Mr. Gorham Name:

Modern American History

*Cold War-1950s/McCarthyism* Block:

McCarthy and McCarthyism

***Who is Joe McCarthy (1908-1957)?***

Republican Senator from Wisconsin, 1947-1957. War veteran, but undistinguished. A heavy drinker and a bully, McCarthy rose to national prominence by alleging that other politicians were communists. His reign of terror lasted from 1950, when he gave his Wheeling, W.V. speech, to 1954, when he was shamed on national TV. by Joseph Welch, who asked the Senator, “at long last, have you left no sense of shame!”



***What is McCarthyism?***

McCarthyism is the political practice of publicizing disloyalty or subversion with little regard for facts. This practice caused an intellectual civil war starting in 1947 and going to 1954. Self-appointed super-patriots identified and punished people they claimed were sympathetic to communism—college professors, Hollywood screenwriters actors, and directors, distinguished war veterans and politicians. McCarthyism pre-dated McCarthy, but he became the face of the movement. Many of the targets of McCarthyism were liberal; the Republicans had been out of power since 1933 and exploited postwar anxieties to regain power.

***When did McCarthyism start?***

By 1950, when Senator Joe McCarthy gave his Wheeling, W.V. speech, McCarthyism was in full force. By 1947, professors suspected of communist sympathies were being fired; performances by artists suspected of communist leanings were cancelled.

***The Damages of McCarthyism.***

* Colleges and universities across the nation fired professors deemed “agents of Communism.” (Tell Julia Child/Smith College story)
* By 1949, 22 states had adopted oaths of allegiance for teachers.
* Priests, ministers fired.
* In 1949, a Connecticut woman started the “Minute Women USA”—they were anti-labor, anti-tax, and pro-segregation.
* **In 1947, the House of Representatives investigated Hollywood at the House Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings.**
* To oil millionaire Hugh Ray Cullen, McCarthy was “the greatest man in America.”
* “It was a dirty business, exposing people, often on flimsy grounds, and [benefiting from their misfortune].”
* One target, Philip Loeb, a widower with a disabled son, lost his acting job. He committed suicide.
* The use of undercover witnesses skyrocketed—“professional witnesses” against people they had claimed to like.
* One FBI agent from New Bedford, MA, a married man with children, seduced another women, got her to join the Communist Party, and then denounced her.
* Many of the McCarthyites were anti-Semitic.
* McCarthyism began to decline when Eisenhower appointed Earl Warren to the Supreme Court. The Court struck down many McCarthyist laws on the grounds that they violated the due process and equal protection clauses of the U.S. Constitution.