

Title of Lesson Plan: Eisenhower, McCarthy, and the Election of 1952

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Lesson Overview:

The central focus of the lesson is the Presidential Election of 1952 and particularly the battle for Wisconsin in that year. Specifically the lesson explores future President Eisenhower's unwillingness to confront Senator Joseph McCarthy in his home state. Because I teach in Wisconsin, the story has special relevance for my students.

Lesson Objectives:

The aim of this lesson is to help students explore the difficult political situation created by McCarthy's charges of Communist infiltration in the government for soon-to-be President Eisenhower. By examining this particular episode, larger issues surrounding the political consequences of the Red Scare will be more fully understood. In addition, for students in Wisconsin, it will offer important insight into the political history of our state.

Grade Level:

This lesson is aimed at junior-senior level students in AP US History.

Standards:

The 2018 Wisconsin Social Studies Standards promote an inquiry-based approach to the various strands in Social Studies. These specifically apply to history and are applicable to this lesson:

1. Use historical evidence for determining cause and effect.
2. Analyze, recognize, and evaluate patterns of continuity and change over time and contextualization of historical events.
3. Connect past events, people, and ideas to the present, use different perspectives to draw conclusions, and suggest current implications.
4. Evaluate a variety of primary and secondary sources to interpret the historical context, intended audience, purpose, and/or author's point of view (Historical Methodology).

Historical Background:

During the late stages of the 1952 campaign, Dwight Eisenhower traveled to Wisconsin, the home state of Senator Joseph McCarthy. McCarthy, of course, helped initiate the “Red Scare” of the early 1950s and Eisenhower, though uncomfortable with McCarthy, had been cautious in his public opposition to him and his tactics. On 14 June of 1951, Senator McCarthy delivered a scathing attack on former Secretary of State George C. Marshall, a man who had been a mentor and cherished colleague of Eisenhower’s during the pre-war and war years. Though personally very angry about McCarthy’s attacks on his friend, Ike was under intense political pressure NOT to publicly defend Marshall during stops in Wisconsin. In the end, Ike deferred to McCarthy and Republican Governor Kohler, but not before the full text of his Milwaukee speech had been sent to the New York Times, including the “deleted” paragraph defending Marshall. It was an episode that Eisenhower regretted.

Materials:

The various documents will be provided.

Procedures:

- A. A “brainstorming” session will be conducted during which students will be asked to share any information that they can recall about the general topic of “McCarthyism.”
- B. Students will be presented with the documents for the lesson and given a 15- minute reading period during which they will be instructed to study the documents and make any notations on them for later reference.
- C. This is not a stand-alone activity, and students will listen and take notes on a 15-20 minute lecture I will present on the context of the 1952 election (big picture).
- D. Students will be assigned a partner for the purpose of debating the assertion in the next section. Students will flip a coin to determine which “side” they will take. Partners will have 5 minutes to make their case.
- E. Students will have 30 minutes to construct an essay response to the assertion in which they argue the opposite point of view from Step D.

Assessment and Extensions:

Upon completion of the document analysis, students will:

1. Effectively verbalize various points of view concerning Eisenhower’s actions during the campaign of 1952 related to McCarthy’s attack on Marshall;
2. Produce a succinct essay of 150-200 words supporting or refuting the following proposition: “Eisenhower was justified in not defending George Marshall in the face of McCarthyite attacks during the Wisconsin campaign swing of 1952.”

Text of Document Excerpts/Source Materials with Citations:**DOCUMENT 1: Excerpt from McCarthy's speech before the Senate on June 14, 1951**

How can we account for our present situation unless we believe that men high in this Government are concerting to deliver us to disaster? This must be the product of a great conspiracy, a conspiracy on a scale so immense as to dwarf any previous such venture in the history of man. A conspiracy of infamy so black that, when it is finally exposed, its principals shall be forever deserving of the maledictions of all honest men. It is when we return to an examination of General Marshall's record since the spring of 1942 that we approach an explanation of the carefully planned retreat from victory, Let us again review the Marshall record, as I have disclosed it from all the sources available and all of them friendly. This grim and solitary man it was who, early in World War II, determined to put his impress upon our global strategy, political and military.

It was Marshall, who, amid the din for a "second front now" from every voice of Soviet inspiration, sought to compel the British to invade across the Channel in the fall of 1942 upon penalty of our quitting the war in Europe.

It was a Marshall-sponsored memorandum, advising appeasement of Russia in Europe and the enticement of Russia into the far-eastern war, circulated at Quebec, which foreshadowed our whole course at Tehran, at Yalta, and until now in the Far East.

It was Marshall who, at Tehran, made common cause with Stalin on the strategy of the war in Europe and marched side by side with him thereafter.

It was Marshall who enjoined his chief of military mission in Moscow under no circumstances to "irritate" the Russians by asking them questions about their forces, their weapons, and their plans, while at the same time opening our schools, factories, and gradually our secrets to them in this count.

It was Marshall who sent Deane to Moscow to collaborate with Harriman in drafting the terms of the wholly unnecessary bribe paid to Stalin at Yalta.

It was Marshall, with Hiss at his elbow and doing the physical drafting of agreements at Yalta, who ignored the contrary advice of his senior, Admiral Leahy, and of MacArthur and Nimitz in

regard to the folly of a major land invasion of Japan; who submitted intelligence reports which suppressed more truthful estimates in order to support his argument, and who finally induced Roosevelt to bring Russia into the Japanese war with a bribe that reinstated Russia in its pre-1904 imperialistic position in Manchuria-an act which, in effect, signed the death warrant of the Republic of China.

It was Marshall, with Acheson and Vincent eagerly assisting, who created the China policy which, destroying China, robbed us of a great and friendly ally, a buffer against the Soviet imperialism with which we are now at war.

It was Marshall who, upon returning from a diplomatic defeat for the United States at Moscow, besought the reinstatement of forty millions in lend-lease for Russia.

It was Marshall who fixed the dividing line for Korea along the thirty-eighth parallel, a line historically chosen by Russia to mark its sphere of interest in Korea. It is Marshall's strategy for Korea which has turned that war into a pointless slaughter, reversing the dictum of Von Clausewitz and every military theorist since him that the object of a war is not merely to kill but to impose your will on the enemy.

What can be made of this unbroken series of decisions and acts contributing to the strategy of defeat? They cannot be attributed to incompetence. If Marshall were merely stupid, the laws of probability would dictate that part of his decisions would serve this country's interest. If Marshall is innocent of guilty intention, how could he be trusted to guide the defense of this country further? We have declined so precipitously in relation to the Soviet Union in the last 6 years. How much swifter may be our fall into disaster with Marshall at the helm? Where will all this stop? That is not a rhetorical question: Ours is not a rhetorical danger. Where next will Marshall carry us? It is useless to suppose that his nominal superior will ask him to resign. He cannot even dispense with Acheson. What is the objective of the great conspiracy? I think it is clear from what has occurred and is now occurring: to diminish the United States in world affairs, to weaken us militarily, to confuse our spirit with talk of surrender in the Far East and to impair our will to resist evil. To what end? To the end that we shall be contained, frustrated and finally: fall victim to Soviet intrigue from within and Russian military might from without. Is that far fetched? There have been many examples in history of rich and powerful states which have been corrupted from within, enfeebled and deceived until they were unable to resist aggression. . . .

SOURCE: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1951mccarthy-marshall.html>

DOCUMENT 2: Eisenhower's speech in Denver (September 9, 1952)

Let me be specific. I know that charges of disloyalty have, in the past, been leveled against General George C. Marshall. I have been privileged for thirty-five years to know George Marshall personally. I know him, as a man and as a soldier, to be dedicated with singular selflessness and the profoundest patriotism to the service of America. And this episode is a sobering lesson in the way freedom must not defend itself.

SOURCE: <http://academic.emporia.edu/esrs/vol51/lovett.pdf>

DOCUMENT 3: Eisenhower's "deleted paragraph" from the Milwaukee speech during the 1952 campaign (October of 1952)

The right to challenge a man's judgment carries with it no automatic right to question his honor. Here I have a case in mind. Charges of disloyalty have in the past been leveled against General George C. Marshall. I am not now discussing errors in judgment he may have made while serving in capacities other than military. But I was privileged throughout the years of World War II to know General Marshall personally as Chief of Staff of the Army. I know him, as a man and a soldier, to be dedicated with singular selflessness and the profoundest patriotism to the service of America. Here we have a sobering lesson of the way freedom must not defend itself.

SOURCE:

<http://www.eisenhower.utexas.edu/DI/McCarthy/sixthdraftDDEWlcampaignspeech.pdf>

Document 4: EISENHOWER AND McCARTHY (October 3, 1952)

Senator McCarthy shakes hands with Republican presidential nominee Dwight D. Eisenhower in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Earlier that day, Eisenhower had endorsed McCarthy's bid for re-election.



SOURCE:

<https://www.jsonline.com/picture-gallery/life/green-sheet/2017/03/10/photos-when-ike-met-joe---eisenhower-and-mccarthy-in-wisconsin-1952/98978136/>

DOCUMENT 5: SELECTED VOTE TOTALS: 1952 ELECTIONS

NATIONAL RESULTS FOR THE PRESIDENCY

Dwight D. Eisenhower (R) 33,936,234 popular votes (55.1%) 442 E.V.

Adlai E. Stevenson (D) 27,314,992 popular votes (44.4%) 89 E.V.

VARIOUS WISCONSIN RESULTS PRESIDENCY:

(R) EISENHOWER/ NIXON: 979,744 (60.95%)

(D) STEVENSON/ SPARKMAN: 622,175 (38.71%)

GOVERNOR: (R) WALTER KOHLER: 1,009,171 (63%)

(D) WILLIAM PROXMIRE: 601,844 (37%)

SENATOR: (R) JOSEPH R. McCARTHY: 870,444 (54%)

(D) THOMAS E. FAIRCHILD: 731,402 (46%)

SOURCE: Wisconsin Blue Book, 1954

DOCUMENT 6: HERBLOCK CARTOONS FROM THE 1952 ELECTION





SOURCE FOR CARTOONS: <https://cjr290.wordpress.com/>

POSSIBLE FURTHER EXTENSION OF THE ACTIVITY

Since I teach AP US History, another use of this episode in McCarthy era history would be the development of a Short Answer Question (SAQ) for student practice.

Directions: Read the following excerpts and respond to the three questions below.

“Eisenhower’s posture toward McCarthy was hardly defiant . . . His next stop was in Wisconsin, McCarthy’s own state, where Tailgunner Joe had called Marshall ‘disloyal’ and ‘half-loyal.’ Ike’s friend Arthur Sulzberger, publisher of the New York Times, drafted a new paragraph for Eisenhower’s speech in Milwaukee, praising Marshall. At the last minute, the candidate’s advisers persuaded Ike to drop the insert; they were fearful of losing votes in the Badger State. But the speech had already been shown to some reporters, who immediately jumped on Eisenhower for the omission. ‘Do I need to tell you that I am sick at heart?’ Sulzberger wired Sherman Adams. Eisenhower’s aides thought their boss never got over his shame at failing to defend Marshall. Still, though, Eisenhower held back. Although throughout his political and military career Ike dodged and delayed, covering his maneuvers with smoke screens of vagueness, when it came to using force he was all in or all out.”

Evan Thomas. Ike’s Bluff: President Eisenhower’s Secret Battle to Save the World (2012).

“Equally telling of Eisenhower’s combination of fierce ambition and passivity was a speech that he gave in Wisconsin and a paragraph that he excised from his remarks. Senator McCarthy had attacked George C. Marshall, one of the two men who had done the most to build Eisenhower’s career as a military leader. Simply loyalty and honesty required a public rebuttal from Ike. Responding to this moral challenge, he drafted a spirited defense of a man who loyalty to the United States had been displayed over a long and brilliant career in challenging times. But the politicians would have none of it. Going soft for a moment that he would have years to regret, Eisenhower cut the defense of Marshall out of his speech. But alas for Ike, the spot would not disappear. The speech had already been distributed, and the newsmen, to their delight, pounced upon the paragraph that had been excised. It made the news and cost Eisenhower the friendship of George C. Marshall, who afterward seldom spoke with his former protege. What price victory?”

Louis Galambos. Eisenhower: Becoming Leader of the Free World (2018).

- (a) Briefly explain ONE significant difference between Thomas's interpretation of Eisenhower's actions in the 1952 campaign in Wisconsin and Galambos's.
- (b) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event or development from the period 1945-1953 could be used to support Thomas's interpretation of Eisenhower's actions.
- (c) Briefly explain how ONE specific historical event or development from the period 1945-1953 could be used to support Galambos's interpretation of Eisenhower's actions.