

Soviet Communism and the West

1945–1991

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Teacher Introduction

These Common Core History Assessments are designed to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they learn about Soviet Communism in the years after World War II. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Similar sets of assessments are available (or planned) for each unit in a typical world history class.

★ *Historical Thinking and the Challenge of the Common Core*

This set includes nine assessments aligned with the first nine Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards. We have left out the tenth Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard, which does not lend itself to assessments of the sort provided here. The set also includes two writing tasks aligned with two key Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards.

These Common Core standards challenge history teachers to develop in students the complex literacy skills they need in today's world and the ability to master the unique demands of working with historical primary and secondary source texts. The Common Core standards are supportive of the best practices in teaching historical thinking. Such practices include close reading, attending to a source's point of view and purpose, corroborating sources, and placing sources in their historical context. These are the skills needed to make history less about rote learning and more about an active effort to investigate and interpret the past.

These assessments are also useful in many ways for ELA teachers. They assess many of the skills specified in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards, which put a good deal of emphasis on the reading of informational texts. The Anchor Standards form the basis for all of the various Common Core standards for English Language Arts.

★ *What Are These Assessments Like?*

- **A group of nine reading skills assessments and two writing tasks for each major era of world history**

Each reading skills assessment is based on one of the key Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standards—Assessment 1 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 1, Assessment 2 addresses Common Core Reading Standard 2, and so on. Two writing tasks are based on the first two College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing, which are the basis for the Common Core History/Social Studies Writing Standards. The two writing standards focus on writing arguments to support claims and writing informative/explanatory texts.

- **Based on primary or secondary sources**

In most cases, one primary source is used. In some cases, an assessment is based on more than one primary source or on a primary and a secondary source. The sources are brief. In most cases, texts have been slightly altered to improve readability, but without changing meaning or tone. Links to online versions of print media are available in the Bibliography. Please note that these links were valid at the time of production, but the websites may have since been discontinued.

- **Brief tasks promoting historical literacy**

For each assessment, students write brief answers to one or two questions. The questions are not tests of simple factual recall. They assess the students' mastery of the skills addressed by that assessment's Common Core History/Social Studies Standard.

- **Two versions of each of the nine reading standards assessments**

A *basic* and an *advanced* version of each assessment are provided. The *basic* assessment addresses the Common Core Standard for grades 6–8. The *advanced* assessment is based on the Common Core Standard for grades 9–10 and grades 11–12 combined. Each version uses the same source or sources. In some cases, sources have been somewhat shortened for the *basic* version.

- **Easy to use as both learning and assessment tools**

These assessments do not take valuable time away from instruction. The primary sources and background information on each source make them useful mini-lessons as well as tools to assess students' historical thinking skills. The sources all deal with themes and trends normally covered when teaching the relevant historical era.

- **Evaluating student responses**

Brief but specific suggestions are provided, defining acceptable and best responses to each question asked in the assessment. The suggestions are meant to aid in evaluating students, but even more importantly, they are a way for teachers to help students better understand and master the skills on which the assessment is focused.

Assessment 1

The “Suicide” of Jan Masaryk

★ Key Ideas and Details

1. (6–8) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

★ Using This Assessment

These Common Core History Assessments are intended to help your students develop key literacy and history thinking skills as they study and master the content covered in their world history coursework. The assessments are intended to be *formative* more than *summative*. That is, they are meant to be part of the instructional process itself, providing you and your students with information at a point when timely adjustments in teaching and learning can be made.

Assessment 1 is designed to measure students' ability to master the skills described in Common Core History/Social Studies Reading Standard 1 for grades 6–8. It asks students to cite specific textual evidence from two documents. It also challenges students to adapt that reading skill to the unique demands of thinking historically as they carefully interpret textual evidence in a primary source from a time in the past and a secondary source account of that same time in the past.

★ Evaluating Student Responses to This Assessment

[This section is not available for review on sample pages]

The “Suicide” of Jan Masaryk

Directions: This exercise asks you to read one primary source document and one secondary source document carefully and answer questions about specific details in the documents. In order to better understand the documents, read and make use of the source information located just below each document. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the two assessment questions that follow.

CCS Standard 1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

Document 1: A Primary Source

REPORTER. Mr. Secretary, could I ask a question on Europe? There seems to be a great deal of alarm—quite understandable—in this country over developments in Europe the last couple of weeks, including the fall of Czechoslovakia. This alarm ranges all the way through fears that Italy might fall to the Communists and in the extreme to talk of war. I wonder if we could have your assessment of the situation as far as you can go.

MARSHALL. I think you correctly describe the situation in your question, that there are great fears as to the developments. There are also very strong feelings regarding these developments and a considerable passion of view on the part of a great many in this country. The situation is very, very serious. It is regrettable that passions are aroused to the degree which has occurred. It is tragic to have things happen as just occurred in Czechoslovakia, particularly what has happened to some of the officials, as in the affair today of the death of Jan Masaryk, all of which indicates very plainly what is going on. It is a reign of terror in Czechoslovakia and not an ordinary due process of government by the people.

Source Information: George Marshall was U.S. secretary of state in the years after World War II. His name is linked to the European Recovery Act, or “Marshall Plan,” a massive U.S. plan to aid in the rebuilding of war-torn Europe. In the spring of 1948, Marshall was heavily engaged in trying to convince Congress to fund the Marshall Plan. This document is from that time. This excerpt was quoted from *“The Whole World Hangs in the Balance”*: January 8, 1947–September 30, 1949, vol. 6 of *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, edited by Larry I. Bland, Mark A. Stoler, Sharon Ritenour Stevens, and Daniel D. Holt (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), p. 398.

The Nuclear Cold War

Directions: This exercise asks you to study three documents carefully and answer one question on what these sources have in common. In order to better understand the documents and their importance as historical evidence, read and make use of the source information located just below or next to each document itself. When you have studied the documents and the source information, answer the assessment question that follows.

CCS Standard 7: Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.

Document 1: A Primary Source

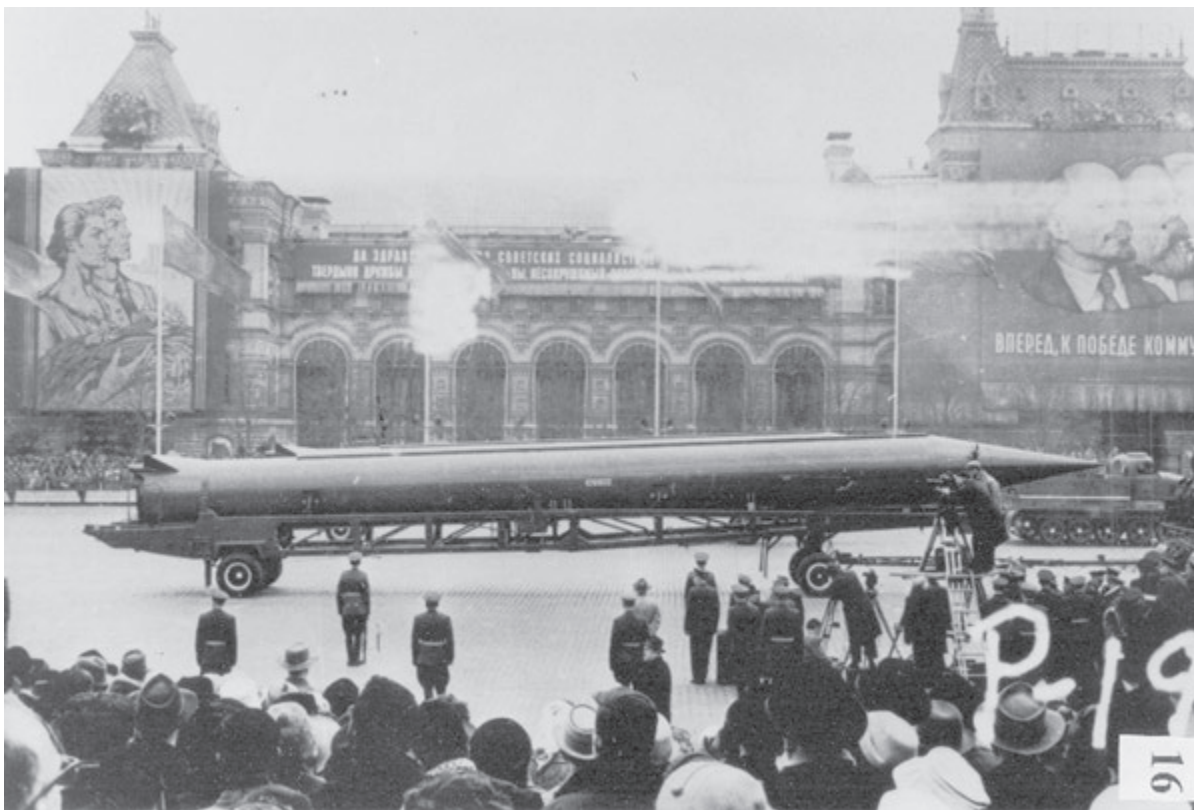


Photo source: By Central Intelligence Agency (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Source Information: This is a Central Intelligence Agency photograph of a Soviet medium-range ballistic missile being paraded through Red Square, Moscow, sometime in the early 1960s. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Soviets made great strides in rocket technology. Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev often exaggerated how far ahead the Soviets were in the nuclear arms race, but there is no question that their military might was enormous.

Document 2: A Primary Source

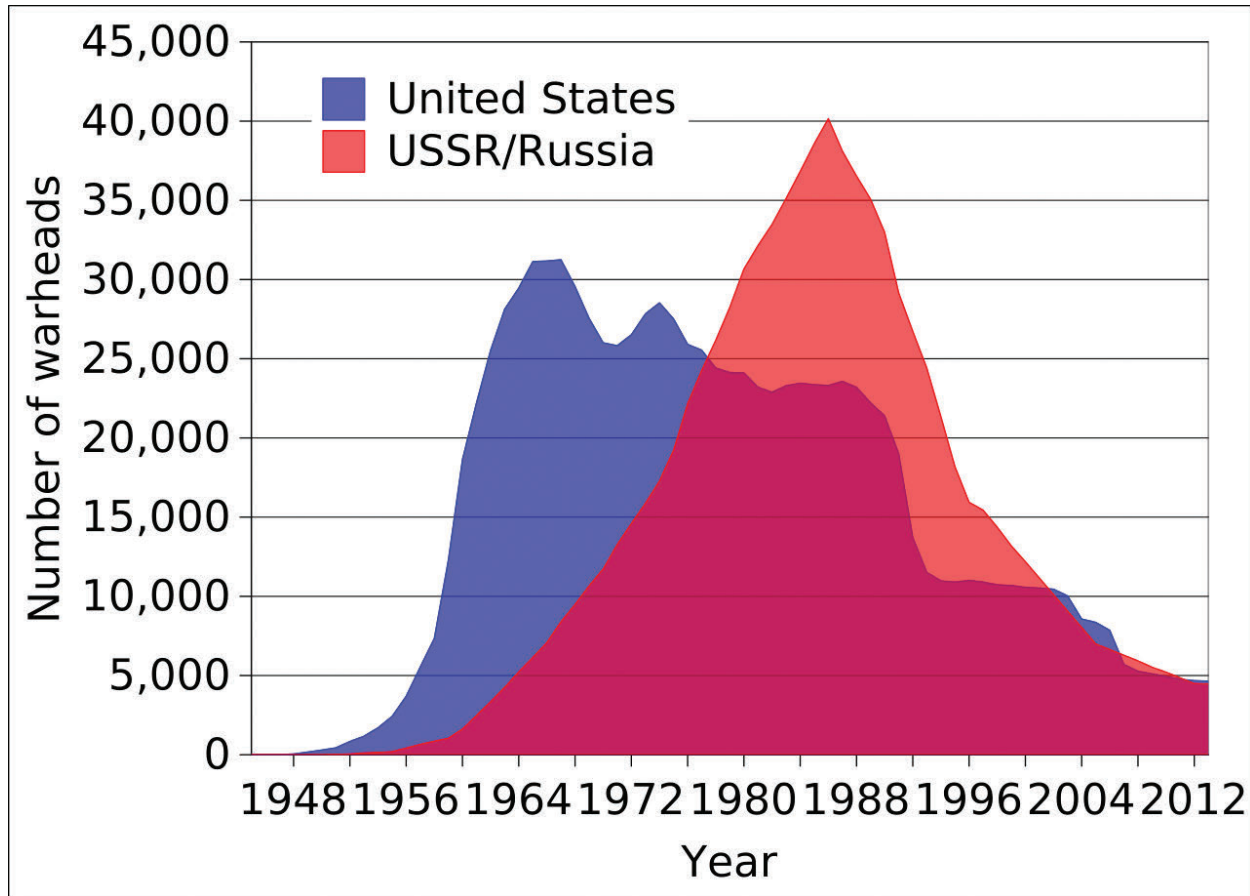


Photo source: Created by Wikimedia Commons user Fastfission (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)

Source Information: The Cold War remained “cold” because neither side ever dared use any or all of the nuclear weapons it had. Of course the Cold War did also become “hot” in many smaller conflicts, such as the Korean War and the Vietnam War. However, the Soviet Union and the United States never went to war directly with each other. This graphic of their total stockpiles of nuclear weapons (“warheads”) illustrates the pattern of the Cold War arms race.