

Connecticut Explored Curriculum Lesson Plan

Topic: Red Scare

Article: “Stamping Out the Reds” by Jeffrey White, *Hog River Journal*, Vol. 3, Number 4
http://connecticutexplored.org/issues/v03n04/the_reds.htm

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Description: Ben Franklin once said, “They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.” In this lesson students will explore this idea through a study of the Palmer Raids in Connecticut after World War I. After reading a description of the Raids and choosing a side to support, the students will illustrate their perspective by creating a political cartoon through a guided activity.

State Standards Addressed:

Content Standard 1: Historical Thinking – Students will develop historical thinking skills, including chronological thinking and recognizing change over time; contextualizing, comprehending and analyzing historical literature; researching historical sources; understanding the concept of historical causation; understanding competing narratives and interpretation; and constructing narratives and interpretation.

Content Standard 2: Local, United States, and World History – Students will use historical thinking skills to develop an understanding of the major historical periods, issues and trends in United States history, world history, and Connecticut and local history.

Content Standard 4: Applying History – Students will recognize the continuing importance of historical thinking and historical knowledge in their own lives and in the world in which they live.

Content Standard 5: U.S. Constitution and Government – Students will apply knowledge of the U S Constitution, how the U S system of government works and how the rule of law and the values of liberty and equality have an impact on individual, local, state and national decisions.

Essential Questions: What happens when individuals’ civil liberties are breeched?

Objectives: After completing this lesson students will understand what motivated authorities to conduct the Palmer Raids and how they were executed in Connecticut. After completing this lesson, students will be to read political cartoons and be able to create their own.

Historical Background: Although the United States was triumphant in World War I, the war did not end as smoothly as the United States would have liked. First, the U.S. suffered large numbers of casualties in a fight that was commonly perceived a European conflict. Second, the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ended the war, was a difficult negotiation and did not leave any of the parties satisfied. Perhaps most disturbing to the United States was the creation of a communist state in Russia. The United States sent a small force in support of the White Army, comprised of anti-communist Russians, that was soundly defeated by the communist Red Army. Communism threatened many of the values Americans held dear including the right to private property, the free enterprise system, freedom of religion, elected officials, and more. From the

beginning Communism was viewed as a significant, active threat to the U.S. that was fundamentally opposite to the American way of life.

Coinciding with this tumultuous period in foreign policy was an equally chaotic domestic period. A massive influx of eastern European immigrants into America's cities stressed the American economy and culture in many ways. Economically, the United States was still being paralyzed by intense labor strikes that were growing in boldness. It seemed at times that in many ways there were two America's, labor and management, each with a disdain for the other. There were many aspects of the labor movement that were in common with communism. Both labor and communism actively fought on behalf of the worker. Both called for a redistribution of wealth in society in favor of workers. Perhaps most obvious, was the ethnic composition of eastern Europeans in both movements.

It was in this heated time that Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer instituted a witch-hunt for prospective communists. Clearly there was some real and significant left wing activity taking place in the United States. The most significant evidence of this activity was the discovery of a complex plan to bomb the homes of many of the most prominent government officials as well as other prominent buildings in the country. Palmer himself was the target of two separate incidents. Beyond these incidents and a handful of others, it is difficult to support the bold claims made by Palmer to justify his heavy-handed tactics. Using broad powers granted to him through the Espionage Act passed in 1917 and Sedition Act of 1918, Palmer authorized a series of raids in which thousands of suspected radicals were arrested and detained. Over five hundred were eventually deported. The detainees had virtually no legal rights and Palmer used a very broad net and loose standards when identifying groups as suspected radicals plotting an overthrow of the government. Initially, public support for the raids was strong but by 1920 enthusiasm had subsided. In the courts Judge George Anderson denounced the raids and freed twenty aliens from detention. In the court of public opinion, Palmer faced another defeat when it was discovered that some of his charges were not only false, but manufactured.

It appears Connecticut was an enthusiastic and willing partner in Palmer's plans. There were several raids that took place in towns throughout Connecticut including Manchester, Bridgeport, Rockville, New Britain, and others. It appears that Connecticut courts, residents, and newspapers were firmly in support of the raids. Scant evidence was ever found against the detainees. Ultimately dozens of Connecticut residents were arrested and detained.

Strategies: This lesson serves as an effective transition between the Imperialism/World War I and the Roaring Twenties units in United States history. It demonstrates how communism, the difficulty of World War I, and the nationalism of the imperialist era translate to the isolationism of the 1920s decade.

This lesson requires a lot of abstract thinking, artistic ability, and critical reading. It is best to think carefully about group composition so that no group is left without strengths in any of these areas. It is also recommended that the teacher actively participate in the groups to help brainstorm cartoon ideas and prompt discussion and constructive exchanges of ideas. The teacher should also be sensitive to satire or exaggerated depictions of ethnic groups in the cartoons, though to accurately depict the issues of the period, it is recommended that a slightly longer leash should be allowed for the portrayal of sensitive ethnic issues.

Authentic Assessment Activity:

Lesson Procedure

Day 1

- A. Pass out copies of the Palmer Raids article.
- B. As students read the article they should fill out the guided reading sheet which facilitates a greater understanding of the Palmer Raids.
- C. Once students are finished reading and filling out their guided reading sheet, post the sample political cartoons from circa 1920 for the students to interpret. They should answer the questions provided.
- D. The teacher should review the students' interpretation of the political cartoons as a group to make sure the students have correctly interpreted it.

Day 2

- A. Divide the students into groups of three and pass out the guide for creating political cartoons. It helps, but is not essential, to try to have a more artistically inclined student in each group. It is also very beneficial to have the groups be homogeneously composed.
- B. Each group should choose their position: for or against the Palmer Raids. Once they have made their choice, pass out the suggested (but not mandatory) message for their political cartoon along with the cartoon template. If the group would prefer to use their own idea and message, they should first present it to the teacher to determine its viability.
- C. The students should be able to create the cartoon within 30 minutes.
- D. Once the students have finished creating their cartoon, the cartoons can be posted on the board for perusal.
- E. Take down the cartoons and re-distribute them in random order to the groups. Each individual group member should then interpret and assess their fellow student's cartoon according to the evaluation sheet provided. On the back of the evaluation sheet is a grading rubric.

Materials:

Article: "Stamping Out the Reds" by Jeffrey White

Guided reading worksheet

Primary document political cartoon and interpretation questions

Political cartoon template

List of suggested topics for political cartoons

Political Cartoon evaluation sheet and rubric

Annotated Bibliography

Kenneth Ackerman, *Young J. Edgar: Hoover, the Red Scare, and the Assault on Civil Liberties*, This book is not only a valuable resource for information pertaining to the Palmer Raids but it also describes the surprisingly significant role a twenty-four year old J. Edgar Hoover played. In this way the teacher will be able to draw a common narrative between the Red Scare of the 1920s to that of the 1950s.

Michael Barson, *Red Scared!: The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture*, *Red Scared!* effectively tells the story of the Palmer Raids using illustrations from the media and pop culture including comic books, trading cards, movie posters, and various forms of literature. The pleasant writing and riveting graphic art make this a particularly interesting account.

Bruce Fraser, *Yankees at War: Social Mobilization on the Connecticut home front, 1917-18*

This dissertation is a thorough study of Connecticut and the need for unity on the home front. This study helps clarify the context of the Palmer Raids and their apparent support in the state of Connecticut.

Robert K. Murray *Red Scare: A Study of National Hysteria, 1919-1920*

This is one of the primary modern resources for an in depth study of the events leading up to and during the hysteria that swept the nation after World War I. Murray views the events through a moral lens which leads predictably to a sense of outrage throughout the book.

Bruce B. Schubert *The Palmer Raids in Connecticut; 1919-1920, Connecticut Review*,
October 1971

One of the few accounts of the Palmer Raids that focuses on the Connecticut's unique role.

Field Trip Option(s): None

Name: _____

Guided Reading Worksheet for “Stamping Out the Reds” by Jeffrey White

1. List and briefly explain as many motivations you can identify for U.S. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer to conduct the raids. Include events (both domestic and international) as well as more personal motivations.

- | | |
|----|----|
| a. | e. |
| b. | f. |
| c. | g. |

2. List evidence captured during any of the raids that provide evidence that justified the raids.

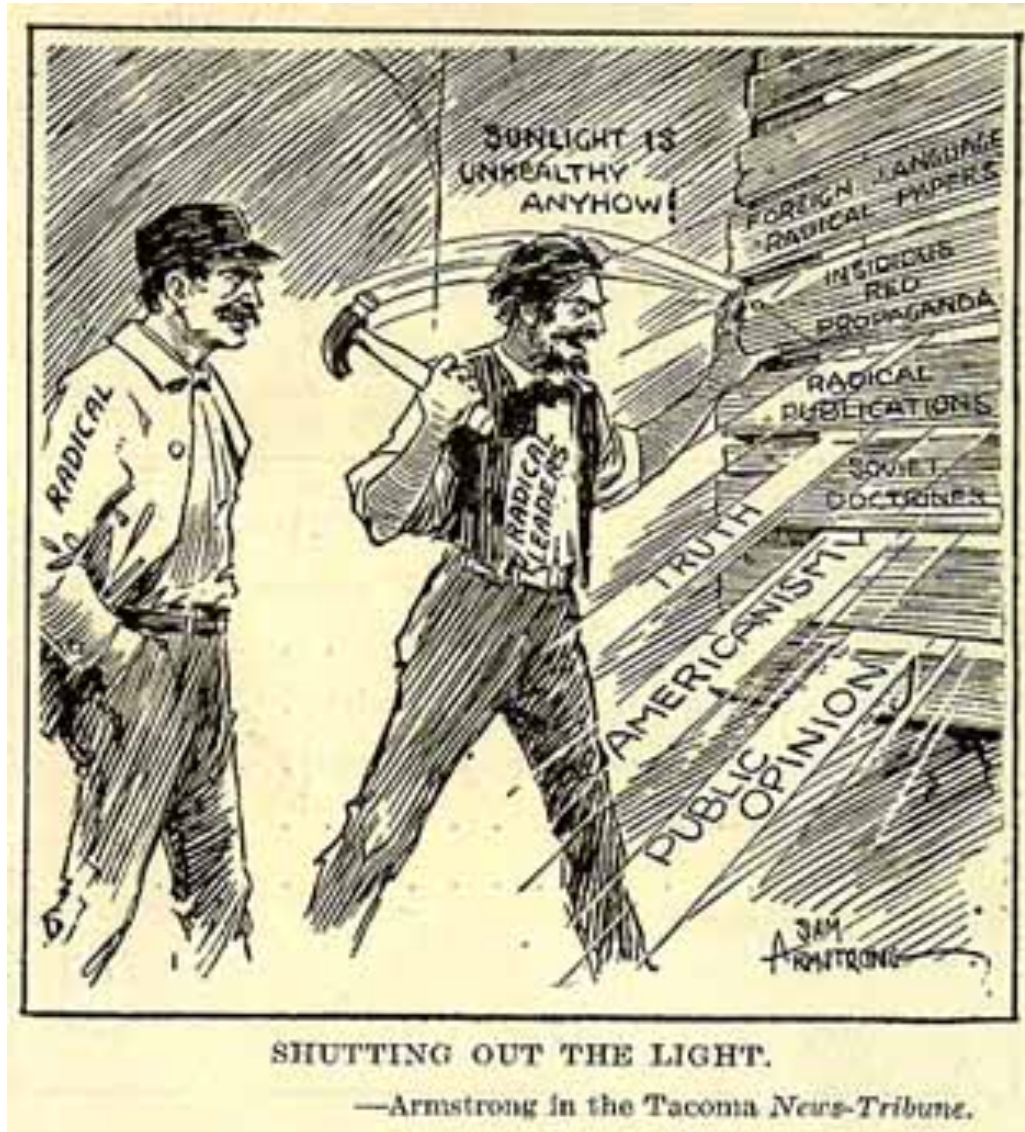
3. List any information that raises doubts about the necessity and effectiveness of the raids.

4. List all legal procedures denied to the detainees that are normally constitutionally guaranteed to American citizens. Also include any laws broken by Palmer and/or government officials in the process of conducting the raids and prosecuting detainees.

5. What brought about the end of the raids? Does this effect your assessment of the necessity of the raids?

(see page 2)

Evaluate a political cartoon from this time period.

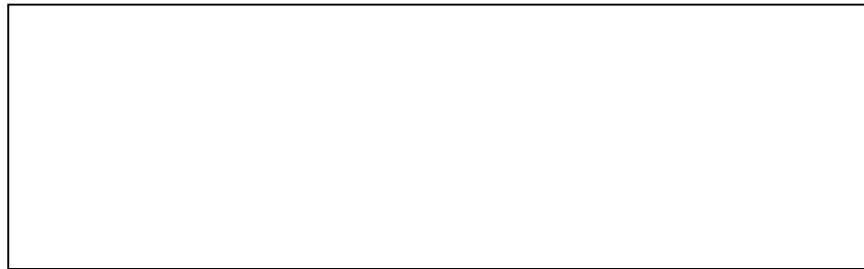


1. What is Truth, Americanism, and Public opinion equated to in this cartoon? What is communicated through this comparison?
2. What does this cartoon suggest about the legitimacy of the radical ideas?
3. What do radicals use to misguide the public?

Political Cartoon Template



Comment Box



List of proposed topics for political cartoons based on the article “Stamping Out the Reds” by Jeffrey White

Pro-Palmer Raids

A cartoon depicting:

- Civil liberty advocates pleading to the deaf ears of a communist ruler
- Guilty Eastern Europeans immigrants all pointing to each other as Palmer enters their room/building
- Vladimir Lenin imagining/dreaming/wishing for social turmoil/downfall of America or American values
- America search for German/Russian enemies abroad when in reality they are in the country
- The similarities in goals/tactics between labor unions and socialism

Anti-Palmer Raids

A cartoon depicting:

- Palmer over-inflating other trivial things in an effort to boost his presidential candidacy
- The U.S. citizenry constantly afraid under the scare tactics used by Palmer if he were elected president
- The heavy handed tactics used by Palmer
- Palmer destroying the very Constitution he is trying to protect
- Connecticut as the “Constitution State”
- Palmer following in the tradition of the national government trampling civil liberties in times of war
- The Espionage Act having more in common with less democratic governments around the world
- What-goes-around-comes-around in which the people cheer the legal deprivations of the immigrants only to face those same deprivations in the future

Palmer Raid Political Cartoon Evaluation Sheet

Name: _____

Evaluate the political cartoon according too. Justify your scores citing specific examples/details and information from the cartoon.

1...2...3...4...5 Technique - Is the drawing clear? Are the characters accurately drawn? Is there proper labeling or other form of obvious identification? If so, the cartoon scored well.

Justify your score:

1...2...3...4...5 Style - Are the features exaggerated? Is there satire? Is it one-sided? If so, the cartoon scored well.

Justify your score:

1...2...3...4...5 Message Clarity - Is the message clearly conveyed? Do you know the position/point the designer is communicating? Is the message justified in the cartoon? If so, the cartoon scored well.

Justify your score:

1...2...3...4...5 Creativity - Did the designer portray the message creatively? Is the portrayal of the funny? Does it “ring true”? Was it portrayed in a way that you would not have thought of? If the answers to these questions are yes then this cartoon scored well.

Justify your score:

Cartoon Evaluation Grading Rubric

Superior	<p>There are four scores and four justifications. Each justification references at least <u>two</u> details from the cartoon The score appropriately matches the critique The expectations were reasonable given the time/skill/experience constraints of the creators</p>
Very Good	<p>There are four scores and four justifications. Each justification references at least <u>one</u> detail from the cartoon The score appropriately matches the critique The expectations were reasonable given the time/skill/experience constraints of the creators</p>
Good	<p>There are four scores and four justifications. Not all justifications referenced details from the cartoon The score appropriately matches the critique The expectations were either too easy or too difficult given the constraints of the assignment</p>
Poor	<p>The sheet may be incomplete Details from the cartoon are rarely and/or inconsistently referenced in the justifications The scores do not appear to correlate with the critique The expectations were too easy or too difficult given the constraints of the assignment</p>