

SAMPLE C

(Context: The research question for this historical investigation was “To what extent were the Hollywood Ten victims of McCarthyism?” The two sources used in part A of the investigation were “*The Witch Hunt – The Underside of American Democracy*” by Michael Dorman, which condemns McCarthy’s “witch hunt” against communism, and “*Blacklisted by History*” by Stanton Evans which is more sympathetic to McCarthy and presents him as a victim of a Soviet conspiracy within the US governments at the time.)

Reflection: Attempt 1

A question emerging from the analysis is to what extent the Hollywood Ten have to be mistrusted and how far public opinion successfully covered up the truth in this case. The public attitude towards McCarthyism shaped the era’s definition of “the practice of publicizing accusations with insufficient regard to evidence” and “the use of unfair investigatory methods to suppress opposition.”¹ For historians questioning the widely public accepted image of McCarthyism as being a time period of fraud and unfair accusations towards American citizens, it is nearly impossible to win supporters to believe in their theories. Stanton Evans will thus experience difficulty to convince the public nation of his claim that a massive Russian spy operation in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations aimed to enhance the spread of communism in the world, regardless of his holding of evidence.

The ordinary American viewed communism as the biggest enemy, condemned its supporters and supported any measures to contain the Communist spread. The 1950s thus marked a time period where reason, justice and civil rights were discarded to expose the guilty using illegal means². Similar to the accused screenwriter Lawson, who stated “I am framing my answer in the only way in which any American citizen can frame his answer to a question which absolutely invades his rights³”, the ordinary American citizen would argue, I am framing my opinion towards Communism in the only way in which any American citizen can frame his opinion to an ideology which absolutely opposes the Capitalist ideals.

The reliability of the hearings of the Hollywood Ten has to be questioned and considered for the historian’s investigation. In the 1950s the committee never justified their charges, however the hearings produced vast amounts of publicity and indicated communist activity in Hollywood to some extent. The fact that the Hollywood Ten and all members of the film industry that not only admitted or were accused to be communists, but also merely suspected of alleged communist ties were banned from Hollywood and found guilty, certainly questions the reliability of the accusations. Although most of the Hollywood Ten members eventually conceded publicly – but not before the committee – that they had been communists at one time or another⁴, the accusations of communist activity within Hollywood, together with the era of McCarthyism, have to be questioned and put into perspective by historians.

¹ Oshinsky, David. “In the heart of the heart of conspiracy”, *The New York Times*, 27th January 2008. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/books/review/Oshinsky-t.html?_r=0>

² Dorman, Michael. *Witch Hunt: The Underside of American Democracy*. New York: Delacorte, 1976. 80. Print.

³ Dorman, Michael. *Witch Hunt: The Underside of American Democracy*. New York: Delacorte, 1976. 80. Print.

⁴ Dorman, Michael. *Witch Hunt: The Underside of American Democracy*. New York: Delacorte, 1976. 80. Print.

Reflection: Attempt 2

Completing this investigation I realised that a particular challenge facing Stanton Evans is that his book is arguing against the widely publicly accepted image of McCarthyism. Nowadays most people think of McCarthyism as being a time of unfair accusations towards American citizens, and a time where justice and civil rights were discarded to expose people using illegal methods⁵. This means that it will be difficult for Stanton Evans to convince people that actually the actions of McCarthy were justified and to convince people that there was a massive Russian spy operation in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. This is potentially a problem for all historians who are trying to convince people to reject a widely publicly accepted image of something or someone in history, because it will be very hard to convince people to reject something that is so well established and believed by so many people.

When researching the source by Stanton Evans I also discovered that he received a great deal of criticism from other historians when he published his book. For example, David Oshinsky called the book "a remarkable fantasy, playing upon the deepest fears of right-wing Republicans⁶", and Ronald Radosh argued that Stanton Evans' "exaggerations and unwarranted leaps parallel those made by McCarthy"⁷. This criticism and disagreement highlights that in history it is possible for two historians to come to completely different interpretations of the same historical event. Historians cannot simply know exactly what happened in the past, they have to look at evidence and then come up with their interpretation of what happened. This process brings in the possibility of disagreement and alternative interpretations of the past. This process is also the same method that I used for this investigation, where I first of all looked at different sources to find evidence about the case of the Hollywood Ten and I then came up with my interpretation of what happened. This process relies on finding evidence from sources, but this can be difficult because sometimes the evidence you find is not reliable or sometimes different pieces of evidence contradict each other, as was the case in the two biographies of McCarthy^{8 9} that I looked at. This means that an important part of what historians have to do when they are doing their research is to not only find sources, but also look carefully at the limitations of the sources they are using.

⁵ Dorman, Michael. *Witch Hunt: The Underside of American Democracy*. New York: Delacorte, 1976. 80. Print.

⁶ Oshinsky, David. "In the heart of the heart of conspiracy", *The New York Times*, 27th January 2008. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/books/review/Oshinsky-t.html?_r=0>

⁷ Radosh, Ronald. *The Enemy Within*. National Review Online. 5th December 2007.

⁸ Evans, Stanton.

⁹ Oshinsky, David. "In the heart of the heart of conspiracy", *The New York Times*, 27th January 2008. Web. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/27/books/review/Oshinsky-t.html?_r=0>