IRON CURTAIN
SOURCE ANALYSIS

SPEECH & CARTOON
ANALYSIS, QUESTIONS
AND ANSWER KEY
COLD WAR – IRON CURTAIN SOURCE ANALYSIS

Directions: Read the following text and complete the related activities.

Less than a year after the end of World War II, the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, delivered a speech that introduced the Cold War era term ‘iron curtain’. His March 5th, 1946 speech at Fulton, Missouri, United States was titled the “Sinews of Peace”. It was a significant step in the early stages of the Cold War. He used the term ‘iron curtain’ to describe the line in Europe that divided Western Europe from Eastern Europe. The Western European nations were self-governing and based on the western principles of capitalism and democracy, while the Eastern European nations were under Soviet communist control.

The following is an excerpt from Churchill’s famous speech:

"Ladies and gentlemen, the United States stands at this time at the pinnacle of world power. It is a solemn moment for the American Democracy. For with primacy in power is also joined an awe-inspiring accountability to the future. If you look around you, you must feel not only the sense of duty done but also you must feel anxiety lest you fall below the level of achievement. Opportunity is here and now, clear and shining for both our countries. To reject it or ignore it or fritter it away will bring upon us all the long reproaches of the after-time.

A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately light by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits, if any, to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies.

I have a strong admiration and regard for the valiant Russian people and for my wartime comrade, Marshall Stalin. There is deep sympathy and goodwill in Britain - and I doubt not here also - towards the peoples of all the Russias and a resolve to persevere through many differences and rebuffs in establishing lasting friendships. We understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression. We welcome Russia to her rightful place among the leading nations of the world. We welcome her flag upon the seas. Above all, we welcome, or should welcome, constant, frequent and growing contacts between the Russian people and our own people on both sides of the Atlantic. It is my duty however, for I am sure you would wish me to state the facts as
I see them to you. It is my duty to place before you certain facts about the present position in Europe.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

The safety of the world, ladies and gentlemen, requires a new unity in Europe, from which no nation should be permanently outcast. It is from the quarrels of the strong parent races in Europe that the world wars we have witnessed, or which occurred in former times, have sprung.

Churchill’s speech was viewed differently by different people. Some viewed it as a message from a leader that was trying to warn the free world of danger while others viewed it as instigating a conflict with the Soviets.
COLD WAR – IRON CURTAIN QUESTIONS

Directions: Complete the following based on the following reading, speech excerpts and political cartoon.

1. When and where did Winston Churchill give his famous ‘iron curtain’ speech?

2. What did Churchill mean by an ‘iron curtain’?

3. What is the central message of the first paragraph of the included speech? Explain.

4. Why does Churchill likely “understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression”?

Use the following excerpt of the speech to answer question #5.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

5. What is Churchill being critical of in the above excerpt from his speech?
6. What is the central message of the final paragraph of the included speech? Explain.


8. Consider the political cartoon at the bottom of page two of the reading.
   a. Who is the person saying ‘don’t fence me in’?

   b. What is meant by the statement ‘don’t fence me in’?

   c. According to the cartoon, who is responsible for the ‘iron curtain’?

   d. The two men at the bottom of the cartoon are holding a piece of paper that says ‘plans for new world’. What do you think is the message of this?

   e. What do you think is the significance of the people being crushed by the iron curtain?

   f. What is the overall message of the cartoon? Explain.
Teacher Key

Name: ________________________

COLD WAR – IRON CURTAIN QUESTIONS

Directions: Complete the following based on the following reading, speech excerpts and political cartoon.

1. When and where did Winston Churchill give his famous ‘iron curtain’ speech?
   March 5th, 1946 at Fulton, Missouri, USA.

2. What did Churchill mean by an ‘iron curtain’?
   He was describing the divide that was being created in Europe due to the increased sphere of influence by the Soviet Union.

3. What is the central message of the first paragraph of the included speech?
   He is essentially saying that the USA has emerged from World War II as a superpower and has a duty to help protect the future for free peoples.

4. Why does Churchill likely “understand the Russian need to be secure on her western frontiers by the removal of all possibility of German aggression”?
   Russia was attacked by Germany in both World War I and World War II and Churchill was expressing a view that he understood that Russia wanted to avoid another major conflict with Germany.

Use the following excerpt of the speech to answer question #5.

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia, all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and, in some cases, increasing measure of control from Moscow.

5. What is Churchill being critical of in the above excerpt from his speech?
   He is criticizing the Soviet Union for controlling the territories it captured during World War II and not allowing those countries to become free again.
6. What is the central message of the final paragraph of the included speech? Explain.

He is arguing that past conflicts (both world wars) occurred from a divided Europe and is proposing that for peace to exist all European nations must participate and be part of the solution.


Some viewed it as a message from a leader that was trying to warn the free world of danger while others viewed it as instigating a conflict with the Soviets.

8. Consider the political cartoon at the bottom of page two of the reading.
   a. Who is the person saying ‘don’t fence me in’?

Winston Churchill

   b. What is meant by the statement ‘don’t fence me in’?

It represents Churchill’s dislike of Soviet control over Eastern Europe.

   c. According to the cartoon, who is responsible for the ‘iron curtain’?

The Soviet Union, because it says ‘made in Moscow’.

   d. The two men at the bottom of the cartoon are holding a piece of paper that says ‘plans for new world’. What do you think is the message of this?

The two men represent the Soviet Union and its control over Eastern Europe because they are on the opposite side as Churchill. The message on the paper shows that the Soviets planned to change the order of Europe and control its portion.

   e. What do you think is the significance of the people being crushed by the iron curtain?

It shows the perspective of the author in that the iron curtain was a hardship on Europeans. This hardship was how the Eastern Europeans were controlled by the Soviets and how Europe was divided.

   f. What is the overall message of the cartoon? Explain.

The overall message is that Europe was divided along the ideological lines of capitalism in the west and communism in the east. Also, that not all people supported this divide and that it created a hardship for many people.