Objectives:
By the end of this lesson, your students will be able to:
1. understand McCarthy’s purpose and use of rhetorical devices;
2. determine the central point of the speech;
3. assess whether McCarthy’s points are valid;
4. provide an objective summary of portions of the text;
5. analyze the relationship between ideas in the speech;
6. determine the meaning of words and phrases as McCarthy uses them;
7. analyze the structure of the text;
8. point out and separate fact from opinion;
9. cite instances of McCarthy’s bias.

Time:
One to two class periods

Note to Teacher:
This lesson plan is a draft chapter of a potential book series from Prestwick House that guides students through analyzing nonfiction passages from history. We’d love to hear your opinion on how this lesson works in your classroom.

After reading this lesson plan or trying it out in your classroom, please click here to visit our survey and tell us what you think.

Materials:
Student Handout: Joseph McCarthy’s “Enemies from Within” Speech
Student Handout: Homework Questions, “Enemies from Within”
Annotated Teacher’s Speech: Joseph McCarthy’s “Enemies from Within” Speech

Procedure:
1. Introduce the lesson.
Give the students background on the Red Scare and McCarthyism that frames the speech.

In the years following the defeat of Nazism in Germany and Imperialism in Japan, many countries came to realize that two political forces had begun vying for control of the world’s destiny. Building to an ideological if not potentially nuclear conflict were the philoso-
phi-phies of Democracy—capitalism, personal freedoms, and individual initiative—and its opposite, Communism—dictatorship, collectivism, and suppression of individuality. Many in America saw the rise of the Soviet Union as nearly apocalyptic throughout the world; but, more importantly, they felt it was infesting all walks of life in the United States. Russia had been under Communist dictatorship since 1917, but that philosophy had not spread greatly. Now, however, in the chaos after WWII, a new Communist ruler had forcibly taken over in China, and most of Eastern Europe was firmly under Soviet control.

Anti-communism had already become a political issue when Senator Joseph McCarthy (Republican, Wisconsin) delivered this speech to the Ohio County Women’s Republican Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, on February 9, 1950. McCarthy had originally been elected in 1947, but had no serious impact in Congress; in fact, he was voted “the worst US senator” by the Washington press. This speech, however, propelled him into national prominence and brought a greater degree of hysteria into the debate over the Communist threat. In 1954, McCarthy was censured for his policies and methods; he died in 1957, and, even today, the noun “McCarthyism” connotes a rabid, indiscriminate attack on individuals without substantiation.

In this speech, McCarthy quotes Communist leaders who stated the inevitability of world domination, he contrasts the atheism of the Communist philosophy with the Christian principles of the United States, and he forcefully puts forth the accusation that many American institutions were filled with traitors. Parts of his arguments are bolstered by statistics, but McCarthy never produced a list of the names of 57 State Department employees who were “card carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party.” At different times, he also claimed that there were “81” and then “205” of them. As you read this speech, make certain to separate McCarthy’s fervently held beliefs from purely factual information.

2. Have students read the speech.
Distribute The Wheeling Speech, also called “Enemies from Within” handout and have students read it over. This should take about 10-15 minutes. Alternatively, you could assign students to read paragraphs aloud, or you could read it to the class. The entire speech, though, should be completed before individual portions are examined and discussed.

3. Discuss the speech in class, paying attention to the language used.
After the reading has been completed, discuss the speech, concentrating on the points McCarthy makes, the argumentative aspects, the specific charges, and the rhetorical devices he uses. Use the annotated teacher’s copy of the speech to highlight specific rhetorical elements.

4. At the period’s conclusion or after you’ve completed your discussion, have student continue their analysis as homework.
When the period is close to ending, choose an appropriate spot to stop and distribute the handout, Homework Questions, “Enemies from Within.” Have classes answer the short answer questions that cover to the material they have gone over. You could also have the class read the rest of the speech closely for homework, looking for specific instances of rhetoric and logic. Then, discuss what they found and go over the remaining short answer questions the next day.
Jospeh McCarthy's “Enemies from Within” Speech

February 9, 1950

1 Ladies and gentlemen, tonight as we celebrate the one hundred forty-first birthday of one of the greatest men in American history, I would like to be able to talk about what a glorious day today is in the history of the world. As we celebrate the birth of this man who with his whole heart and soul hated war, I would like to be able to speak of peace in our time, of war being outlawed, and of world-wide disarmament. These would be truly appropriate things to be able to mention as we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln.

2 Five years after a world war has been won, men's hearts should anticipate a long peace, and men's minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period—for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of the “cold war.” This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps—a time of a great armaments race.

3 Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the hills of Indochina, from the shores of Formosa right over into the very heart of Europe itself. Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.

4 Lest there be any doubt that the time has been chosen, let us go directly to the leader of communism today—Joseph Stalin. Here is what he said—not back in 1928, not before the war, not during the war—but two years after the last war was ended: “To think that the communist revolution can be carried out peacefully, within the framework of a Christian democracy, means one has either gone out of one's mind and lost all normal understanding, or has grossly and openly repudiated the communist revolution.” And this is what was said by Lenin in 1919, which was also quoted with approval by Stalin in 1947: “We are living,” said Lenin, “not merely in a state but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with Christian states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collusions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable.”

5 Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone here tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the communist world has said, “The time is now”—that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the communist atheistic world? Unless we face this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.

6 Six years ago, at the time of the first conference to map out the peace—Dumbarton Oaks—there was within the Soviet orbit 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the antitotalitarian side there were in the world at that time roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today, only 6 years later, there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia—an increase of over 400 percent. On our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000. In other words, in less than 6 years the odds have changed from 9 to 1 in our favor to 8 to 5 against us. This indicates the swiftness of the tempo of Communist victories and American defeats in the cold war. As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, “When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be because of enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within.”

7 The truth of this statement is becoming terrifyingly clear as we see this country each day losing on every front. At war's end we were physically the strongest nation on Earth and, at least potentially, the most powerful intellectually and morally. Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining, living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself.

8 The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores, but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not
been the less fortunate or members of minority groups who have been selling this Nation out, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer—the finest homes, the finest college education, and the finest jobs in Government we can give. This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been the worst.

In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with Communists. I have in my hand 57 cases of individuals who would appear to be either card carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy… One thing to remember in discussing the communists in our government is that we are not dealing with spies who get 30 pieces of silver to steal the blueprints of new weapons. We are dealing with a far more sinister type of activity because it permits the enemy to guide and shape our policy…

As you hear this story of high treason, I know that you are saying to yourself, “Well, why doesn’t the Congress do something about it?” Actually, ladies and gentlemen, one of the important reasons for the graft, the corruption, the dishonesty, the disloyalty, the treason in high Government positions—one of the most important reasons why this continues is a lack of moral uprising on the part of the 140,000,000 American people. In the light of history, however, this is not hard to explain.

It is the result of an emotional hang-over and a temporary moral lapse which follows every war. It is the apathy to evil which people who have been subjected to the tremendous evils of war feel. As the people of the world see mass murder, the destruction of defenseless and innocent people, and all of the crime and lack of morals which go with war, they become numb and apathetic. It has always been thus after war.

However, the morals of our people have not been destroyed. They still exist. This cloak of numbness and apathy has only needed a spark to rekindle them. Happily, this spark has finally been supplied.

As you know, very recently the Secretary of State [Dean Acheson] proclaimed his loyalty to a man [Alger Hiss] guilty of what has always been considered as the most abominable of all crimes—of being a traitor to the people who gave him a position of great trust. The Secretary of State in attempting to justify his continued devotion to the man who sold out the Christian world to the atheistic world, referred to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as a justification and reason therefore, and the reaction of the American people to this would have made the heart of Abraham Lincoln happy.

When this pompous diplomat in striped pants, with a phony British accent, proclaimed to the American people that Christ on the Mount endorsed communism, high treason, and betrayal of a sacred trust, the blasphemy was so great that it awakened the dormant indignation of the American people.

He has lighted the spark which is resulting in a moral uprising and will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we may have a new birth of national honesty and decency in government.
Homework Questions  “Enemies from Within”

1. What would be the reason for beginning this speech with a reference to Abraham Lincoln?

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2. Who is the god of war? What purpose is served by including it at the point (Paragraph 3) that McCarthy does?

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3. What elements do the quotations in Paragraph 4 have in common?

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4. The biblical Sermon on the Mount occurred when Christ spoke to his followers outside of Jerusalem; Christians consider this lengthy sermon the essence of Christ's teachings. What purpose would McCarthy have in referring to this sermon?

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5. What is “30 pieces of silver” an allusion to (Paragraph 9)? What is the effect?

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6. Analyze this metaphor McCarthy uses (Paragraph 7): “Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining, living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself.”

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7. What are some facts that McCarthy uses that have no opinions connected to them?

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8. List six statements of opinion.

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9. Locate a quotation that supports each of the following points McCarthy uses to forward his beliefs.
   - fear
   - patriotism
   - hatred
   - exaggeration
   - sorrow

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10. In Paragraph 13, McCarthy uses the technique called “begging the question” in which a conclusion is stated without any proof being offered. How does he use this?

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Joseph McCarthy’s “Enemies from Within” Speech

1 Ladies and gentlemen, tonight as we celebrate the one hundred forty-first birthday of one of the greatest men in American history, I would like to be able to talk about what a glorious day today is in the history of the world. As we celebrate the birth of this man who with his whole heart and soul hated war, I would like to be able to speak of peace in our time, of war being outlawed, and of world-wide disarmament. These would be truly appropriate things to be able to mention as we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln.

The phrase “peace in our time” is an allusion to words spoken by British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain in 1938, when he claimed that an agreement worked out with Hitler would absolutely prevent Britain from becoming involved in a war with Germany. Obviously, Chamberlain was wrong, as Hitler invaded Poland within a year. McCarthy’s use of the term is clearly an attempt to disparage the logic and plausibility of the other two items in his list: “of war being outlawed, and of world-wide disarmament.”

Allusion: a reference to a fairly well-known person, event, place, etc.

2 Five years after a world war has been won, men’s hearts should anticipate a long peace, and men’s minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period—for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of the “cold war.” This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps—a time of a great armaments race.

Anaphora: the repetition of words or a group of words within a short section of writing.

3 Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the hills of Indochina, from the shores of Formosa right over into the very heart of Europe itself. Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.

4 Lest there be any doubt that the time has been chosen, let us go directly to the leader of communism today—Joseph Stalin. Here is what he said—not back in 1928, not before the war, not during the war—but two years after the last war was ended: “To think that the communist revolution can be carried out peacefully within the framework of a Christian democracy means one has either gone out of one’s mind and lost all normal understanding, or has grossly and openly repudiated the communist revolution.” And this is what was said by Lenin in 1919, which was also quoted with approval by Stalin in 1947: “We are living,” said Lenin, “not merely in a state but in a system of states, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with Christian states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois states will be inevitable.”

This argument is framed as a religious one, reinforced by quotations from two of Russia’s leaders, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin.

5 Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone here tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the communist world has said, “The time is now”—that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the communist atheistic world? Unless we face this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.
McCarthy uses phrases that are similar: “Christian democracy” in Paragraph 4 and “democratic Christian” here; he repeats “communist atheistic” here and “communistic atheism” in Paragraph 3. He also asks rhetorical questions and answers them, a technique called hypophora. He has started to point out what will inevitably happen if his alarms are not heeded: “we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.”

6 Six years ago, at the time of the first conference to map out the peace—Dumbarton Oaks—there was within the Soviet orbit 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the anti-totalitarian side there were in the world at that time roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today, only 6 years later, there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia—an increase of over 400 percent. On our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000. In other words, in less than 6 years the odds have changed from 9 to 1 in our favor to 8 to 5 against us. This indicates the swiftness of the tempo of Communist victories and American defeats in the cold war. As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, “When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be because of enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within.”

McCarthy has incorrectly presented this as a direct quotation. Lincoln did say something similar: “At what point then is the approach of danger to be expected? I answer. If it ever reach us it must spring up amongst us; it cannot come from abroad.” This exact statement, though, is completely McCarthy’s. The “Communist victories and American defeats” is his second attempt to frighten his listeners, which is reinforced one line later with “terrifyingly.”

7 The truth of this statement is becoming terrifyingly clear as we see this country each day losing on every front. At war’s end we were physically the strongest nation on Earth and, at least potentially, the most powerful intellectually and morally. Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining, living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself.

Metaphor: a comparison of two things that are basically dissimilar in which one is described in terms of the other

8 The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores, but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate or members of minority groups who have been selling this Nation out, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest nation on earth has had to offer—the finest homes, the finest college education, and the finest jobs in Government we can give. This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been the worst....

McCarthy begins his main point at this juncture: The “finest” Americans, those who work in the government, are responsible for America’s predicament. Notice his continuing repetition and his use of cliché.

Cliché: a trite, overused, and overly familiar expression

9 In my opinion the State Department, which is one of the most important government departments, is thoroughly infested with Communists. I have in my hand 57 cases of individuals who would appear to be either card carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy....One thing to remember in discussing the communists in our government is that we are not dealing with spies who get 30 pieces of silver to steal the blueprints of new weapons. We are dealing with a far more sinister type of activity because it permits the enemy to guide and shape our policy....

This paragraph is both hyperbolic and contains an allusion and a metaphor. It sounds as if the State Department has no redeeming qualities and must be treated the way an exterminator would eradicate vermin from a home.

Hyperbole: conscious exaggeration or overstatement
As you hear this story of high treason, I know that you are saying to yourself, “Well, why doesn’t the Congress do something about it?” Actually, ladies and gentlemen, one of the important reasons for the graft, the corruption, the dishonesty, the disloyalty, the treason in high Government positions—one of the most important reasons why this continues is a lack of moral uprising on the part of the 140,000,000 American people. In the light of history, however, this is not hard to explain.

McCarthy’s listing of government wrongs—graft, corruption, dishonesty, disloyalty, treason—combines climax and asyndeton. What effect does he create by doing this in such a specific manner?

The list seems more rushed and immediate because it contains no conjunctions. It begins with the relatively minor misdemeanor of graft and ends with punishable-by-death treason. If the listeners/readers accept that graft exists in the State Department, the listing allows them to progress easily from one crime to the next and culminate with the most serious.

Asyndeton: a list without conjunctions

Climax: the organizing of ideas to that they progress from least important to most important

It is the result of an emotional hang-over and a temporary moral lapse which follows every war. It is the apathy to evil which people who have been subjected to the tremendous evils of war feel. As the people of the world see mass murder, the destruction of defenseless and innocent people, and all of the crime and lack of morals which go with war, they become numb and apathetic. It has always been thus after war.

However, the morals of our people have not been destroyed. They still exist. This cloak of numbness and apathy has only needed a spark to rekindle them. Happily, this spark has finally been supplied.

The analogy to a fire beginning to awaken Americans to the supposed dangers they face propels McCarthy’s thesis forward. Watch for the target of his analogy in the next paragraph.

Analogy: the use of something well understood to explain a much more complicated concept

As you know, very recently the Secretary of State [Dean Acheson] proclaimed his loyalty to a man [Alger Hiss] guilty of what has always been considered as the most abominable of all crimes—of being a traitor to the people who gave him a position of great trust. The Secretary of State in attempting to justify his continued devotion to the man who sold out the Christian world to the atheistic world, referred to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount as a justification and reason therefore, and the reaction of the American people to this would have made the heart of Abraham Lincoln happy.

Begging the Question: a logical fallacy in which the conclusion is agreed upon with no proof

When this pompous diplomat in striped pants, with a phony British accent, proclaimed to the American people that Christ on the Mount endorsed communism, high treason, and betrayal of a sacred trust, the blasphemy was so great that it awakened the dormant indignation of the American people.

Ad Hominem: a personal attack; literally meaning “to the person”

He has lighted the spark which is resulting in a moral uprising and will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we may have a new birth of national honesty and decency in government.

In this final paragraph, McCarthy again mentions a “spark.” Previously, he stated that America had lost itself under a “cloak of numbness and apathy” and needed some sort of moral “spark” to become what it was during WWII. Surprisingly, it was Acheson who rekindled the spark, despite his being called a traitor by McCarthy.
Homework Questions “Enemies from Within”

1. What would be the reason for beginning this speech with a reference to Abraham Lincoln?
   By invoking one of America’s best-loved presidents, McCarthy is attempting to win the audience over to his viewpoint immediately.

2. Who is the god of war? What purpose is served by including it at the point (Paragraph 3) that McCarthy does?
   The mythological god is Mars (Roman) or Ares (Greek). McCarthy intends to make his listeners aware that although the most destructive war in history has recently ended, there is another war just on the horizon between the forces of “communistic atheism and Christianity.” This battle, as he describes it, will be the last one to be fought, and the United States is losing it. His warning and his incorrect evaluation represent McCarthy’s first attempt at frightening his audience.

3. What elements do the quotations in Paragraph 4 have in common?
   Both quotations discuss the triumph of Communism through armed conflict. Both denigrate the idea of Christianity and praise the philosophy of Communism.

4. The biblical Sermon on the Mount occurred when Christ spoke to his followers outside of Jerusalem; Christians consider this lengthy sermon the essence of Christ’s teachings. What purpose would McCarthy have in referring to this sermon?
   McCarthy’s speech was delivered to a group of Republican women in West Virginia, so it can logically be inferred that a great majority of the listeners were Christians. They would understand what the Sermon on the Mount said and agree with Senator McCarthy that Dean Acheson, the Secretary of State, should not have used Christ’s sermon as “justification” for a “devotion to the man who sold out the Christian world to the atheistic world.”

5. What is “30 pieces of silver” an allusion to (Paragraph 9)? What is the effect?
   In the Bible, Judas betrayed Christ for “thirty pieces of silver.” McCarthy is equating members of the State Department with a disloyal and abhorrent traitor.

6. Analyze this metaphor McCarthy uses (Paragraph 7): “Ours could have been the honor of being a beacon in the desert of destruction, a shining, living proof that civilization was not yet ready to destroy itself.”
   A beacon shines to light up dark places or to alert people to danger. The United States is the “beacon,” as well as the “proof,” pointing out the horrors of Communism, but, in McCarthy’s reasoning the country has failed because of Communist infiltrators. There is no reason to have a beacon in an actual desert, except in McCarthy’s “desert of destruction.” Within the sentence, McCarthy includes the plosives of beacon, desert, destruction, proof, and destroy. These all add force to his statement.

7. What are some facts that McCarthy uses that have no opinions connected to them?
   • It’s Lincoln’s 135th birthday
   • WWII ended five years ago
   • Quotations from Lenin and Stalin
   • The statistics about people under Soviet domination
8. List six statements of opinion.

- “what a glorious day today is in the history of the world.”
- “Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity…And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.”
- “The truth of this statement is becoming terrifyingly clear as we see this country each day losing on every front.”
- “The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is…because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation.”
- “We are dealing with a far more sinister type of activity…”
- Paragraphs 11, and 14

9. Locate a quotation that supports each of the following points McCarthy uses to forward his beliefs.

- **fear** “we find ourselves in a position of impotency”
- **patriotism** “one of the greatest men in American history”
- **hatred** “the man who sold out the Christian world”
- **exaggeration** “the most abominable of all crimes”
- **sorrow** “the destruction of defenseless and innocent people”

10. In Paragraph 13, McCarthy uses the technique called “begging the question” in which a conclusion is stated without any proof being offered. How does he use this?

McCarthy states that “being a traitor” is “the most abominable of all crimes”; this is his conclusion, but there is no reasoning to back it up. Is “being a traitor” worse than a being a mass murderer or a war criminal? He is also using the tactic of “guilt by association.” Acheson supported Hiss—who was convicted of perjury only 19 days earlier—so Acheson must also be guilty.
Standards

Common Core State Standards
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.2
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.4
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.6
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.8
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.11-12.10

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills
- TEKS §110.33 (b)(1)
- TEKS §110.33 (b)(6)
- TEKS §110.33 (b)(8)
- TEKS §110.33 (b)(10)

Sources:
- Note: The original speech is four pages long. We have taken the major points, eliminated some obscure and then-contemporary references, and used what is generally considered the thrust of the speech. This text was compiled from a combination of sources:
  - http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6456
  - http://www.advances.umd.edu/LincolnBirthday/mccarthy1950.xml


Note to Teacher:
This lesson plan is a draft chapter of a potential book series from Prestwick House which guides students through analyzing nonfiction passages from history. We’d love to hear your opinion on how this lesson works in your classroom.
After reading this lesson plan or trying it out in your classroom, please click here to visit our survey and tell us what you think.

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