High School U.S. History
Origins of the Cold War and the Booming 50s
Content Module

This content module has been curated using existing Law-Related Education materials along with images available for public use. This resource has been provided to assist educators with delivering the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for high school U.S. History. This content module may be utilized as a tool to help supplement instruction. It is not intended to be a complete unit of study.

Note: Arrows have been placed throughout the module to indicate areas where students should interact with the module.

All rights reserved. Permission is granted for these materials to be reproduced for classroom use only. No part of these materials may be reproduced in any other form or for any other purpose without the written consent of Law Related Education, State Bar of Texas.

For additional information on the LRE Program, please go to www.texaslre.org
The Origins of the Cold War and the Booming 50s

This module will explore the origins and events of the Cold War, along with the social and economic changes the nation experienced in the booming 50s.

**Picturing the Cold War**—Before we look at the specifics of the 50s, create a personal illustration or definition of what you think the difference is between a “hot war” and a “cold war.”

---

**Characteristics of the 1950s**

As you read the paragraph below, circle key words that help you understand the 50s decade.

Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union entered a 46-year period of tension known as the Cold War. While the two “superpowers” never actually fought each other, they backed opposing sides in regional wars around the globe, built competing alliances for support and security, raced to amass the strongest arsenal of nuclear arms, and be the first in space exploration. One of the first regional wars involved the U.S. fighting with South Korea against North Korea in an attempt to prevent the spread of communism throughout the entire peninsula. At the same time, the nation, weary from World War II, experienced economic growth in both agriculture and business, a population explosion known as the “baby boom,” and a growing middle class. These events changed the way Americans lived and worked forever.

Use key ideas from the paragraph to write three specific questions. Two of your questions should deal with foreign affairs in the 50s and one question should deal with the domestic characteristics of the decade.

1. (foreign)

2. (foreign)

3. (domestic)
Two Presidents of the 1950's

Two Presidents served during the decade of the 50s, one Democrat and one Republican. Each faced critical foreign and domestic issues symbolic of the changes occurring in the post-World War II United States.

As you read about the two presidents, look for details you could use to compare and contrast the two.

Harry Truman was elected Vice President when Franklin Roosevelt won his fourth presidential term in 1944. He had previously served as one of the Democratic Senators from Missouri. When President Roosevelt suddenly died in 1945, one year into the fourth term, Vice President Truman succeeded him. Truman’s most immediate task was to bring an end to World War II. Germany was a few weeks from surrender, but Japan still continued to fight. Truman had been kept largely in the dark about the development of the atomic bomb. The first major decision he faced was whether or not to use it to force Japan to surrender. Even though his decision was controversial, it did bring an end to the deadly war. By 1947, Truman became convinced that Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader and one of the Allies who helped win World War II, was not to be trusted. He feared Stalin was planning to spread communism throughout Europe. During the six years of Truman’s presidency, this fear came true and the Cold War began in earnest.

At home, Truman had to deal with the economic and social changes resulting from the war. The economy and population began to boom. With these changes, social unrest especially with African Americans began to occur. In 1946 President Truman created the President’s Committee on Civil Rights. This committee called for desegregation in American society, anti-lynching legislation, and an end to poll taxes. In 1948 President Truman issued an Executive Order banning racial discrimination in the hiring practices in the federal government and ordered the desegregation of the military. In 1947 Jackie Robinson became the first African American to play Major League baseball. These changes marked significant steps in the early years of the Civil Rights movement, but much more was to come in the struggle for equality. (NOTE—we will fully discuss the Civil Rights movement over time in the next module.) The seven years President Truman served had both highs and lows. Even though Truman could have run for re-election in 1952, he chose not to because his popularity had reached a new low.

“I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation (oppression) by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to the economic stability and orderly political processes.”

Harry S. Truman

March 12, 1947, Speech to Congress
Two Presidents of the 1950’s

Two Presidents served during the decade of the 50s, one Democrat and one Republican. Each faced critical foreign and domestic issues symbolic of the changes occurring in post-World War II United States.

**As you read about the two presidents, look for details you could use to compare and contrast the two.**

When President Truman chose not to run for re-election in 1952, the Democrats nominated Adlai Stevenson and the Republicans nominated popular World War II hero, General Dwight D. Eisenhower. In fact, both parties had wanted Eisenhower as their candidate because of his popularity with the American people. When Eisenhower won the election, he became the first Republican president since Herbert Hoover left office with the election of Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. As with Truman, President Eisenhower faced ongoing Cold War tensions with the U.S.S.R. that soon spread into the Middle East. President Eisenhower agreed with President Truman that communism must be contained and prevented from spreading. The major difference between the two was that Eisenhower believed the U.S. must be willing to go to the “brink” of war if necessary.

At home, President Eisenhower was more restrained than Truman in his use of executive powers to handle the domestic issues in the United States. Eisenhower, like Truman, had to deal with the growing civil rights struggle in the nation. President Eisenhower had to enforce the Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* to end segregation in the nation’s public schools. Even with this Supreme Court decision, the issue of integration continued to cause a great deal of dissension in the nation. President Eisenhower oversaw the creation of NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Association), which oversaw the U.S. effort to catch up with the Soviets after they launched the first satellite into space. However, the major domestic accomplishment in his administration was to establish the Interstate Highway System throughout the United States. This system had a major impact on the American economy that continues today.

Personally, President Eisenhower and President Truman did not like each other. Their disagreements ranged from Truman’s handling of the Korean War and the threat of communism in the United States, to personal and insignificant things such as the type of hat each planned to wear at Eisenhower’s inauguration. This tension was evident when Eisenhower, just about to take the oath of office asked, “I wonder who is responsible for my son John being ordered to Washington from [his military duties in] Korea? I wonder who is trying to embarrass me?” Just a few minutes from being replaced as President and Commander-in-Chief, Truman responded in the third person, “The President of the United States thought it was right and proper for your son to witness the swearing-in of his father to the Presidency. If you think someone was trying to embarrass you by this order, then the President assumes full responsibility.” The relationship between the two remained strained until eventually, they put aside their differences at the 1963 funeral of assassinated President John Kennedy.

*May the light of freedom, coming to all darkened lands, flame brightly—until at last the darkness is no more. There is another theory which states that this has already happened.*

— Dwight D. Eisenhower
Comparing the Two Presidents of the 1950’s

Complete the Venn diagram below finding 3 similarities for the intersecting parts of the circles and three differences for the part of the circle representing each president.

Harry Truman
(1884-1972)

Dwight D. Eisenhower
(1890-1969)
**Understanding the terms associated with the 1950s**

*Read the definition of each term related to the study of the 1950s. In the third column, draw a personal symbol or illustration to help you remember the term. As you come across these terms in later passages, don’t forget you can look back at these definitions for clarity.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Personal Symbol or Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arms Race</td>
<td>Race between U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to develop the largest stockpile of nuclear weapons; both believed whichever nation had the largest arsenal of weapons would serve as a deterrent to those wanting to attack</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boom</td>
<td>The population explosion that occurred when soldiers returned from WWII; resulted in major economic and social changes to life in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berlin Airlift</td>
<td>U.S. military air operation that brought food and other needed supplies to West Berlin after the government of East Germany cut West Berlin off from supply routes; lasted 11 months</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacklist</td>
<td>List of entertainment professionals, who were denied employment during time of the McCarthy hearings, because of alleged association with the communist party</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War</td>
<td>Political hostility between the U.S. and its allies and the Soviet Union and its allies that stopped just short of open warfare; both engaged in threats and propaganda against the opposing side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Containment Policy</td>
<td>Truman’s policy, based on the theory that communist governments would fall if they were not able to expand their influence on other countries; believed this policy was better than directly challenging them in military conflicts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Understanding the terms associated with the 1950s

*Read the definition of each term related to the study of the 1950s. In the third column, draw a personal symbol or illustration to help you remember the term. As you come across these terms in later passages, don’t forget you can look back at these definitions for clarity.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Personal Symbol or Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)</td>
<td>A neutral area in which warring nations agree to remove any military forces; The 38th parallel in Korea was the DMZ and served as the boundary between North and South Korea after the partition.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domino Theory</td>
<td>Hypothesis that if one country falls to communism it will lead to neighboring countries suffering the same consequence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GI Bill of Rights</td>
<td>Bill passed to assist returning World War II soldiers readjust to civilian life; included unemployment assistance, money for education and occupational training programs, and low-cost loans for housing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H-Bomb (Hydrogen bomb)</td>
<td>A nuclear bomb a 1000 times more powerful than the atomic bomb; first tested by the U.S. in 1951, quickly followed by the Soviets testing theirs; became the most sought after weapon in the arms race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)</td>
<td>Congressional Committee set up to investigate alleged communist activity in the United States</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Boom</td>
<td>Increase in housing construction caused primarily by the low interest loans provided to returning servicemen and the growth of suburbs resulting from the interstate highway system</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding the terms associated with the 1950s

Read the definition of each term related to the study of the 1950s. In the third column, draw a personal symbol or illustration to help you remember the term. As you come across these terms in later passages, don’t forget you can look back at these definitions for clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Personal Symbol or Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Iron Curtain</td>
<td>Symbolic term used by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to describe what happened to Eastern European countries falling under the control of the Soviet Union at the conclusion of WWII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McCarthyism</td>
<td>Campaign by Senator Joseph McCarthy to find and prosecute alleged communists believed to be living and working in the U.S. government and other U.S. institutions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marshall Plan</td>
<td>Plan by Secretary of State George Marshall to provide economic aid to rebuild Western Europe after WWII; believed to help stop the spread of communism into countries deeply affected by WWII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North American Treaty Organization (NATO)</td>
<td>Military alliance of 30 European nations, the U.S. and Canada, that pledged to respond with assistance if any member nation is attacked; primarily developed as a protection against the growing threat of communism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuremberg Trials</td>
<td>International trials that occurred at the conclusion of World War II to hold high ranking Nazi officials accountable for war crimes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Read the definition of each term related to the study of the 1950s. In the third column, draw a personal symbol or illustration to help you remember the term. As you come across these terms in later passages, don’t forget you can look back at these definitions for clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Personal Symbol or Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partition</td>
<td>The practice of changing the political boundaries to create two separate areas of a country because groups claim the same land as their homeland; Examples— North and South Korea; North and South Vietnam; Israel and Palestine; India and Pakistan; carried out in an attempt to bring peace to the area but often resulted in continued conflict</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polio Vaccine</td>
<td>Developed by Dr. Jonas Salk in 1955 to protect people from contracting polio, a disease which often resulted in paralysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red China</td>
<td>Nickname given the mainland of China after it was taken over by Communists in 1949—the official name of the country was the People’s Republic of China headed by Mao Zedong</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEATO</td>
<td>Southeast Asia Treaty Organization formed to defend the region from the spread of communism; members included Australia, France, Great Britain, neighboring Southeast Asian countries and the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Red Scare</td>
<td>A second round of fear occurring in the U.S. and other countries over the growing power and expansion of communist countries following WWII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Understanding the terms associated with the 1950s

Read the definition of each term related to the study of the 1950s. In the third column, draw a personal symbol or illustration to help you remember the term. As you come across these terms in later passages, don’t forget you can look back at these definitions for clarity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocabulary Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Personal Symbol or Illustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space Race</td>
<td>Race between the U.S.S.R and the U.S. to achieve firsts in space; began in 1957 when the Soviets launched the first satellite (Sputnik) into space; the U.S. responded with launch of the Explorer satellite a few months later and the race to the moon was on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburbs</td>
<td>A small residential community at the outskirts of a city; created when the housing boom occurred at the end of WWII</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations</td>
<td>International organization created after WWII to keep the peace; replaced the League of Nations which had failed to prevent World War II</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warsaw Pact</td>
<td>A military alliance of communist nations created by the Soviet Union to counter NATO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1950’s

Our study of the 1950s will be divided between foreign and domestic affairs during the decade. Foreign affairs in the 1950s were dominated by the Cold War. To understand the origins of the Cold War, we must first look at the situation as World War II came to an end. Read the next three sections describing the end of the war and complete the questions that follow each paragraph.

Plans for the End of World War II

As you read, highlight the 4 parts of the plan agreed to by the Allied powers at the Potsdam Meeting toward the end of the war.

As World War II drew to a close, the Allied leaders Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of England, and Harry Truman who had succeeded Franklin D. Roosevelt as President met at Potsdam to continue to make plans of what to do with a defeated Germany. Preliminary plans for how to handle a defeated Germany had begun at Yalta, which President Roosevelt had attended without Vice President Truman. At the Potsdam Conference, Stalin agreed to allow democratic elections in the countries in Eastern Europe, including Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary.

Secondly, all three agreed to divide Germany into American, French, British, and Soviet occupation zones. They also agreed to divide the capital of Berlin into four zones even though the city was located in the Soviet’s eastern zone of occupation. Next, the leaders agreed that the war crimes committed by the Nazis during the war had to be punished as well as a program conducted to remove all Nazi influence from Germany. This resulted in the Nuremberg Trials held from November 1945 to October 1946 to try the top Nazi leaders. Twelve of these were executed, seven were given prison sentences of life or terms of ten years and up.

Finally the three agreed to the U.S. idea for the creation of the United Nations to replace the ineffective League of Nations as a strong international organization to maintain global peace. The headquarters for the U.N. was New York City. The organization consisted of a general assembly of member nations and a security council of select nations charged with maintaining international peace and security. The security council included the Soviet Union, Great Britain, the United States as permanent members, with other nations selected on a rotating basis.

In conclusion, which part of the Allied leaders’ plan would you have been most likely to support? Explain your choice.

Which part would you have been least likely to support? Explain your choice.
As you read the paragraph below, look for clues to identify the biggest concerns of the Soviet, British, and U.S. leaders at the close of the war.

However, by the end of the war, Stalin began to secure the eastern border of the Soviet Union by making the occupied Eastern European countries satellite nations. He did this to buffer and protect the Soviet Union from any future invasions. Stalin was determined to permanently weaken Germany to ensure they would never be able to invade the Soviet Union again. These satellite nations included the countries of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and finally East Germany. To accomplish this, Stalin changed his mind and decided not to allow free democratic elections and continued the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe.

In 1946, alarmed by the actions of the Soviet Union, Winston Churchill delivered the “Iron Curtain” speech saying, “…an iron curtain has descended across the continent.” He believed the Soviets had established a totalitarian and communist Eastern Europe, cut off from the democratic and capitalistic Western Europe. The United States, worried that all of Europe might fall to communism, reversed the long-standing isolationist foreign policy and committed to a plan to help rebuild Western Europe.

In the appropriate column, identify each nation’s concern and how each nation responded.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Concern(s)</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soviet Union</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Changes to Germany and the Capital Berlin

As you read the paragraph below, pay attention to the changes to Germany and the capital city of Berlin.

By 1948, the tension over the occupation of Germany intensified between the Soviets and the U.S. The U.S., French, and British zones of Germany joined together into the Federal Republic of Germany, better known as West Germany. The zone occupied by the Soviets became the German Democratic Republic or East Germany. As for the capital Berlin, which also had been divided into four zones and was located deep within East Germany, the British, French, and the Americans combined their sectors of the city into West Berlin with the Soviets in East Berlin. The Soviets responded to this action by blockading West Berlin in hopes of gaining complete control of the capital. The two million people living in West Berlin became hostages of the Soviets, unable to get necessary supplies.

In 1948, as the situation grew more serious, the United States organized a massive airlift to fly supplies into West Berlin for the next year. By the end of the Berlin Airlift in 1949, 277,000 flights had delivered 2 million tons of food and supplies to people in West Berlin. Many thought that World War III might break out over this crisis. However, in 1949 the Soviets lifted their blockade of Berlin. As a result, the nation of Germany was now divided into East and West Germany and the city of Berlin, East and West Berlin. This remained the situation until the late 1980s.

Based on the details in the paragraph, use the map of Europe in the Cold War to illustrate the Iron Curtain and color the countries that were considered Soviet satellites all one color (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany). Label the Soviet Union and color the same as the satellite countries.
Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan

After six years of fighting the Nazis, the economies of European nations were in shambles and their people faced disease and starvation. In 1947, President Truman persuaded Congress to take serious steps to bring financial aid to those countries in their efforts to rebuild. He also felt by providing this aid, it would help them resist Stalin’s plans to dominate Europe. Secretary of State George Marshall was given the task of devising a massive aid package to help these nations rebuild their economy. The Marshall Plan is given credit for also boosting the U.S. economy, helping to rebuild Europe, and preventing the spread of communism into Western Europe.

This idea of coming to the aid of countries while trying to “contain” the spread of Soviet communism became known as the Truman Doctrine. This doctrine defined the U.S. foreign policy for the next twenty years. To support this doctrine, the U.S., Canada, and countries in Western Europe created NATO (North American Treaty Organization) as a military defense alliance. Stalin responded by creating his own military defense alliance of the Eastern European satellite countries known as the Warsaw Pact.

The Truman Doctrine marks a huge change foreign policy and the role of the U.S. in the world. Beginning in the later part of the 19th through the first half of the 20th century, the majority of Americans wanted to stay isolated from any world conflicts. Beginning with the Truman Doctrine, the U.S. now played a major role in world affairs.

https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War#/media/File:Cold_war_europe_military_alliances_map_en.png

**Place an X on the continuum below to identify which foreign policy position you agree is the best for the U.S. and briefly explain your reason.**

| Isolationist Doctrine |  | Truman Doctrine |

I placed my “X” on the line above because......
Korean War 1950 to 1953

As you read the following, highlight the differences between President Truman and General Douglas MacArthur.

While efforts seemed to stop the spread of communism in Western Europe for the time being, this was not true in Asia. By 1949 mainland China fell to the communists after driving the opposing forces to the island of Taiwan off the Chinese coast. President Truman refused to recognize the People’s Republic of China and its communist leader Mao Zedong. The United States also blocked the entry of communist China, now referred to as Red China, into the United Nations. Instead, the U.S. recognized the island of Taiwan as the official Chinese government. This continued to be the official U.S. policy until the 1970s. As feared, communism next spread to China’s neighbor to the south, the peninsula of Korea. When the northern section of Korea fell to the communists, a partition of the peninsula was set up at the 38th parallel that divided the peninsula into North and South Korea. The 38th parallel became a demilitarized zone, known as the DMZ, to buffer and protect South Korea.

In 1950, the North Korean army supported with weapons from the Soviet government crossed the 38th parallel in an attempt to keep the peninsula under communist control. Truman sent U.S. troops to join with the United Nations peacekeeping troops under the command of General Douglas MacArthur to prevent the take-over of South Korea. President Truman and General MacArthur quickly began to disagree over the best course of action in the war. General MacArthur wanted to invade China as well as use atomic weapons, but Truman felt that was too dangerous. When General MacArthur defied Truman’s order by getting too close to the Chinese border, President Truman fired him. This controversial firing of General MacArthur, a World War II hero, was opposed by many in the United States and contributed to the decline in President Truman’s approval rating.

The continuing war in Korea became a campaign issue when General Eisenhower ran for the presidency in 1952. One of Eisenhower’s campaign promises was to end the Korean War as soon as possible. After he was elected, he fulfilled that promise by signing a ceasefire in 1953. The agreement returned Korea to the status quo before the war with a communist government in North Korea and a non-communist government in South Korea. The 38th parallel again served as the border, with a demilitarized zone (DMZ) along the boundary. Over 54,000 thousand soldiers lost their lives in the war. Many disagreed with the compromise and were disappointed at the lack of a clear victory. However, the boundary between North and South Korea set by the cease-fire still holds today.
After reading about the differences between President Truman and General MacArthur, as well as analyzing the maps above, decide whose position on the conduct of the war do you most agree. Defend your position in the space provided.

President Truman’s idea of containment by defending South Korea to stop the spread of communism.

General MacArthur’s idea of escalating the war by invading North Korea to end the threat of communism on the peninsula.

I agree with ________________________________ because
Origins of the Arms Race

While other countries were trying to develop an atomic bomb, the U.S. was the first to succeed and use it to end World War II. Joseph Stalin became upset with the Americans when they would not share the technology with him, since he was one of the U.S. allies in the war. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union continued to experiment and eventually developed their own nuclear weapons. The tension over nuclear weapons intensified in 1952 when the United States tested the even more powerful hydrogen bomb. The Soviets followed with their own successful explosion of an H-bomb in 1953. The arms race between the two nations accelerated, and other nations tried to build their own stockpile of nuclear weapons as well. For the first time in history, humankind had the ability to end civilization. Citizens in both nations became even more fearful and distrustful as tensions escalated and leaders planned for nuclear attacks and war, all the while stockpiling the most destructive weapons the world had ever seen.

Students practice “Duck and Cover” drills in case of an atomic attack.

Family in bomb shelter in their home, prepared in case of a nuclear attack.

Pretend you are a person in either of the pictures above. Identify who you are, what you are doing, what you think might happen next, and what you hope happens.
Following World War II in 1948, the United Nations recommended a partition of Palestine into the Arab state of Palestine and the Jewish state of Israel. The British had previously been in charge of this area. Tension and fighting between the Arabs and Jews in this area began in 1947, and as more and more Jews from around the world wanted to return to their homeland, the fighting escalated. When the head of the Jewish group, David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the establishment of Israel, President Truman recognized the new nation the same day. Palestine and other Arab nations immediately responded by declaring they were dedicated to the destruction of Israel and attacked.

At first the United States attempted to stay out of the conflict, but as the war continued, the U.S. began selling weapons and sending military advice to Israel. Earlier in 1947 the Soviets had extended their influence by supplying Egypt and other Arab nations in the Middle East with arms and pledging their support if needed. As a result the Middle East became another regional area involved in the Cold War struggle between the two superpowers.

Study the map of the Middle East to answer these questions:

1. Predict Israel’s ability to maintain control of their new nation given its geographic location.

2. What do you think will have to happen for Israel to maintain control?

3. Which nations pose the most serious threat to Israel?
Domestic Affairs in the 50s

Dealing with the aftermath of World War II and the growing threat of communism were also at the heart of many of the domestic events of the 50s.

GIs’ Return

The United States changed drastically when the war was over and the soldiers returned home. With memories of the economic difficulties in the years between the world wars still fresh, government leaders were concerned that the influx of soldiers seeking employment would harm the economy. In response to this situation, Congress passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, better known as the G.I. Bill. The legislation provided financial assistance as soldiers returned home, and allowed the nation to express appreciation for their service. This sweeping legislation provided financial assistance for veterans to pursue educational and training opportunities to prepare them for the new economic scene in the United States. This resulted in more people than ever having the opportunity for a college education which previously had only available to the wealthy. This emphasis on education and training also helped to lessen the impact of the 15 million veterans returning home and immediately looking for work. As a result, the economy exploded due increased production from the newly trained workers and the ever-increasing demand for weapons due to the military industrial complex created by the arms race.

The G.I. Bill also provided low interest loans to buy a home, which resulted in a 50% increase in home ownership for whites, but not for people of color. Thousands took advantage of these loans to purchase a new home located in the areas outside the urban center. These areas were called suburbs and dramatically changed the social structure of America. While many women filled the factory jobs when their husbands were away fighting and chose to return home, many more stayed in the workforce which created economic changes for the American family. Now a family could bring in two paychecks rather than one. Finally, a dramatic increase in the birthrate changed the demographics of the U.S. These “baby boomers” would become the largest demographic group in the United States, impacting housing, schools, spending habits, and culture for years to come.

Using the information from the GIs’ Return paragraph to evaluate the social, economic, and political change you feel had the longest lasting impact on the U.S. Explain your choice.

Social Change--

Economic Change--

Political Change (Hint--Think how the role of the government has changed since the Depression)
McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare

As you read the following, highlight key details to explain “McCarthyism” and the fear that followed.

The Russian Revolution in 1917 and the communist takeover of Russia’s government created the First Red Scare, which involved the Palmer Raids to capture and arrest suspected communists in the United States. In 1938, Congress had created the HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) to continue investigations of the possible communist activity in the United States, starting a Second Red Scare in the nation. In 1948, a member of the Communist Party USA and a Soviet spy testified before HUAC, accusing several influential people of being members of the Communist Party USA. Alger Hiss, a respected government official, denied the allegation but was tried, convicted for perjury and sentenced to five years in prison.

A Wisconsin Senator by the name of Joseph McCarthy seized on this growing fear as a result of the tensions of the Cold War. Speaking in 1950, McCarthy claimed there were over 205 card carrying members of the Communist Party working in the State Department. This set off new paranoia and accusations against Americans in the government, the army, the motion picture industry, as well as literary figures and prominent intellectuals in American society. Senator McCarthy’s technique, called McCarthyism, included making sweeping accusations, employing guilt by association, and using documents out of context as supporting evidence. While some of the accused people had briefly dabbled with the Communist Party in the 1930s during the Depression, they quickly recognized the difference between the ideals of communism versus the reality of putting it into practice.

Over 250 actors, writers, and directors were “blacklisted” and denied work as a result of McCarthy’s accusations. McCarthy even accused former general and Secretary of State George Marshall and others in the military of being instruments of the Soviets. He threatened to have Truman impeached for being soft on communism. He finally was stopped in the first years of the Eisenhower administration, when his attacks on army officials intensified. He was condemned and censored by the U.S. Senate. McCarthy died a few short years after leaving the Senate. Even with Senator McCarthy gone, the search for suspected Communist spies continued. In 1954, Julius and Ethyl Rosenberg were convicted and executed for allegedly giving atomic bomb secrets to the Soviets.
McCarthyism and the Second Red Scare

After reading about McCarthyism and the fear that followed, use the space below to draw a political cartoon that illustrates some aspect of this event.
Constitutional Changes

The effects of having the Democrats in control of the White House for 17 continuous years led conservatives to push for a Constitutional amendment to limit the number of terms and years a president might serve. President Roosevelt had been elected to four terms and during that time had consolidated power in the executive branch as he dealt with the Great Depression and World War II. In 1951, Congress proposed, and the states ratified, the 22nd Amendment. This amendment limited a president to two terms or ten years total if he/she as the Vice President assumed the presidency due to the death or departure of the president. Roosevelt died one year into his fourth term and Truman finished the last three years of that term. Truman was then elected to his own term of four years in 1948 for a total of seven years as president. He would have been able to run for another term in 1952 because of a “grandfather” clause in the amendment that excluded him from the provision of not being able to serve more than ten years. However, he opted not to run again because of his low approval rating with the American people.

Since the president is now limited to two terms, should members of Congress also be limited to a certain amount of terms?

If so, how many two-year terms should a member of the House be allowed to serve and how many six-year terms should a member of the Senate be allowed to serve? Explain your reasoning.

Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company v. Sawyer

During the Korean War, President Truman declared a “limited” national emergency to be sure that nothing interrupted the production of any material necessary for the war effort. At the time, the steelworkers union and owners and management were involved in a labor dispute over wages and the price of steel. When they could not resolve their differences, the steelworkers union called for a strike. President Truman issued an executive order directing the Secretary of Commerce, Charles Sawyer to take over the steel mills as steel was vital for military efforts in Korea and the fight against communism. The owners sued and the case eventually ended in the Supreme Court where the Court ruled 6-3 in favor of the steel mills believing the president had overextended his Constitutional power and authority in seizing the mills.

What do you see as the strongest argument for Truman’s seizure of the steel mills?

The strongest argument against his seizure?

How would you have voted had you been on the Supreme Court and heard this case?
Interstate Highway Act

While General Eisenhower was serving in Europe, he was impressed with the Autobahn in Germany as a necessary part of a national defense system. Construction on the German Autobahn started in the 1930s during the Weimar Republic. When Hitler came to power, he saw the benefits of the highway system to the economy and supported continued construction. During the war, construction slowed but still continued with work done by concentration camp workers and other forced labor. However, the Autobahn suffered significant damage during the war. After the war, the West German government repaired most of the damage to their portion of Autobahn as well as restarted the project to complete construction. It helped their economy to recover from the war.

In 1954 President Eisenhower appointed a committee to study and propose an interstate highway system after his experiences in Europe. In 1956 Congress passed the Federal Aid Highway Act and construction of an interstate highway system began. The effects of the interstate highway cannot be underestimated. Dependence on the railroads as the major means of transportation declined. Living in the suburbs with access to larger and less expensive housing was readily available. Tourism dramatically expanded along with all the necessary services to accommodate travel. New businesses developed along the highways.

While it is easy to see the benefits of the Interstate Highway system to life in America, what are three problems that might develop as a result of the highway system?

1. 
2. 
3. 

Looking Back

In conclusion, look back at the questions on page 2 you wanted answered concerning the 1950s at the beginning of the module. How would you now answer each?

1. 
2. 
3. 