

Lies, Spies and Secret Ties: The Cold War Around the World



Cambridge History for Schools 2021-22

Teachers' Guide

Learning Intentions

This session will introduce pupils to the politics of the Cold War between 1945 and 1991. By looking at the Cold War in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, it will encourage pupils to think beyond major powers like the USA and USSR to see how Cold War politics influenced societies around the world. At the same time, it aims to introduce propaganda and espionage as tools of the Cold War and encourage pupils to develop their own media literacy by uncovering 'fake news'.

Pupils do not require any prior knowledge of propaganda or the Cold War to complete this session. It may be helpful to supply an atlas or world map for unfamiliar place names. If pupils are interested in seeing how the world map changed during the Cold War, the website Geacron (geacron.com) can display a rough map of the world for any year in human history.

This session may be conducted alone or in groups. However, some activities rely on discussion and debate and are best suited to small group work.

Video Timestamps and Activities

00:00 – 06:42 – Introduction to the Global Cold War

This opening section will introduce the Cold War, beginning with its origins at the close of the second World War and the 'major powers' of the USA and USSR. It will then suggest that to explain the Cold War fully, it may be necessary to look beyond Europe and North America and see how the Cold War was understood in Africa, Asia and Latin America. However, it will also suggest that these countries did not necessarily see themselves as on one side or the other of the Cold War, setting up the themes of Activity One.

Activity One – Which Side Are You On?

For this activity, pupils will need access to the Activity One factbook, cut-outs of the national flags in the factbook and a workspace to lay out the flags. If the session is being run online, it may be helpful to prepare a document with images of flags which the pupils can move around.

To begin this activity, place the USSR flag to the left of the workspace and the USA flag to the right. Using the information in the Factbook, pupils should attempt to place each country along the line from USSR to USA depending on where they believe they positioned themselves in the Cold War. Pupils should be encouraged to disagree on the positioning of flags between themselves and the activity should wrap up with students or groups comparing how they arranged the flags.

The aim of this activity is not to have a clear answer, but to demonstrate the complexity of the Cold War. Very few countries should be at one extreme or the other, and pupils should note that even countries placed close to each other could have significant disagreements. A sensible order could be USSR – Czechoslovakia – China – UAR - Ghana – India - Pakistan - France – UK – USA but pupils should be able to make their own cases for any changes to this template.

06:43 – 13:44 - Propaganda and Persuasion

This section of the video will recap the learning intention of Activity One. It will then move on to talk about how these complex relationships between East and West were negotiated through propaganda and secret intelligence work, providing some relevant examples from the countries in the factbook. It will also introduce the idea of 'black' propaganda – propaganda which disguises its own origin in order to trick its audience – as a way to set up Activity Two.

Activity Two – Sorry, Who Is This?

For this activity, pupils will need the factbook from Activity One and the new Activity Two sources. The flags from Activity One may also be helpful as prompts but are not necessary.

In this activity, pupils take on the role of Cold War spies trying to monitor and understand foreign propaganda. Each source in the Activity Two document is a real piece of propaganda from the Cold War era, originating from one of the countries mentioned in the Factbook. Most have been edited to be accessible to a KS3 audience, but each contains a lot of original source material. Pupils should use the information in the factbook to guess which propaganda comes from which country while avoiding 'black' propaganda traps. In a classroom setting, groups could be assigned to read one source each and present to the class, or each group could quickly read each source individually.

The purpose of this activity is to encourage pupils to analyse the aims of propaganda use that to guess at their origin. Pupils should be able to spot the bias in how each source presents reality and understand how disguising the origin of propaganda can make it seem more authentic.

Activity Two Answers

Source A is from the Chinese state broadcaster, Radio Beijing. The clues are the broadcast's support for anti-colonialism, their mention of a huge population and their mistrust of 'false communists' in the Soviet camp. The reference to being a 'changed nation' may be a reference to China's revolution in 1949.

Source B is French black propaganda, designed to look like a postcolonial African newspaper but secretly printed in Paris. The clues are the emphasis on 'responsible' new governments and praise for countries which maintain 'friendship' with Europe. Britain is also an acceptable answer – they briefly offered to fund the newspaper but were disappointed with its results.

Source C is United Arab Republic propaganda. The clues are the play's opposition to imperialism, the distrust of the Commonwealth and the prominence of Cairo as a base for anti-imperialism. Pupils might suggest that it was written by Somali students in Cairo – this is actually true, as far as I can tell.

Source D is British propaganda, designed to counteract the claims of Radio Cairo by appealing to Africans via their own newspapers and broadcasters. The clues are the text's anti-communism, its hostility to the United Arab Republic specifically and its praise for the British system of treaties in Somalia.

13:45 – 22:34 – The Radio and the Global Cold War

This section will briefly discuss the outcomes of Activity Two, adding more detail to some of the more surprising answers. It will then talk about the role of radio in propaganda throughout the Cold War and radio's special role in propaganda for Africans, Asians and Latin Americans. It will also point out that racism and colonial biases led Europeans to imagine that radio was extremely effective at persuading people – whereas in reality, listeners around the world could reinterpret and redeploy propaganda however they wanted. It will challenge the pupils to make a short propaganda broadcast of their own, setting up Activity Three.

Activity Three – What Are You Trying To Say?

For this activity, the factbook from Activity One and the examples of propaganda from Activity Two may be helpful.

In this activity, pupils should take on the role of a radio broadcaster from one of the following countries from the factbook:

- People's Republic of China ('Radio Beijing')
- India ('Akashvani')
- France ('Radiodiffusion-Télévision Française')
- UK ('British Broadcasting Corporation')
- United Arab Republic ('Radio Cairo')

Using what they know about the country from the factbook, they should work in groups to produce a short speech or play - 'radio broadcast' from their station to present to the rest of the group. Each broadcast should explain their country's role in the Cold War and try to persuade the other groups to join their side. Pupils should be encouraged to approach this task creatively, engaging debate and creative writing skills and even manipulating the truth when it suits their aims. At the end, the class could take a vote to see if anyone was persuaded by each of the broadcasts.

The aim of this activity is to reinforce the pupils' ability to think creatively about propaganda by encouraging them to produce their own. The activity should test their persuasive writing and performance skills, but also reiterate that propaganda can be manipulative and unfair. If the vote proves that no-one was really persuaded by the other groups' propaganda, point this out – not everyone in the Cold War was won over with fancy words, and with the right critical thinking skills the pupils should be able to spot 'fake news' in the future.

22:35 – 23:34 – Closing remarks

This section will thank the students for attending the History for Schools session and summarise the themes of the events – the complexity of the Cold War, the ability to bend the truth with propaganda and the importance of identifying manipulative media, wherever it comes from.