

Case study : Communism and Culture in the USA: 1947-1957.

<b>Classe</b>	3 <sup>e</sup>
<b>Chapitre, Thème</b>	Thème II : Le monde depuis 1945 Chapitre 1 : Un monde bipolaire au temps de la Guerre Froide
<b>Objectifs méthodologiques</b>	Contextualiser : mettre des événements en perspective Lire un texte en langue étrangère Rédiger un texte construit en anglais
<b>Objectifs culturels</b>	Comprendre l'affrontement culturel et idéologique entre les USA et l'URSS
<b>Niveau</b>	B1+-B2

*In the early years of the Cold War, the world was divided between the American and their allies, and the Soviets and their allies. At this time, "Red Scare" swept over the USA : people all over America were afraid of being culturally and ideologically invaded by the USSR, and that communism would prevail in the USA. Many responses were made to circumvent this threat, politically and culturally. Let's discover them!*

→ What forms did the fight against communism take in the USA?

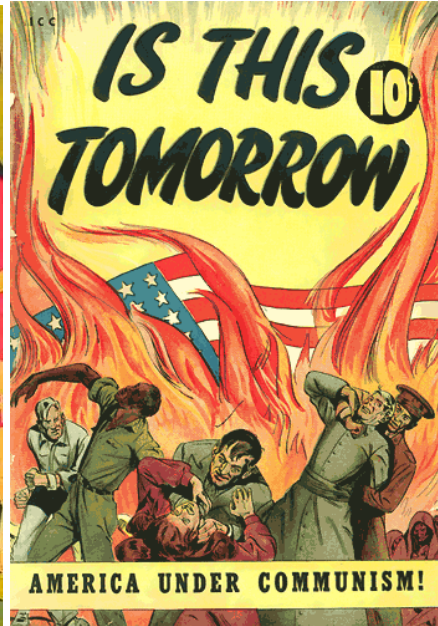
Document 1: The Truman Doctrine

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation in violation of the Yalta agreement in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria.

At the present moment, nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one. One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

Source: Excerpt from the "Truman Doctrine Speech," delivered by President Truman to Congress on March 12, 1947



Document 2: Front page of *Is this tomorrow*, an American comics, 1947.

**AMERICANS . . . . .**  
**DON'T PATRONIZE REDS!!!!**

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**YOU CAN DRIVE THE REDS OUT OF TELEVISION, RADIO AND HOLLYWOOD . . . . .**

**THIS TRACT WILL TELL YOU HOW.**

**WHY WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT:**

1) The REDS have made our Screen, Radio and TV Moscow's most effective Fifth Column in America . . .  
2) The REDS of Hollywood and Broadway have always been the chief financial support of Communist propaganda in America . . . 3) OUR OWN FILMS, made by RED Producers, Directors, Writers and STARS, are being used by Moscow in ASIA, Africa, the Balkans and throughout Europe to create hatred of America . . . 4) RIGHT NOW films are being made to craftily glorify MARXISM, UNESCO and ONE-WORLDISM . . . and via your TV Set they are being piped into your Living Room—and are poisoning the minds of your children under your very eyes !!!

So REMEMBER — If you patronize a Film made by RED Producers, Writers, Stars and STUDIOS you are aiding and abetting COMMUNISM . . . every time you permit REDS to come into your Living Room VIA YOUR TV SET you are helping MOSCOW and the INTERNATIONALISTS to destroy America !!!

Document 3: Anticommunist tract from the 1950s, decrying the "REDS of Hollywood and Broadway"

He May Be a Communist!

In this set of clips, Americans are shown how to spot Communists.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWeZ5SKXvj8>

Document 4 : Two testimonies of Hollywood magnates : The Witch Hunt in Hollywood.

Clément KAMOULY-LE CRANN



*At the beginning of the Cold War, the HUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee), alleging that numerous communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers had infiltrated the United States federal government, universities and film industry, interrogated many artists, trying to find Communists and arrest them, especially in Hollywood. Being suspected of Communist sympathies was enough to make you lose your job, some even had to leave the USA (like Charlie Chaplin).*

Senator J. McCarthy

TESTIMONY OF RONALD REAGAN

Mr. STRIPLING: As president of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), have you at any time observed or noted a group of Communists or Fascists who were attempting to exert influence or pressure on the guild?

Mr. REAGAN: There has been a small group within the SAG which has consistently opposed the policy of the guild board. They have been suspected of following the tactics that we associate with the Communist Party.

Mr. STRIPLING: You have no knowledge yourself as to they are members of the Communist Party?

Mr. REAGAN: No, sir; I do not know.

Mr. STRIPLING: Has it ever been reported to you that certain members of the guild were Communists?

Mr. REAGAN: Yes, sir; I have heard different discussions and some of them tagged as Communists... I know this organization will do anything in its power to protect us from Communism.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, have you ever been solicited to join any Communist organization?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir, I have received literature from an organization called the *Committee for a Far Eastern Democratic Policy*. I don't know if it is Communist or not. I didn't want to have anything to do with them.

Mr. STRIPLING: Mr. Reagan, what is your feeling about the Communist party?

Mr. REAGAN: Well, sir... I detest, I abhor their philosophy, but I detest even more their tactics, which are those of the fifth column, and are dishonest.



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*Perhaps the most famous animator of all time, Walt Disney (1901-1966) was already a celebrity in 1947 thanks to his creation of the popular cartoon character Mickey Mouse in the 1920s. In the late 1930s and early 1940s his fame—and wealth—had grown with the production of full-length animated films such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Pinocchio* (1940), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941), and *Bambi* (1942). During World War II he produced many films for the military. Disney became suspicious of communist influence in Hollywood after a strike in his studios in 1941.*

TESTIMONY OF WALTER E. DISNEY

Mr. SMITH: Have you ever made any pictures in your studio that contained propaganda?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, during the war we did. I did four anti-Hitler films and one on taxes for the Treasury on taxes.

Mr. SMITH: From those pictures that you made have you any opinion as to whether or not the films can be used effectively to disseminate propaganda?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, on the one for the Treasury on taxes, it was to let the people know that taxes were important in the war effort.

Mr. SMITH: Do you permit pictures to be made at your studio containing propaganda?

Mr. DISNEY: No. During the war, it was a different thing. We watch so that nothing gets into the films that would be harmful in any way to any group or any country. We have large audiences of children [and we don't want to offend them].

Mr. SMITH: Have you had at any time in the past any Communists employed at your studio?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes; in the past I had some people that I definitely feel were Communists.

Mr. SMITH: Can you name [them] ?



Mr. DISNEY: Well, I feel that there is one artist I believe might be a Communist. His name is David Hilberman. He has no religion and he had considerable time at the Moscow Art Theater studying art direction.

Mr. SMITH: Do you remember the name of William Pomerance ?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, sir. But he was replaced by another man by the name of Maurice Howard.

Mr. SMITH: What is your opinion of Mr. Pomerance and Mr. Howard as to whether or not they are or are not Communists?

Mr. DISNEY: In my opinion they are Communists...

Mr. SMITH: What is your personal opinion of the Communist Party? Is it a political party?

Mr. DISNEY: Well, I don't believe it is a political party. I believe it is an un-American thing.

Mr. SMITH: Do you feel that there is a threat of communism in the motion-picture industry?

Mr. DISNEY: Yes, there is, and there are many reasons why they would like to take it over or get in and control it, or disrupt it, but I don't think they have gotten very far, and I think the industry is made up of good Americans, just like in my plant, good, solid Americans.

## Questions

### Doc 1:

- 1) What is the context of this speech?
- 2) President Truman refers to the "Yalta agreement". What was this agreement about? Who signed it?
- 3) Complete the chart below, using elements from President Truman's speech. Which way of life is the audience encouraged to follow? why?

The "American way"	The "Soviet way"

4) President Truman says that the US are going to "*support free peoples who are resisting*". How are they going to do that? Give examples.

5) According to President Truman, is Cold War going to be an "armed conflict"? How could we describe it?

### Doc 2:

- 1) What kind of document is it?
- 2) Who is the main target of these documents?
- 3) Why can we say these are propaganda documents?
- 4) Was Cold War a cultural war?

### Doc 3:

- 1) What is that document? Where was it displayed?
- 2) How are the Communists mentioned?
- 3) How is the public involved by the document? What do they have to do?

### Doc 4:

- 1) Name of the person \_\_\_\_\_
  - a. What did they do for a living?
  - b. Why were they called to testify?
  - c. What power did they hold within the entertainment industry to shape public opinion?
- 2) Views
  - a. How did this person view communism? Include quotes and information that evidence this.
  - b. How did this person view HUAC? Include quotes and information that evidence this.
  - c. Why are cinema and films so important in times of war? What is the link between cinema and propaganda?
- 3) Un-American
  - a. What was called "un-American" during this time period?
  - b. Why do you think people used the term "un-American"?
  - c. In their speeches, what do they oppose to "being a Communist"?

### Final task :

Essay : Describe the anti-communist mobilization in the US between 1947 and 1957.