capitalist society is an insatiable appetite for goods and services. The United States government wanted to develop lifelong consumers to develop needs, wants, and product preferences to expand the economy for a prosperous postwar nation.

When President Franklin Roosevelt delivered his annual message to Congress in 1941, he gave his "Four Freedoms Speech," describing extending American ideals worldwide. Roosevelt expressed his concern about human rights and freedom. His famous speech proposed "four essential human freedoms, freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear." When Western Europe lay under Nazi domination, Roosevelt presented a vision in which America should spread those ideals worldwide. In his State of the Union Address, he told Congress that "four freedoms," including "freedom from want," would define the post-WWII international era. After years of wartime rationing, American consumers were ready to spend money, and factories switched from war to peacetime production.

During the Cold War period of the late 1940s and 1950s, winning the "contest for the hearts and minds" of the American people became a challenge in the battle of mobilizing societies for a new geopolitical rivalry. After the containment of the Soviet Union on the military front during the Cold War, economics and consumption played a significant role in swaying public sentiment toward higher living standards, political freedom, and social mobility. The United States used government-sponsored efforts to persuade European people that democracy and capitalism were superior to Soviet alternatives. The lengthy battle between the economic systems of capitalism and Communism would set the stage for the eventual fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

In 1959, the "kitchen debate" is a prime example of a pivotal economic discussion on consumption at a heated debate in Moscow. U.S. vice president Richard Nixon and Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev traded barbs at the

American kitchen exhibit as they illuminated the deep socio-political and cultural divide between the two superpowers in the 1950s. These kitchen debates were about standards of living and technological advances in the U.S./USSR. They showed how Americans were buying these consumer goods as they needed to have a "good life." The exhibits aimed to develop better mutual understanding and friendlier relations between people in the East and West. This attention to consumerism became central as America countered the ideology of the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War, the U.S. and Soviet Union competed fiercely to prove superiority. While the Soviet Union was ahead of the U.S. in rocket technology, the U.S. was winning in consumer products. The contest was on as Khrushchev decided to enter a competition to catch up and overtake America. Using the kitchen debate to highlight these efforts, students will learn how the U.S. government manipulated its citizens through consumption, propaganda, and advertising to buy consumer goods. The unit will combine concerns of the Cold War and elaborate on how consumerism and propaganda were tools used to convince Americans to increase their consumption and living standards.

Content Objectives

American prosperity vs. Soviet shortages

In this unit, students will study how the U.S. government aimed to combat Communism, not with nuclear weapons, but through a capitalistic society that included automobiles, refrigerators, washing machines, and consumer goods. Americans prospered as Soviet citizens suffered from chronic shortages of consumer goods. While the Soviet Union was busy trying to feed and supply clothes for its citizens, the United States pushed "the American Dream" toward the middle class. The decades following World War II were a time of significant economic growth and prosperity. This unit will highlight how consumer demand spurred economic growth and how rising incomes, marketing, and advertising created the culture of consumption and consumerism in the 1950s.

Demand vs. Planned Economy

The unit will show how capitalism succeeded by creating a financial system with benefits, improving individuals' lives, and giving people power. A demand-driven economy would offer the best route to recovery and affluence, but it would also nurture the long-sought ideal of a more equal and democratic nation. Citizens living better than ever would be on an equal footing with their similarly prospering neighbors. The American government used propaganda to manipulate Americans into believing that being good citizens and consumers is the "American Way." The theory is that spending on consumer goods and services, building supply and demand, is the primary driver of the economic success of a capitalistic society. Communist countries created centrally planned economies that led to many shortages because the government dictated production.

What was the "Cold" War

Students will study the Cold War and the goals of the U.S. to restrict and stop the spread of Communism and encourage democracy and capitalism. The United States entered the post-World War II era as the most powerful country in the world. The challenges facing the country were: The spread and containment of Communism, leadership in the global economy, and preservation of security at home and abroad. The United

States and the Soviet Union competed militarily and economically for over forty years.

Classroom Environment

I teach Oklahoma History, U.S. Government, and special education to high school students in Tulsa Public schools. The students at school have varying academic levels and socioeconomic and social-emotional statuses. Students dropped out of school from COVID and anxiety and are now making up for the lost time. Building relationships and mentoring are crucial to engaging students. Working with students personally and helping to inspire them with local and world events are essential.

It is challenging to instruct students with varying academic levels. The key is to engage students through differentiation, scaffolding, and group and individual lessons. Having students come together for a lively discussion and debate helps them develop academic and social skills to support lesson content and critical thinking. Small group and independent study will reinforce class content through projects, discussions, and individual lessons. This curriculum will meet Oklahoma standards for students to learn and gain new insights into the historical and cultural context of the Cold War.

It takes careful thought and analysis to study the history of our country's foundations, especially in our current political climate. All sections of this unit will be appropriate for high-school students. Students are engaged when incorporating current events and civics into history lesson units. Bringing students experiential learning that will broaden their horizons and help connect them to real-life activities will help them see value in history. I will teach this unit in U.S. History. This unit will also explore history through T.V., radio, and advertising to help students understand the popular culture of the times and then apply background knowledge to understanding content.

The Unit

Students will learn how the years of fighting against Cold War Communism in the U.S. reflected in the anxieties that affected everyday life and heightened when anti-communist hysteria changed the lives of citizens. The Cold War was a war of words, not guns. It was the fear of the atomic bomb. It was a diplomatic struggle between the democratic nations of the West, such as the United States, Great Britain, and France, and the nation's allies with the former Soviet Union. The fear of the Red Scare of Communism influenced American attitudes, beliefs, and actions. Threats of nuclear war, foreign invasions, and national security had Americans "duck and cover" in schools and their homes. The Federal Civil Defense Administration's strategies for surviving a nuclear attack included fallout shelters, duck and cover drills, and the protection of U.S. government institutions. All these factors contributed to the increased tensions that affected the citizens of America.

The Cold War was fought in the White House and the Kremlin but also entered peoples' kitchens. In American and Soviet homes, the capitalism-communism divide was a topic of conversation at kitchen tables. The world leaders debated the merits of American-style capitalist consumerism and Soviet-style Communism in a battle

of ideas and beliefs. Khrushchev talked about how their economy, with Soviet scarcity, would lead to dreams of abundance and how "one office, one factory, could be directed, as capitalism could not, to the fastest fulfillment of human needs.¹ Therefore, Khrushchev said that Communism could easily outproduce the wasteful chaos of the marketplace in the United States. In short, Khrushchev talked of the fantasy of the ability to satisfy the Soviet's needs, while President Eisenhower spoke about comfortable homes.

One of the factors in the Cold War during the 1950s was consumerism and living standards.² As early as 1957, it became clear that Soviet leaders had underestimated the power of the cultural Cold War and the role of living standards, convenience, and leisure. While Khrushchev preferred to make outer space, Sputnik, and the Space Race, a central theme, the American way of life was slowly becoming a global phenomenon. The Soviets, more than ever, were struggling to control the beliefs and images of American life. One of the mistakes the Kremlin made was to allow interest in America to become a threat to its policies and reforms.³ In doing so, it created a paradox for the cultural discussions that were about to take place. When Khrushchev visited the United States for the first time, people in the U.S. thought the exchange would lessen world tensions. However, to Communists, it stood for a chance to use the pressure to still further victories of manipulation.

Capitalism

Students will learn how capitalism functions and how it offers business owners and corporations the most significant level of freedom and flexibility. In a capitalist economy, the economy is free from state control, and freedom of enterprise is cherished. Capitalism is an economic system in which private individuals control property and enterprise for their interests. Capitalism is built on the ideals of personal property, profit motive, and market competition. The essential purpose of capitalism is that profits drive the free-market capitalistic economy by supply and demand. Capitalism establishes a price system that ensures resources are conserved by producing market demand and anticipating consumer preferences.

In Cold War America, capitalism held a prominent place in economic development. The rhetoric of choice and abundance was pivotal in America's attempts to propagandize the "American Way." In America in the 1940s and 1950s, goods were mass-produced and targeted at the middle class. Americans were able to consume more cheaply than ever before and were also able to buy on credit. Between 1945 and 1949, Americans bought 20 million refrigerators, 21.4 million cars, and 5.5 million stoves, a trend that continued well into the 1950s.⁴

Both superpowers wanted high productivity from their workers. The Western model of capitalism was a free market economy, one of supply and demand. Capitalism is incompatible with the Communist system. During the Cold War, buying items for the home helped alleviate traditional American uneasiness with consumption. President Eisenhower's question about how Americans could help the economy was: Buy!"- "Buy What?"- "Anything." In a discussion on the economy, historian Elaine Tyler May noted, "the values associated with domestic spending upheld traditional American concerns with pragmatism and morality, rather than opulence and luxury."⁵

In contrast to a planned economy, capitalism promotes private ownership. Individuals have the right to own property and the freedom to do what they want. Because of capitalism, individual businesses can grow and expand as large as the market allows. Capitalism offers the most significant level of freedom to business owners and corporations.

Communism

Most forms of Communism are grounded in Marxism, a theory conceived by Karl Marx during the nineteenth century. Marx thought the only way to have a balanced society was to put workers in control and live in a communal system. Communism promised prosperity and equality, even though it delivered neither. In the Soviet Union, during the early Cold-War, the ruling elite gained the most and the workers suffered. As the Soviet economy grew and modernized, it became common for the nation to experience shortages. Ordinary citizens often had to wait in line to acquire necessities like cars, housing, and clothing. There was a deep contrast between the people who live relatively well and the remainder of people whose standard of living is low.

During the early Cold War, the Soviet government-controlled prices, and decisions about how many goods to produce. The Soviet economy was based on state ownership and central planning. The government controlled all communication and transportation and owned all factories, agriculture, and farms. Individuals held no private property or assets. In this system, workers earned the same pay. The Communist government rationed items that the people wanted, creating shortages and used many resources to maintain nuclear and military arsenals. They worked on the supply side of economics and would only manufacture a limited supply of goods, thereby controlling prices.

Communist countries created centrally planned economies that led to many shortages because the government dictated production. A planned economy (also called a command economy) is an economic system in which the government makes critical decisions about producing and distributing goods and services. Under a planned system, there are disadvantages, including a lack of efficient resource allocation, lack of innovation, and the needs of society are not fulfilled. In a market economy, companies produce goods that are in demand.

In the 1940s, massive food shortages and droughts in the Soviet Union led to a shortage in the grain supply. During the 1950s, the Soviet Union had moved from a mainly agrarian society into an industrial power. There was a lack of skilled workers in this transformation, and this also led to shortages in consumer goods. When goods were available, consumers stood in long lines; this created the "black market" for goods. Soviets wanted cigarettes, shampoo, liquor, jeans, sugar, and milk, among other products. The "black market" was illegal but was essential because the Soviets wanted consumer goods. This mode, termed the "second economy," provided party propagandists with a scapegoat for shortages and lined the pockets of party officials.

Containment and Rebuilding

By focusing on government policies, students will be able to learn how the U.S. government helped countries rebuild after WWII to stop the spread of Communism. In 1947, the Containment Policy proposed by George F. Kennan focused on Soviet Communism that was spreading at this time. Kennan determined this policy and strategy to stop the spread of communist influence and control wherever it threatened to surface. The policy said that

Communism needed containment and isolation, or it would expand and spread to neighboring countries; therefore, becoming a threat to the U.S. as Communism stood for a system to fear. In the "Truman Doctrine," on March 12, 1947, President Harry S. Truman presented his address before a joint session of Congress. Truman asked Congress for \$400 million in the military and economic aid for Turkey and Greece (threatened by the USSR). Harry S. Truman said the U.S. would supply financial and military support to any country

threatened by a Soviet takeover.

In 1947, George Marshall argued that Soviet propaganda had instilled perverse notions that Americans had unlimited wealth and that "monopoly capitalists" dominated the imperialistic U.S. government. He stated that Soviet propagandists declared, "American democratic principles are loudly proclaimed as a cloak for undemocratic practices and to conceal widespread racial and economic discriminations and extensive concentration of the political and economic power in the hands of a few."⁶ To meet this emergency, Secretary of State George Marshall proposed that European nations should create a plan for their economic reconstruction and that the United States provide monetary assistance.

George Marshall promised that the U.S. commitment to reconstructing Europe would not only restore the market for American goods but would help to repair poverty, desperation, and chaos. He used his speech to promote economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability. In his plan, he proposed that the United States supply financial aid to restore the economic infrastructure of postwar Europe. Over the next four years, Congress appropriated \$13.3 billion for European recovery. This financial aid supplied much-needed capital and materials that enabled Europeans to rebuild the continent's economy. For the United States, the Marshall Plan supported free markets for American goods that would increase consumption, create dependable trading partners, and support the development of stable democratic governments in Western Europe.

On April 3, 1948, President Truman signed the Economic Recovery Act of 1948 (Economic Cooperation Act of 1948), which became known as the Marshall Plan, named after Secretary George Marshall. The Marshall Plan supported the development of stable democratic governments in Western Europe and signaled bipartisanship of WWII into the postwar years.⁷ These plans sent aid to war-torn Europe after WWII, mainly focusing on preventing the spread of Communism. The Marshall Plan was created to avoid the spread of Communism in Western Europe and stabilize the international situation in a way favorable to America with its considerable investment in developing political democracy and free market economies. Americans became convinced that the Europeans would not be able to get back on their feet either economically or militarily without massive American commitment and infusion of funds. Students will learn how the U.S. government tried and succeeded in helping to rebuild postwar Europe to spread democracy and freedom.

During the 1950s, many events led to significant changes between the two superpowers. Rapid economic growth in the U.S. and western Europe, the death of Stalin in 1953, the beginning of the Space Race, and Sputnik in 1957, became an outgrowth of the increasing relevance of consumption and production in the era of Cold War competition in a nonmilitary way. Also, television became a significant phenomenon that changed American life. The new medium's power revolutionized news broadcasting and transformed the U.S. to forge a national popular culture. By the late 1950s, television became more about consumerism when Americans sat at their dining tables and living rooms.

The Kitchen Debate- 1959

This information in the kitchen debate is essential for students to learn as it will build context and lead to a debate in the final project in this unit. Historians regard the kitchen debate as one of the most symbolic events that revealed distinctive Cold War elements. Richard M. Nixon was a central figure throughout the history of the Cold War. Nixon traveled widely as vice president, including a celebrated trip to the Soviet Union in 1959. Nixon went to Moscow to promote the American National Exhibition and America's consumer society. The most famous moments of Nixon's Soviet trip came in Moscow, as he went with Soviet leader Nikita S.

Khrushchev around the U.S. kitchen exhibition in Sokolniki Park. Stopping at the display of a model kitchen, Nixon and Khrushchev engaged in one of the most compelling bits of theater in the history of the Cold War. The "kitchen debate" was a robust discussion of the merits of capitalism and Communism between the two world leaders.

Their debate exposed differences in the late 1950s that were exchanged by superpowers to best advocate and protect their respective ways of life. To the average Soviet, items such as televisions and automobiles signified a comfortable, secure life rarely available in the Soviet Union. Most Soviets were happy just to have food and clothing. Most Soviet visitors were impressed with the exhibition, and U.S. officials underestimated the appeal of consumerism, consumption, and democratic values to the average Soviet person.⁸ U.S. information strategists realized that future exhibits should emphasize what capitalism afforded U.S. citizens.

The Kremlin's counterattack, reflecting profound insecurities about the impact of Western consumer culture, tried to undermine the appeal of the American exhibition. The Soviet Communist Party (CPSU), backed by various allied committees, employed a variety of means to discredit the American way of life. This approach backfired as many Soviets enjoyed the exhibit. The guides at the exhibition received notes in which people confessed their dissatisfaction with Soviet life; some had hostility toward Communism. Despite years of intense anti-American propaganda, Americans were struck by "the friendly attitude of most Soviet visitors toward America and Americans, in contrast to the indifference of most Americans towards the Russian people."⁹

When the debate aired on U.S. television on July 25, 1959, and two days later, it aired on Soviet television; Nixon and Khrushchev debated the social systems of ordinary citizens to decide which country had a better method of government. *Time* magazine described how "Nixon sold the American way, as he was getting through to the Russian people with a message that told of one man, a system, and a country dedicated not to war, as Communist propaganda had insisted, but also to prosperity and peace."¹⁰ On August 3, 1959, *Newsweek* included coverage of the debate transcript and described two hundred reporters and photographers pressing close to the adversaries (Nixon and Khrushchev) to cover the widely celebrated event.¹¹

The exhibition provided the U.S. with an ideal forum to respond to Khrushchev's claim that the Soviet system would overtake and "bury" the capitalist West. The crowds at the exhibit now knew firsthand that their country, the Soviet Union, lagged behind the U.S. in the quality of life it could supply its consumers. While the hope was to relieve tension between the clashing countries, it inevitably did the exact opposite. An estimated 2.7 million people came to the exhibit over the six weeks, and many more would have come if there would have been more tickets available.¹² Young people jumped the fence, especially wanting to see "Americana" at its best, including the newest model automobiles, appliances, Pepsi, fashion, rock and roll music, and Disney films.

Most importantly, however, the debate proved that the Cold War had moved into a new phase, one characterized less by the threat of looming military conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union and more by a contest to win over the people of the developing world and living standards. It was a consumer propaganda campaign masterminded to sell the American Way as superior. The debate was "in the kitchen," where the future of women's work was debated and discussed amongst politicians and the public. During the discussion, Nixon claimed that "the newest kitchen model would make life easier for our housewives."¹³ The USIA (United States Information Agency) concluded that the Moscow exhibition was "the largest and probably

the most productive single psychological effort ever launched by the U.S. in any Communist country."¹⁴

Their debate illuminated how both leaders used the kitchen to expose the rivalries between the two countries during the Cold War period. Critics had long disparaged what they viewed in Khrushchev's words as "the capitalist attitude towards women" in America.¹⁵ They argued that capitalist systems kept women at home and discussed how women would be enthusiastic about family over society. During the conversation, Khrushchev accused Nixon of trying to threaten the Soviet Union indirectly. Nixon responded to Khrushchev by saying the Soviet Union had better weapons than the United States and was also making an indirect threat to him. In the debate, Khrushchev claimed that "Nixon's grandchildren would live under Communism, and Nixon claimed that Khrushchev's grandchildren would live in freedom."¹⁶

The Suburbs in America

Experts fought over which values best exemplify "America." The Kitchen Debate does reveal numerous issues that became emblematic of the Cold War, including issues of economics, gender ideology, and the movement of white families to the suburbs during the baby boom generation. Fighting the Cold War at home and the growth of the middle class during this era would be a permanent reminder of the ongoing battleground of consumer expectations and desires. The Cold War propaganda showed that strong nuclear families would help the U.S. beat the USSR.

During the 1950s, suburbia was undoubtedly on the rise in America. Americans were moving out of cities into the suburbs with the rise of automobiles and highways. Government guarantees for home and business loans, and the GI Bill, were significant factors in the post-war period, prompting an economic boom, and financing the construction of thousands of new homes, like those that sprang up in the suburbs such as Levittown, New York.¹⁷ Women faced enormous social pressures to marry young and have a big family. From 1940 to 1950, the estimated number of families with three children doubled, and the number of families with a fourth child quadrupled.¹⁸ Families were ultimately creating more consumers to buy goods. In 1960, the U.S. census revealed that the suburban population equaled the urban population.

The growth of the suburbs did not come without a dark side. Urban areas declined, and racial segregation was on the rise. The suburbs did not include people on the margins of society, immigrants, minorities, the elderly, and the working poor in this prosperity. This conformity also had damaging issues. For white women, the charms of suburban life began to wear thin after a few years. Almost thirty percent of women did work outside the home during the 1950s.¹⁹ Nevertheless, popular culture was full of messages influencing women that their most excellent contentment in life would come from raising children, tending to their husband's needs, and owning all the labor-saving household appliances that money could buy.

Many women realized that there was more to life than childcare and housework. Minority women did not experience suburban life because they were barred from suburbia altogether. Homebuilder William Levitt, the father of the suburbs, declared openly that his subdivisions were intended for whites only. In 1960, not a single resident of Levittown, New York, was black.²⁰ Racial segregation was on the rise in America during the civil rights movement. This segregation became clear in suburbia, education, and the workplace.

Soviet Women

Expectations for women increased in the Soviet Union as many Soviet men died during WWII, and women had to work and raise their families. Like their American counterparts, Soviet women were also called on to be

loyal homemakers and impeccable housekeepers after World War II. Soviet women worked outside of the home far more than American women. The period that followed Joseph Stalin's death in 1953 is commonly known as "the thaw," a time of limited political or cultural transformation of freedom. "The thaw" was often mentioned in connection with Khrushchev's liberalization policies as he tried to end some of Stalin's repressive tactics. The thaw allowed openness to economic trade and the arts, media, and popular music, significantly influencing the people's public consciousness in the Soviet Union. This period implied "a symbolic reversal" of Russian strategy as Khrushchev tried to categorize public life using an array of moral values.²¹ The Soviet economy increased in the 1950s, giving greater expectations to the Russian people.

Both superpowers used gender stereotypes in their propaganda. They presented men as courageous, intelligent, and diligent. Neither American nor Soviet propaganda mentioned the apparel or appearance of men. In contrast, the Soviets stressed the strength, political commitment, work expectations, and virtue of communist women while deriding American women as lazy, expressive, and bland. The USIA retaliated by criticizing femininity, motherhood, and fashion behind the Iron Curtain.²² Soviet women held jobs and had advanced degrees. During the Soviet period, most women had no choice but to wear frumpy clothes, work full-time jobs and carry the double burden of keeping the home with little help from their male family members.

In the 1950s, Madison Ave. used fashion to further the propaganda wars. On the cover of *Life* magazine, August 10, 1959, Pat Nixon was photographed with Mrs. Khrushchev and others who had gone to Moscow for the kitchen debates. Pat Nixon glowed in her natural raw silk suit and a fancy hat. She looked just as she was supposed to: like a sophisticated and lovely American homemaker. The message was clear: the Russians might be ahead in space research and education, but they could not match the sophistication of Western dress and the easy smoothness of an American lady going about her everyday life.

In contrast, Mrs. Khrushchev was clad in the plainest dress, buttoned at the front, called *khalat*. This style had become a domestic uniform for Soviet women.²³ Women wore *khalat* at home, whether going about their domestic work, cooking, resting, or entertaining. The cover of *Life* magazine blatantly displayed the disparities between American and Soviet women through the clothes they wore. Students will see how ad agencies used images to establish the differences between the two cultures and how they manipulated their citizens.

Propaganda

During many historical events, leaders used diverse types of propaganda to affect their citizen's ideology. During World War I, propaganda became a common term around America when posters and films were used against enemies to rally troop enlistment and gain public opinion. Propaganda became a modern political tool generating fear or support across broad demographics and achieving the country's benefit depending on how the government manipulated citizens domestically and overseas. Propaganda promotes a particular agenda or point of view. The goals of deception can vary, but common goals include shaping people's opinions, convincing them to support a specific cause or political candidate, and encouraging them to behave in a certain way.

In World War II, the techniques governments worldwide used were political propaganda posters. Hitler understood the power of propaganda and created the Ministry of Enlightenment and Propaganda in 1933.²⁴ Posters at this time incited fear and demanded allegiance. Posters are still part of the arsenal of the art of persuasion, but other forms of media overshadow them. The U.S. had "Uncle Sam" and "Rosie the Rivetter" to remind citizens of the nationalism of the war effort during this time. The end of World War II set the stage for the beginning of the Cold-war Era, which was an anxious time for relations and world competition between the

United States and the Soviet Union as mistrust set in between the once wartime allies. The continued fear of the Red Scare of Communism influenced American attitudes, beliefs, and actions that our government used to indoctrinate, influence, and mobilize.

Advertising

The end of WWII signaled the end of a thrift consciousness that Americans had held since the Great Depression. Businesses used advertising and Madison Avenue to promote material purchases that "people could not live without" in the United States. Advertising boomed in the 1950s because of America's popular culture at this time and television's massive reach. Advertising played a significant role in the economy as public consumption peaked at a historically elevated level. Advertiser's supplied helpful information to consumers about products and service choices and compare features, benefits, and prices. With all this information, consumers choose to buy more products and services.

Advertising and marketing became an integral part of the 1950s due to the rise of television and consumerism. Advertisers targeted women who did the shopping at this time. The people who created these ads were male. Advertising changed American life by ensuring that consumers see that what were once luxuries were now necessities. Consumption was encouraged in the 1950s by forced obsolescence and advertising to persuade Americans to buy things they did not need. Americans bought into the idea of "keeping up with their neighbors" to purchase and become mass consumers. The baby boomers and teen culture also contributed to the new markets for advertisers to sell their goods to and build consumers.

Television became an essential part of nearly every American home, reinforcing the images synonymous with depicting the good life through consuming the latest goods and services. Television programs such as *"Leave it to Beaver," "Father Knows Best,"* and *"The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet"* glorified the perfect "white" suburban family, something that often felt separate from the reality of the nuclear family.²⁵ These shows were a version of white middle-class tastes and values with little effort to add any nuisance to the picture of the "perfect" home life for Americans.

Teaching Strategies

One of the core goals of this unit is for students to develop a strong understanding of how the Cold War during the 1940s and 1950s influenced U.S. history through propaganda, economics, and popular culture. America experienced a fundamental change during this period of consumption, manipulation, and the actions taken by our government to achieve these goals. These concepts are critical for students to understand to be more educated about the U.S. and World history.

Students will have the necessary background information covered in this unit through various pedagogical techniques and activities. These include direct instruction via lecture, close-reading of primary sources, multimedia literacy, whole-class, small group discussions, and debates. The activities in this unit will challenge students to consider their beliefs and how they align with actions taken by our government in political and consumer culture.

Venn Diagram

Students will define the fundamental differences between capitalism and Communism. Students will be able to list the basic principles of both economic approaches and compare these systems to each other by creating a Venn diagram. Students will learn about the advantages and disadvantages of these structures through a class discussion.

Propaganda Visual Analysis

Students will individually answer various questions for each poster or advertisement to list different propaganda techniques used for an image. For each photo, students will answer the following questions on a piece of paper: Who was the intended audience for this image? Where would this image have been used or displayed? What emotions does this image prompt? Was it meant to invoke good feelings or bad toward the subjects? Does this image effectively convey its message to its audience? What is left out entirely? (Ideas, facts, points of view) What facts are being skewed or misrepresented? Are there any outright lies?

Debate Circles

Students get in debate circles, using small groups, prepping for both sides of the argument, and presenting their case; the other side then argues, then there is a judge to decide which side wins.

Duck, Duck, Debate

The culminating activity for this unit is a class-wide debate, using duck, duck, argument; students will be the historians to use knowledge and evidence from the team to answer questions. As Nixon and Khrushchev debated in 1959, is Communism or capitalism a better economic system? Students will take a stance on this issue and discuss their responses in a debate using evidence from prior class activities.

This strategy requires students to prepare ahead of time pros and cons on a debatable topic, citing textual evidence on their pros/cons lists. When they get to class, the teacher chooses a student to go first (I would randomly draw a name or use an app that will do that). That selected student gets to pick what side to argue first. After they present their argument in a timed format (one minute), they can play a little duck, duck, and debate. They choose the person who will debate next, but they automatically must argue with the other side. The class can vote on which side won in between rounds. As an extension of this strategy, students can write a persuasive paragraph or essay on the topic.

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1- Capitalism vs. Communism

Objective: In this lesson, students will be able to define the fundamental differences between capitalism and Communism. Students will be able to list the basic principles of both economic systems and compare them to each other by creating a Venn diagram. Students will decide the advantages and disadvantages of each system through a class discussion.

Materials for capitalism:

Students will watch a video on the definition of capitalism

Students will analyze a *Pyramid of the Capitalist System*.

Students will read excerpts from *The Wealth of Nations* by Adam Smith, 1776

Students will study, *The Purpose of Government* by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (The Social Contract)

Procedure and elements: This activity, using a Venn diagram and class discussion, will enable students to understand and learn about the definition of capitalism, understand its meaning, and see different examples of capitalism. Capitalism is a system where people have the freedom to run their own companies and manage their money. Capitalism is built on the forces of the free market instead of the foundation of government power. In capitalism, taxes are set at a specific rate and do not require all the people's earnings to go to the government. Students will research and write about the following terms below, leading to a class discussion to decide the essence of a capitalist society. Students will reflect on the elements they feel most strongly about and which are negotiable.

Building on questions to start with, the class will discuss who manages a person's well-being, the government or the individual. Should the government be involved in an economy? If so, to what extent?

The main terms to define:

Ownership, competition, government intervention

Corporate Capitalism, Finance Capitalism, Free-Market Capitalism

Materials for Communism:

Students will watch a video on the definition of Communism.

Students will analyze selected Karl Marx (German philosopher and political economist) quotes.

Students will read an excerpt from the *Communist Manifesto* by Friederich Engels and Karl Marx in 1848.

Students will listen to two of Nikita Khrushchev's speeches:

January 1959- Soviet Seven-Year Economic Plan- Khrushchev spoke about his belief that the Soviet Union was transitioning from an economy of sacrifice to one of abundance.

July 28, 1959- Khrushchev spoke about how the Soviet Union was well on its way to winning the "peaceful competition" between capitalism and socialism.

Procedure and elements: This activity will enable students to understand and learn about the definition of Communism, understand its meaning, and see different examples of Communism. The basic idea of Communism is to end wealth inequality and traditional class hierarchies with heavy state control to end class inequality. Although the exact meaning of Communism can vary based on context, Communism is an economic ideology that generally seeks to create a classless society through state intervention in and control of the financial system and society. Communist countries also create planned economies where the

government dictates production instead of laws of supply and demand, which decide output in capitalist economies.

The main terms to define:

The proletariat, Planned economy, Interventionism

Communism, *Communist Manifesto*

Lesson 2: Propaganda and Consumerism

Objective- In this lesson, students will visually analyze the impact posters made on the belief of politics and consumerism in the 1950s and compare the key elements of the Soviet and American domestic landscape through advertising. In pairs, students will select two pieces of advertising standing for Soviet and American ideologies. Using a template, they will decide the rhetorical appeal (ethos, pathos, logos) used and name three advertising propaganda techniques (bandwagon, name-calling, card stacking) in each piece.

Materials:

Library of Congress- Russian and U.S. posters from the 1950s.

Procedures and elements: Students will analyze primary source posters, magazine advertisements, and T.V. commercials from the Cold War Era. This strategy will help students analyze visual sources, decide the meaning of these posters and ads, and who is the target of the advertising. This lesson will include a poster analysis in which students explain what they notice about each source, its context, intended audience, and purpose. Students will then search for other posters and ads online to find the meaning, whom the posters target, and how different ideological beliefs collide. This lesson will also include examining T.V. advertising during the 1950s to analyze propaganda techniques.

This activity will use the propaganda visual analysis for each poster or advertisement, and students will individually answer various questions to list different propaganda techniques used for the image. This strategy will help students learn about U.S. and Soviet/Russian relations during the Cold War with visual media as primary sources using historical background and digital resources. This strategy is to support the teaching of this critical period in U.S. history through visuals that convey the U.S./USSR perspectives to encourage inquiry-based learning through the concepts of visual representation, national identity, and media.

Lesson 3- Domestic Life

To what extent did the Cold War shape American and Soviet domestic life in the 1950s using the kitchen debate?

Objective: In this lesson, students will continue discussing Communism and capitalism. Students will decide how exhibits like this and the kitchen debates influenced the beliefs of Russian and the U.S. people. Teams will create a propaganda poster supporting either the Communist or capitalistic position. Then students will debate which team's propaganda poster is most effective and how the kitchen debate influenced US/USSR relations.

Materials:

Video clip of the Nixon-Khrushchev debate, transcript of The kitchen debate.

Newspapers and Magazines of the era and their coverage of the debates, including *The New York Times*, *Life*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *USSR Izvestiia* newspaper.

Procedure and elements: This activity will enable students to debate the following questions: How did Khrushchev hope the exhibit might improve relations between the United States and the Soviet Union? How did Nixon think Soviet visitors would respond to the exhibition? Why does Nixon believe communication, especially television, is necessary for both nations? How is Khrushchev's claim that American homes only last 20 years, and what is his criticism of capitalism? How does Nixon respond? Students will read and analyze various newspaper articles and the event coverage for their arguments.

The culminating activity for this unit will be a class-wide debate using duck, duck, and debate. This strategy will help students to consider how the Soviets and the Americans perceived the Cold War, respectively. Using documents from primary and secondary sources, students will analyze these sources and represent viewpoints to back up their claims. Using the video clip of the Nixon-Khrushchev debate and transcript, students examine various speeches during the kitchen debates, as these debates took place over several days in multiple locations. Students will learn how domestic culture and global politics collided during the Cold-War era.

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Appendix on Implementing District Standards:

USH.6.1 Analyze the origins of international alliances and efforts at containment of Communism following World War II.

USH.6.1A Identify the origins of Cold War confrontations between the Soviet Union and the United States, including the leadership of President Harry Truman, the Iron Curtain, and the Marshall Plan.

USH.6.2 Describe domestic events related to the Cold War and its aftermath.

USH.6.2A Summarize the reasons for the public fear of communist influence within the United States and how politicians capitalized on this fear, including the leadership of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and the Second Red Scare.

USH.6.2C. Evaluate the continuing role of radio, television, and other mass media with the Nixon and Kennedy debates as part of the 1960s and later elections.

USH.6.4 Analyze the political and economic impact of President Nixon's foreign policies, including détente.

WH.3.4-Analyze how the Industrial Revolution gave rise to socialism and Communism, including the ideas and influence and influence of Karl Marx.

WH.4.7 Evaluate the effects of World War II, including military and economic power shifts, the purposes of the United Nations and NATO, and the origins and escalation of the Cold War.

WH.5.5 Evaluate the people, events, and conditions leading to the end of the Cold War, including the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union

4. Read Critically and Interpret Informational Sources

Students will engage in the critical, active reading of grade-level primary and secondary sources related to key social studies concepts, including systematic analysis and interpretation of the informational source.

4A. Students will understand, evaluate, and synthesize textual sources to get and refine knowledge in social studies.

4.A.9-12.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, evaluating features such as author, date, and origin of the information.

4.A.9-12.2 Analyze information from visual, oral, digital, and interactive texts (e.g., maps, charts, images, political cartoons, videos) to conclude and defend arguments.

4.A.9-12.3- Appropriately apply and show understanding of academic vocabulary in a social studies context.

4B. Students will apply critical reading and thinking skills to interpret, evaluate, and respond to a variety of complex texts from historical, ethnic, and global perspectives

4.B.9-12.3 Actively listen, evaluate, and analyze a speaker's message, asking questions while engaged in collaborative discussions and debates about social studies topics and texts.

5.B.9-12.3 Construct visual and multimedia presentations using various media forms to enhance understanding of findings and reasoning for diverse audiences.

Notes

¹ Spufford, Francis. *Red Plenty*, 5

² Magnúsdóttir, Rósa. *Enemy Number One*, 119

³ Ibid., 120

⁴ [pbs/wgbh/americanexperience.org](https://pbs.org/wgbh/amex/americanexperience.org)

⁵ www.archive.gov.

⁶ Belmonte, Laura A. *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War*. 92

⁷ Ibid., 185

⁸ "The Kitchen Debates." *Newsweek*. August 3, 1959

⁹ Phillips, Sarah T., and Shane Hamilton. *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics: A Brief History with Documents*.

¹⁰ "How the Kitchen Debate Gave a New Meaning to the Cold War Home Front." *Time*. Last modified July 24, 2019. <https://time.com/5630567/kitchen-debate-women/>.

¹¹ "The Kitchen Debates." *Newsweek*. August 3, 1959. This article provides a detailed transcript of the infamous debate.

¹² Phillips, Sarah T., and Shane Hamilton. *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics: A Brief History with Documents*. 98

¹³ Ibid., 10

¹⁴ Ibid., 8

¹⁵ Ibid., 10

¹⁶ Ibid., 35

¹⁷ <https://ushistoryscene.com/article/levittown>

¹⁸ <https://census.gov>

¹⁹ <https://www.history.com>

²⁰ <http://ushistoryscene.com/article/levittown>

²¹ Auclert, Raphaëlle. "The 'Armed Thaw': Cultural War under Peaceful Coexistence A Comparative Study between the 1950s and Today."

²² Phillips, Sarah T., and Shane Hamilton. *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics: A Brief History with Documents*.⁹

²³ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/cold-war-fashion>

²⁴ www.archives.gov

²⁵ Phillips, Sarah T., and Shane Hamilton. *The Kitchen Debate and Cold War Consumer Politics: A Brief History with Documents*.¹⁸

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