The Cold War and the American Dream.....

How did the U.S. economy and political climate change after WWII?
WHAT is the COLD WAR?

- The Cold War was a period of tension and mistrust between the United States and the Soviet Union.

- It lasted from the end of WWII (1945) until the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991).

- Each side believed that the other wanted to dominate world affairs…and wanted to stop them.

- The two nations never fought each other directly on a battlefield, but several wars occurred in other nations because of the Cold War. These are known as “proxy wars”.
The Cold War [1945-1991]: An Ideological Struggle

Soviet & Eastern Bloc Nations
["Iron Curtain"]
GOAL → spread world-wide Communism

US & the Western Democracies
GOAL → “Containment” of Communism & the eventual collapse of the Communist world.

METHODOLOGIES:

1. Espionage [KGB vs. CIA]
2. Arms Race [nuclear escalation]
3. Ideological Competition for the minds and hearts of Third World peoples [Communist govt. & command economy vs. democratic govt. & capitalist economy] → “proxy wars”
4. Bi-Polarization of Europe [NATO vs. Warsaw Pact]
Iron Curtain - the political, military, and ideological barrier erected by the Soviet Union after World War II to seal off itself and its dependent eastern and central European allies from open contact with the West and other noncommunist areas.
Peace Time Economics and Politics

- Defense industries change over to making goods for peacetime. Americans buy goods they had put off through the war.....the economy booms.

- Returning veterans win out over women in the competition for jobs

- The G.I. Bill helps spur a housing boom.....Houses are mass produced – made and sold cheaply

- To keep up with rising prices, labor unions work to raise wages.

- President Truman creates a civil rights commission to deal with racial segregation and discrimination in the South and in the military.

- Truman’s “Fair Deal” calls for new housing and employment projects, and an end to racial discrimination in hiring.
America Fights a Cold War

After WWII, Stalin installs pro-Soviet governments throughout Eastern Europe.

1947… The U.S. announces the Truman Doctrine (promises aid to people fighting to maintain democracy) and the Marshall Plan (investing in the rebuilding of war-torn Europe).

After WWII, Germany (and Berlin) was divided into communist East and democratic West.

1948, Stalin blocks access to Berlin and Truman responds by airlifting supplies into the city.

Truman’s strategy is containment (stopping the spread of communism).

NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forms in 1949. It is an alliance of democratic nations.

Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union counter with the “Warsaw Pact” (their own alliance…this creates the “Communist Bloc”)

The Cold War Heats Up in Korea

- After World War II, Korea divides at the 38th parallel… the northern half is Communist, the southern half non-communist.

- June, 1950, North Korean forces cross the 38th parallel into South Korea.

- The U.S. asks the UN to help stop the Communists from taking over.

- The Chinese entered the war and the two sides become deadlocked.

- Douglas MacArther wanted to take the war into China… Truman disagreed - he did not want the Soviets in the war (China’s ally)
  - Mac publically criticizes Truman and is fired

- The war ends in a stalemate – and Korea remains divided at the 38th parallel.
The Cold War Around the World

- **Arms race**: competition between countries to achieve superiority in quantity and quality of military arms
- **Brinkmanship**: the policy that the U.S. would go to the brink of war to stop the spread of communism
- The U.S. and the Soviet Union both worked to help allies and weaken enemies.
- **Space Race**: competition to be the first the explore space which began when the USSR launches Sputnik and America scrambles to catch up
- **U-2**: Soviets shoot down U.S. spy plane over Soviet Union – peace talks collapse between U.S. and USSR
The Cold War at Home

Fear of communism spreads throughout America in the early 1950s... the Red Scare...

(Examples: Alger Hiss – accused of espionage and jailed for lying under oath, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were executed for passing secrets to the Russians)

Truman orders loyalty checks

TheHUAC (House Un-American Activities Committee) began targeting people in the movie industry.
Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed government officials and others were Communists

- He made accusations without proof (the charges against people were never proven)

- Many careers and lives were ruined (reputations ruined...people were “blacklisted”, etc.)

- Many were afraid to speak out against him (out of fear that they would be the next to be targeted).

- The Senate eventually condemned McCarthy and he faded from the scene.
The American Dream in the Fifties

- In the post war era, the prosperous economy encouraged people to buy new goods, get married, start families and move to new areas.

- During the 1950s, the U.S. population grew by almost 30 million people (baby boom).
- The baby boom spurred the growth of suburbs.
- As suburbs grew, car sales increased.
- There was a “migration“ to the sunbelt in the southwest.
- Consumerism - There was an increase in the purchase of “luxury” items (modern appliances, etc.)
- While some felt the pressure to conform, others resisted and rebelled against “square” society (beatniks).
- While many moved into the suburbs, those left behind were unable to pay for the upkeep of the cities and they fell in to “urban decay”.
American Culture

- Rock and roll became popular
  - Bill Hailey, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Fats Domino and Jerry Lee Lewis
  - Elvis Presley was the king of rock and roll
- Television became more popular as more people were able to afford to buy one
  - Howdy Doody, Mickey Mouse, Lassie, The Lone Ranger, I Love Lucy were popular shows
- John F. Kennedy was elected president in 1960 after the first televised presidential debate (vs. Richard Nixon)