Grades: 9-12  
Subjects: U.S. History and Geography  
Time required: 2 days  
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**OVERVIEW**

The Palmer Raids, conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice, targeted radicals, communists, and immigrants in the United States. The raids were led by General A. Mitchell Palmer in response to social unrest and fear in American society after World War I. Several thousand people were arrested, accused of crimes, and sometimes deported. Those considered to be anarchists, communists, or anti-government were targeted. Often times the government went after labor unions and intellectuals in American society. The raids represent a reaction derived from fear and often led to the attack of innocent people for simply disagreeing with democratic or American ideals.

The Palmer Raids are situated within the 1920s Red Scare epidemic in the United States. After WWI, due to unemployment and inflation, workers began to strike. Racism against African Americans and immigrants often led to riots and violent acts. With American society unstable, the U.S. government and ordinary citizens feared a communist takeover. The successful 1917 Bolshevik revolution in Russia fueled the idea that a communist revolt could indeed happen anywhere. The Palmer Raids and other attacks on immigrants was an increased attempt to rid America of communists and radicals.

**UNDERSTANDING GOAL**

Students will place the Palmer Raids within the larger historical context of the Red Scare. Students will understand the economic and social problems America faced after WWI.

**OBJECTIVES**

- Students will compare and contrast communism and capitalism.
- Students will explain the causes of the Red Scare.
- Students will analyze American society after WWI.
- Students will analyze primary sources to evaluate what took place during the Palmer Raids.

**INVESTIGATIVE QUESTION**

How are the Palmer Raids representative of American society after World War I? How do they fit into American conflicts with communism?

**CURRICULUM STANDARDS**

United States History and Geography  
US.36 Analyze the attacks on civil liberties and racial and ethnic tensions, including the Palmer Raids, the immigration quota acts of the 1920’s, the resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, the efforts of Ida B. Wells and Randolph Miller, the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti, the emergence of Garveyism, and the rise of the NAACP.

World History  
W.23 Evaluate primary source documents while analyzing the role of political and economic rivalries, ethnic and ideological conflicts, domestic discontent, disorder, propaganda, and nationalism in mobilizing the civilian population in leading to the outbreak of World War I.

English & Language Arts  
Key Ideas and Details 11-12.1 Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
Materials
- Projector
- Computer/ Laptop for PPT

Resources
- **PowerPoint: Red Scare & Palmer Raids**
- **Red Scare:** Political Cartoons (located on PPT)
  - “The Bomber-ang” Image 5
  - “The Gauntlet Flung Down” Image 6
  - “Come Unto Me Ye Opprest” Image 16
- **Political Cartoon Analysis Guide (Teacher)**
- **Political Cartoon Analysis Tool (Student)**
- **Thinking like a Historian Checklist Handout**
  (From the TPS-University of Northern Colorado)
- **Topics in Chronicling America: Palmer Raids**
  (Reading Room for Newspaper Clippings)
- **Newspaper handout 1** (“Wide Red Round Up in Bomb Plot”)
- **Newspaper handout 2** (“Palmer Declares Alien ‘Reds’ are to be departed”)
- **Newspaper handout 3** (“Rifles and Bombs for Revolution Seized in Raids”)

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<thead>
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<th>DAY 1</th>
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<tr>
<td>Day 1 will cover the Red Scare of the 1920s and introduce students to the Palmer Raids and its place in a larger historical context of unrest and fear in American society.</td>
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**Step 1**
Use PowerPoint slide 1 to test students prior knowledge and engage them in the content. Have students analyze and discuss the image on slide 1. Prompt students to answer the following questions: What do you notice first? Who is depicted in this image? How are they depicted and what emotions do you see? What time period do we think this image is depicting? Who are the “Reds”?

**Step 2**
Before discussing the Red Scare of the 1920s, use PowerPoint slide 2 to cover life in America after World War I. Ask students how they might feel as an American citizen who just lost his job or as an immigrant who finds him/herself mistreated? Do these actions and experiences align with democratic or American values? Why or why not?

**Step 3**
Use PowerPoint Slide 3 to refresh students’ memories about the definition of communism and capitalism. Prompt students to point out the key differences. Why might communism threaten American values, economics, or political structure?

**Step 4**
Use PowerPoint Slides 4 through 6 to cover the components of the Red Scare

**Step 5**
For a quick review, in their journals or on scrap paper have students answering the following: Name at least four factors that led to social unrest in America after WWI. Discuss their responses aloud in class.

**Step 6**
Divide students into three separate groups. Students will be assigned one political cartoon image to analyze located on PowerPoint slide 7.

**Step 7**
Hand students a copy of the **Political Cartoon Analysis Tool**. Show students the political cartoons on PowerPoint slide 7 and have them fill out their analysis sheet individually on their assigned image. (Teachers can find a guided copy of the analysis tool [here](#).)

**Step 8**
Allow time for students to discuss the images in their assigned groups.

**Step 9**
Bring students together for class discussion of images. Each group will present their image using the analysis sheet as a guide. Ask each group to point out who is being represented? What are the emotions depicted? What can we tell about American society or the Red Scare from this image? How does your specific image differ from the other groups?
### DAY 2

Day 2 will delve deeper into the events that took place during the Palmer Raids and students will analyze primary sources to understand the impact of the raids and attacks on immigrants, intellectuals, and communists in America.

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<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>Before beginning Day two’s activity. Use PowerPoint slides 5 and 6 to review the Palmer Raids with the class.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Give students a copy of the <a href="#">Think like a historian checklist handout</a>. Students will use this handout to analyze and evaluate newspaper clippings surrounding the Palmer Raids. If technology is accessible in the classroom or library, have students navigate through the <a href="#">Periodical Reading Room</a> from the Library of Congress. Students will pick out one of the newspaper clippings listed and read them online while completing the handout. (Additional articles can be found on PowerPoint slide 8.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alternative Step 2</td>
<td>After giving students a copy of the checklist handout, divide students into three groups and assign students a copy of the newspaper clipping surrounding the Palmer Raids: <a href="#">Newspaper handout 1</a> <a href="#">Newspaper handout 2</a> <a href="#">Newspaper handout 3</a> Students will read their copy of the newspaper article in their groups and fill out the checklist handout.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Each student/group will present their article to the class using the checklist as a guide. Encourage students to link what is happening in each article to the bigger epidemic of the Red Scare.</td>
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| Step 4 | After each student/group has presented, bring the class back together for review and discussion. Use PowerPoint slide 9 and have students answer the following questions:  
  - What caused this type of hysteria surrounding communism?  
  - Why was communism a threat to American society?  
  - How does the American economy after WWI effect the rise of communism? Why would some people start supporting communism/socialism?  
  - How do the Palmer Raids go against the ideas of democracy and ideas about free speech, freedom of religion, and etc.? |
| Step 5 | In their journals or on a separate sheet of paper have students write a paragraph answering the investigative questions: How are the Palmer Raids representative of American society after World War I? How do they fit into American conflicts with communism? |

"Too Slow for Me", Literary Digest, 7/5/19, Originally from the Philadelphia Evening Ledger (Sykes), political cartoon [1919]

Shutting Out the Light  
Literary Digest, 3/20/20, Originally from the Tacoma News -Tribune(Armstrong), political cartoon [1920]
EVALUATION

TOTAL POINTS: 100

Participation/Discussion = 25%
Political Cartoon Analysis Tool = 25%
Checklist Handout=50%

EXTENSION
This lesson provides a great opportunity for creative extension ideas. For example, teachers could:

- Have students explore the case of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti and explain how their arrest and treatment fits into the larger context of the Red Scare.
- Show students political cartoons from the Red Scare of the 1950s and have students compare and contrast it to the Red Scare of the 1920s.
- Have students read about the founding of the American Civil Liberties Union and investigate the aims of the organization after the hysteria that followed World War I.
- Allow students to listen to the Stuff You Missed in History Podcast surrounding the Palmer Raids. How do we view the Palmer Raids and treatment of “radicals” almost a 100 years later? Do we see the same sort of fear lingering or developing in America today?

Put Them Out and Keep Them Out
Literary Digest, 10/25/19.
Originally from the Philadelphia Inquirer
(Morgan) [1919]
Day 1: Rubric

Student Name:__________

1. Participation _____ out of 10
   The student contributed to class discussion.

   Total Points: 35

2. Questioning/Discussion:_______ out of 25
   The student answered the questions on the political cartoon analysis sheet and contributed to group discussion.

   Points Achieved:______

   Grade:______

Day 2: Rubric

Student Name:__________

1. Participation :________ out of 15
   Student contributed to their group's argument and class discussion using supported evidence

   Total Points: 65

2. Think Like a Historian Checklist ___ out of 50
   Checklist is completed using evidence from newspaper clipping.

   Points Achieved:_______

   Grade:______
Red Leader Among Score Arrested in Pennsylvania City After Infernal Machines Wreck Five Houses.

PITTSBURGH, June 3.—With the arrest of a score of men known to the police as radical agitators, including Robert Johnson, thirty-five, President of the I. W. W. organization here, who was captured after a fight with detectives in a downtown office building, agents of the Department of Justice, with co-operation of the city's combined police and detective forces, had spread a dragnet this afternoon with which they declared they expected before nightfall to apprehend the terrorists responsible for two bomb explosions last night.

Wholesale arrests of Russians, I. W. W. and Bolshevik sympathizers began early to-day shortly after the explosions which wrecked the homes of Judge W. H. S. Thompson of the United States District Court and W. W. Sibray, Chief Inspector of the Bureau of Immigration, and damaged three nearby houses.

What the police declare is one of the most important arrests was made near the scene of the Sibray explosion when an Austrian, who gave his name as Louis Bachui, thirty, was taken into custody. The man, according to the police, was carrying a small black bag, which was empty. The police say he was unable to account for having the bag, which they believe had been used to carry one of the bombs. Bachui was turned over to the Federal authorities this afternoon.

EVERY SUSPICIOUS FOREIGNER ARRESTED ON SIGHT.

All railroad stations and electric lines were being watched by detectives to-day and all suspicious foreigners who could not give good accounts for themselves were arrested. Police said this afternoon that unless the bomb throwers left the city within a few minutes after the explosions last night the dragnet had been so stretched that escape now would be impossible.

Anarchist circulars were found today near the scene of last night's explosions. They were similar to those discovered in other cities where the terrorists operated.

The theory that the Anarchists who placed the bombs were imported from another city gained ground to-day, the police pointing out that they apparently were unfamiliar with Pittsburgh. The Thompson bomb was placed on a porch next door and the Sibray explosive across the street, apparently mistaken for the homes of the intended victims.

Among the houses wrecked by the
PALMER DECLARES ALIEN ‘REDS’ ARE TO BE DEPORTED

Determined and Prompt Action Will Be Taken Against Radicals Caught in Widespread Clean-up; Capture Bomb-Making Materials, Inflammatory Literature, Arms and Ammunition; Practically All Prisoners Were Russians; Had Laid Plans for “Reign of Terror” in Chicago.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 8.—Deportation of all aliens engaged in “red” activities has been determined upon by the department of justice, Attorney-General Palmer announced today.

Details of the widespread clean-up of radicals last night and today show that more than 200 were arrested in nineteen cities. Mr. Palmer has asked the department of labor to deport all of them.

Included among the material and literature seized by government agents in the raids were quantities of articles used in making bombs, a complete counterfeiting plant, a large supply of counterfeit bank notes, thousands of pieces of literature, described as of the most inflammatory nature, and scores of red flags, rifles and revolvers.

Agents of the department of justice and the bureau of immigration have been collecting evidence in these particular cases for two months, Mr. Palmer said. Practically all of those arrested were Russians.
The Reds planned armed revolt


3,250 Radicals Are Seized

Number of Arrests Exceed Expectations, With Round-up Still Incomplete.

Plans for a revolution backed by a military organization were uncovered in the raids on the “Reds” last night, the Department of Justice announced today.

A large number of rifles, bombs and bomb-making materials were seized in Newark, N. J., the department announced. Evidence was also found that there had been planned the actual formation of a military organization among the “Reds,” which was to center in Newark.

4,500 Arrests Made.

More than 4,500 radicals have been taken into custody in the nationwide drive against the forces seeking to overthrow the Government of the United States, it was learned.

The results of the round-up, which is not yet complete, succeeded the expectations of the officials of the Department.

The Reds are still being apprehended, it was stated, and the great raid will show a total far above that of the combined round-ups of the last year.

The opinion was expressed that 90 per cent of those held will be deported or convicted of criminal anarchy, and the advocacy of violence to overthrow the Government.

Details Made Public.

Details of the organization of the two communist parties who sought to “sovietize” the United States were made public today by Francis P. Garvin, Assistant Attorney General in charge of the round-up. The revolutionary movement in this country was the result of the third international soviet conference held at Moscow, March 2 to 6, 1919, it was stated.

“From the examination of various documents in his possession, Attorney General Palmer,” said a statement of the Department, “believes the following to be definitely established so far as the communist party is concerned:

“That the communist party was the outgrowth of the left wing of the Socialist party of America.

“That it is an integral part of the first congress of the communist international which was formed by the bolsheviki.

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