



Year 6

The Cold War

Reading Booklet

Lesson Series:

- 1. The Cold War**
- 2. The Arms Race**
- 3. The Cuban Missile Crisis**
- 4. The Space Race**
- 5. Proxy Wars**

Name: _____

Class: _____

Lesson 1 - The Cold War

The Cold War was a period of tension between the capitalist ideologies of the west and the communist ideologies of the east. The war was led by the 'superpowers' - the USA (west) and the USSR (east).

The Cold War began in the 1940s, despite the USA and Russia being allies during the war. The USA and its allies were concerned about the spread of communism and wanted to issue a policy of 'containment'.

In 1945, the Prime Minister of the UK - Winston Churchill - gave his famous 'Iron Curtain' speech, declaring that an 'iron curtain' had come down in Europe between the east and the west. The USSR were operating a policy of 'expansionism' and between 1945 and 1948, the Soviet Union made Albania, Bulgaria, East Germany, Romania, Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia communist nations.

America's concern was that once one country had fallen to communism, the surrounding countries would fall in a domino effect, finally reaching America - this was called the 'Domino Theory'. As both of the superpowers had the atomic bomb, no actual fighting took place during the Cold War. Instead they fought indirectly through Proxy wars, and competing with one another through the 'arms race' and the 'space race'.

Lesson 2 - The Arms Race

The USA was the first to develop nuclear weapons through the Manhattan Project. It was so top secret that Vice-President Truman didn't even know about it until he became president. Despite this, apparently Stalin knew about it through his spies! In 1945, the USA dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, and two days later on Nagasaki in Japan, killing approximately 214,000 people. Japan surrendered from the war a few days later.

The dropping of the atomic bomb made the USSR even more determined to develop its own nuclear weapons. In 1949, they succeeded and this began the nuclear arms race where both sides competed to have the most and biggest bombs.

In 1952, the US tested the world's first Hydrogen bomb - 2500 times more powerful than the atomic bomb. A year later, the USSR had their own Hydrogen bomb. In 1957, the USSR launched the first Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) which could carry an atomic warhead for thousands of miles. The US tested their own ICBM a year later.

Ironically, by stockpiling so many powerful weapons both sides protected themselves through the theory of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD). This meant that no country would ever launch their weapons as the other side would be sure to retaliate and launch theirs, potentially wiping out each other.

During the Cold War, other nations began developing their own nuclear weapons, including the UK, France and China. The arms race was very expensive for both sides. In the 1970s, both sides began to talk about easing tensions and this was called Détente. Both sides agreed to reduce the number of arms they had through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). The arms race ended when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991.

Lesson 3 - The Cuban Missile Crisis

The Cuban Missile Crisis was the closest that the world came to nuclear war during the Cold War. In 1961, the US government unsuccessfully attempted to overthrow Cuba's new communist government led by Fidel Castro. This failed attempt was known as the Bay of Pigs. The US had installed nuclear missile sites in Italy and Turkey, with the ability to reach the Soviet Union's capital at Moscow.

Fidel Castro agreed for the USSR to put missile sites in Cuba that could reach the USA. In 1962, a U-2 spy plane captured images of the missiles. President Kennedy retaliated by putting Cuba in 'quarantine'; this meant setting up a blockade to stop arms reaching Cuba. The USSR saw this as an act of aggression and Nikita Khrushchev said to the USA that they were putting the world at risk of a nuclear war. The US demanded that the Soviets removed the weapons, but the Soviets refused and said they were defensive.

In October 1962, a Soviet Submarine in the Caribbean was spotted by the US navy and they dropped a practice depth bomb to signal them to come up. The sub had a nuclear weapon on board and mis-read the American's signal as a sign that a war had

begun. The captain on board and a senior officer ordered that the nuclear weapon be discharged. However, they needed all three of the senior officers on board to agree.

The third officer, Vasili Arkhipov, refused to agree and convinced the others it was not a good idea. Therefore, it could be argued that Arkhipov saved the world from nuclear war! The Cuban Missile Crisis ended when the USSR and US both agreed to remove their missiles; the US removed their missiles from Turkey and Italy and agreed to never invade Cuba and the USSR removed the missiles from Cuba. In 1963, a telephone hotline was set up between the countries for negotiations in a time of crisis.



Lesson 4 - The Space Race

The 'space race' was a competition between the two superpowers to show that they had the best and well-funded scientists and technology. The space race began in 1955 when both the US and the Soviet Union announced they would be launching satellites into space. Both sides wanted to put the first man in space and were prepared to spend huge amounts of money on achieving this.

Controversially, both sides also recruited former Nazi scientists to help with their space programmes, some of which went on to be awarded the highest honours for their work in the field despite being responsible for atrocious war crimes. On 4th October, 1957, the Soviets successfully put the first satellite into orbit - it was called Sputnik 1. The Soviets won again by putting the first man into orbit. On April 12, 1961 Yuri Gagarin was the first man to orbit the Earth in the spacecraft Vostok I.

During the 1960s, both countries were trying to be the first nation to put a man on the moon. In 1963, the Russian's put the first women in space - Valentina Tereshkova. This was particularly impressive as she had no pilot training when she volunteered for

the cosmonaut program. After years of experiments, and with the help of many people, including African American women who provided valuable mathematical knowledge, the US spacecraft Apollo 11 landed on the moon. On 20th July, 1969 Neil Armstrong was the first man to walk on the moon. He famously said, 'That is one step for a man, one giant leap for mankind'. The space race ended in 1975 when the US and Soviet Union launched their first joint mission - the Apollo - Soyuz project.



Lesson 5 - Proxy Wars

Although the USA and USSR never officially declared war on each other and went to war during the Cold War, they fought in what were known as 'proxy wars'. This meant that they joined opposing sides of wars being fought in other countries. Throughout the Cold War, during conflicts taking place all over the world, the Soviet Union supported those that followed their communist ideology, whereas the United States supported the side that opposed communism. Examples of proxy wars include the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Yom Kippur War, and the Soviet Afghanistan War.

The Korean War (1950-1953) was fought between South Korea and the communist North Korea. The Soviet's supported North Korea, while the Americans supported South Korea. The war ended with little resolution and the countries remain divided both physically and ideologically. The Vietnam war took place between 1955-1975 and was fought between the communist North Vietnam and the government of South Vietnam. The Vietnam War lasted 20 years and ended in humiliating defeat for the USA.