

National Security vs Personal Freedom (HUAC Investigations)

What is more important - national security or personal freedom?

Step 1: Hook

1. Show students the video - [American Masters: Trumbo/HUAC testimony](#) This short video clip shows Dalton Trumbo being questioned by HUAC.
2. Have students discuss with a partner the following questions
 - a. What do you think Dalton Trumbo is being questioned about?
 - b. Does this “trial” appear to be a fair one?
 - c. Does Dalton Trumbo appear to feel that he is being treated fairly?
 - d. How would you feel if you were being questioned in this way?

Step 2: Background

- Give students a copy of the background essay to read to get a general idea about the Cold War and McCarthyism.
- Annotate or analyze the background question with the students to get them thinking about what was going on during this time period. Have students add their thoughts, questions and connections to the text.
- Select one of the videos from this list to use as a general explanation about McCarthyism and HUAC. You could lead a short discussion about the video when finished. Answer any questions that students have.

[What is McCarthyism? And how did it happen?](#)

This video explains Cold War fears of Communism, McCarthyism and HUAC investigations.

[HUAC Explained \(House Un-American Activities Committee\)](#)

This video goes into a lot of detail about HUAC and the investigations.

[Red Scare and HUAC](#)

This video uses newsreel video to explain the Red Scare and HUAC.

Step 3: Essential Question - What is more important national security or personal freedom?

Explain the question to students, making sure that they understand what the terms national security and personal freedom mean.

Students could answer a question on what they believe to be more important on a Google Form, whiteboard vote, pick a side or respond to a Padlet question to express their opinion.

Step 4: Sources

Supporting question - What were the reasons for the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations? (Suggest that these documents be given to students first.)

1. Give students Sources 2,4,5,7, and 10. These sources give reasons for the investigations by HUAC. Students can answer the document questions on their own paper and complete the graphic organizer. (Step 5)

Supporting question - What were the reasons against the House Un-American Activities Committee investigations?

1. Give students Sources 1,3,6,8, and 11. These sources give reasons against the investigations by HUAC. Students can answer the document questions on their own paper and complete the graphic organizer. (Step 5)

Supporting question - What was the American public's response to the House Un-American Activities Committee?

1. Give students Source 9. This source is a Gallup Poll which shows the opinion of the public about the HUAC Investigations. Students can answer the document questions on their own paper and complete the graphic organizer. (Step 5)

Supporting question - What inferences can you make about Harry S. Truman's response to HUAC?

1. After looking at all of the sources have students discuss what Harry Truman did in response to the HUAC investigations.

Step 5: Graphic organizer: have students fill in the graphic organizer as they analyze the documents:

- Column 1: Have students fill in the source information that is provided at the top of the documents with the sources on the graphic organizer.
- Column 2: As students are reading the sources if they find information that supports the HUAC investigations have them cite evidence from the text in this column. Have students explain their reasoning for the text that they chose.
- Column 3: As students are reading the sources if they find information that is against the HUAC investigations have them cite evidence from the text in this column. Have students explain their reasoning for the text that they chose.
- Column 4: As students are reading the sources if they find information that is both for and against the HUAC investigations have them cite evidence from the text in this column. Have students explain their reasoning for the text that they chose.
- Column 5: As students are reading the sources if they find information that is strictly just informational text have them cite evidence from the text in this column. Have students explain their reasoning for the text that they chose.

Example:

| <u>Source Information:</u> | <u>For the House of Un-American Activities Committees:</u> | <u>Against the House of Un-American Activities Committee:</u> | <u>Supports both for and against:</u> | <u>Informational (just provides information about HUAC):</u> |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <p><u>Source 1:</u> President's News Conference- June 16, 1949, Public Papers Harry S. Truman 1945-1953</p> | | <p>HUAC requested educational institutions to submit lists of textbooks and an oath for all its faculty members. Educational freedom is being questioned.</p> | | |

Step 6: Group discussion: hold a class discussion about the essential question. Discussion could be held in different ways:

- Divide students into small groups and let them compare their graphic organizers. Let each student defend their answer to the essential questions using text based evidence.
- Label two walls in the classroom with the words “National Security” and “Personal Freedom.” Have students go to the wall in which they feel is the most important issue. Students can then discuss their reasons for choosing that wall based off of what they found in the primary sources.
- Students could answer the question again about what they believe to be more important on a Google Form, white board vote, pick a side or respond to a Padlet question to express their opinion.

Step 7: Student outcome - Suggest any of the following for students to complete at the end of the lesson.

- Students will stake a claim using one of the following formats addressing the essential question, using text based evidence to support their claim. Students should cite sources throughout their claims from the primary source documents (Suggest having students review graphic organizers.)
- Write a letter to Truman as one of his advisors - what should he do about the HUAC investigations? Should they be stopped or allowed to continue?

- Write a newspaper account of the HUAC investigations that might appear in a newspaper in Hollywood or in Washington, D.C.
- Write a diary as someone involved in the HUAC investigations, explaining what is happening and how you feel about it. (Choices: Hollywood actor or writer, FBI investigator, member of HUAC)

Additional Student Outcomes:

1. Design a museum exhibit about the HUAC Investigations. What should be in the exhibit? How could you design the exhibit so that it could be “hands on?”
2. Create a diorama (shoebox scene) about the HUAC investigations. Include information and 3 dimensional objects to teach others about it.
3. Create a giant timeline of the HUAC investigations which includes the events leading up to the creation of the committee and including the end of the investigations.
4. Pretend that a movie is being made about the HUAC investigations. You are in charge of creating a movie poster that would attract people to the movie. Your poster must also include some information about the airlift for those who are unaware of it.
5. Students can look at current events going on around the world and compare how personal freedoms and national securities are being tested. Students can come up with solutions to help address the current events.



Truman Presidential
Museum & Library

Answering the Question

Because document-based activities begin with a question, the most natural way to assess students' learning is to have them answer the question. Typically this involves structuring and organizing evidence in order to complete a formal essay writing. While the informational essay is certainly an important skill in a social studies classroom there are also many other valid ways to have students create well-reasoned explanations based on available evidence. Consider the following options for students to answer the guiding question.



1. Write an argumentative essay using textual evidence from the sources to argue whether national security or personal freedom is more important and explain.
2. Conduct a Socratic Seminar in which students share out information about their opinions and present their findings.
3. Lead a whole classroom discussion where students debate whether they think national security or personal freedoms are more important based off of evidence they found in the text.
4. Students can come to the Truman Library and participate in the White House Decision Center over this topic.

Additional ideas for student product:

1. Students can look at current events going on around the world and compare how personal freedoms and national securities are being tested. Students can come up with solutions to help address the current events.
2. Pretend that they are a part of the Hollywood Ten or apart of the government in charge of trying them and act out their own scenes.
3. Research and analyze other sources over this topic and extend their learning and understanding on their own.

Additional Resources:

1. https://www.historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/1946-1960/4-cwhomefront/1-mccarthyism/19480730_HUAC_Testimony_of_Elizabeth_Bentley.html
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N35IugBYH04&feature=youtu.be>
3. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?documentid=5-13&pagenumber=1
4. https://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/loyaltyprogram/documents/index.php?documentid=6-9&pagenumber=1
5. <https://youtu.be/AWeZ5SKXvj8>
6. <https://youtu.be/nJzV6-wJ3SQ>
7. <https://youtu.be/934qAW6BDt4>
8. <https://bleeckerstreetmedia.com/editorial/red-channels-hollywood-blacklist>
9. <https://archive.org/details/100thingsyoushou1949unit>
10. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/magazine/2016/02/04/how-red-scare-destroyed-small-town-teacher/OyzaMTrsxMsx54liP1YX9l/story.html>