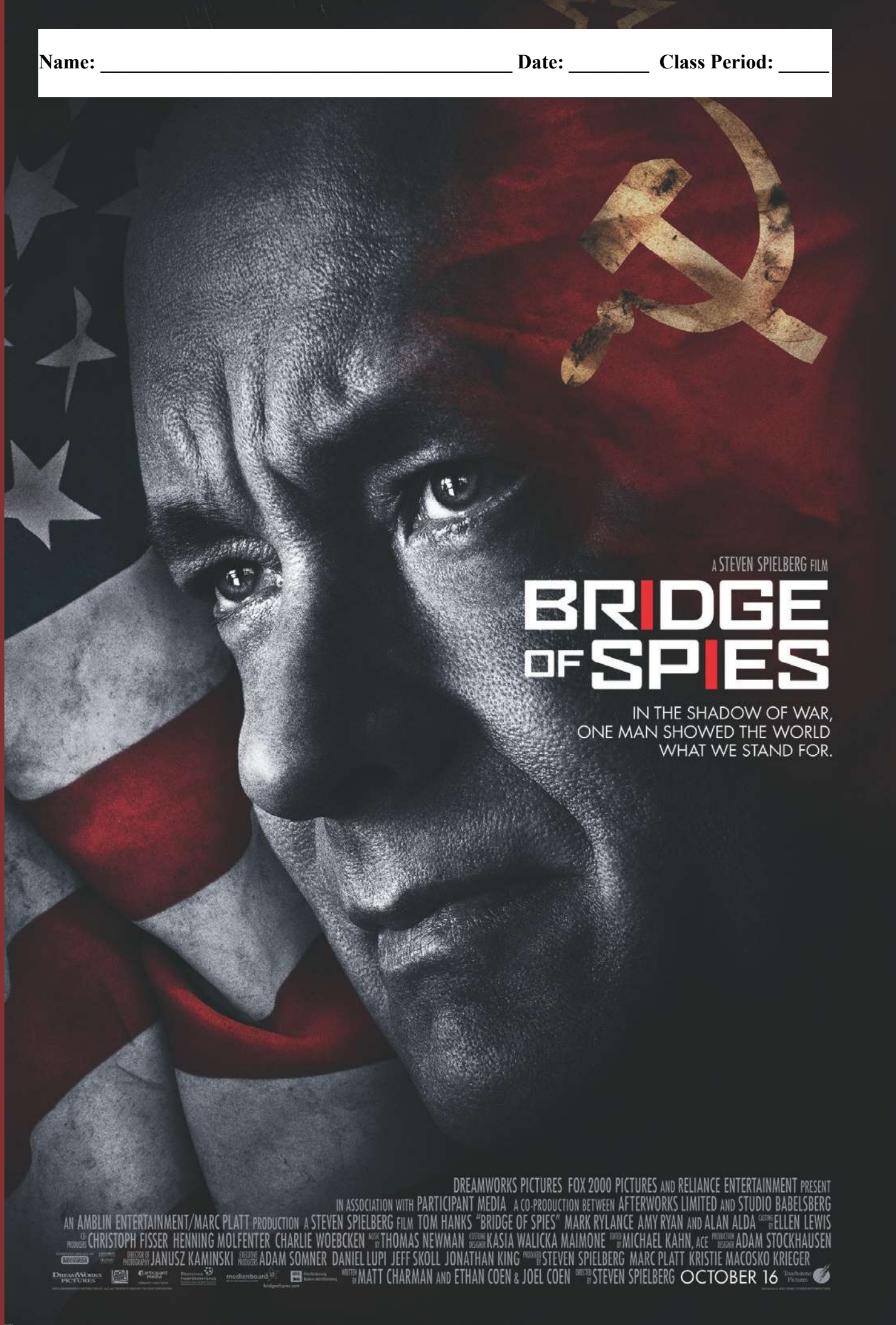
A Discussion Guide

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Class Period:** _____



Journeys in Film
EDUCATING FOR GLOBAL UNDERSTANDING
In Partnership with USC Rossier School of Education

The Cold War

As World War II in Europe drew to a close, British, French, and U.S. forces were racing eastward and Soviet troops were racing to the west, each side trying to gain the maximum territory from the retreating German Army. When the dust settled, the U.S.S.R. controlled most of Eastern Europe, including the eastern part of Germany.

The detonation of two U.S. atomic bombs in Japan a few months later led to an intense effort by the U.S.S.R. to develop its own nuclear weapon. Helped by information obtained from sympathizers in the United States, the Soviets detonated their own bomb in 1949. Having come to a stalemate in weaponry, the communist and democratic nations would conduct their rivalry through a Cold War, in which political tensions and military rivalry were intense but did not erupt into open warfare between the United States and the U.S.S.R.

During this period, the U.S. Congress made headlines through the anti-communist activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) and the wild accusations of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Ordinary Americans became convinced that they were threatened not only by atomic and space-based weaponry, but also by communists within their own government.

Discussion Questions

1. Why were the United States and the Soviet Union so suspicious of one another? What events had caused their antipathy even before World War II?
2. Research the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Was it a fair trial? What were the implications of the Rosenberg case for the trial of Rudolf Abel?

Timeline of events

August 29, 1949 — Soviet Union detonates its first atomic bomb.

October 1, 1949 — The People's Republic of China is proclaimed.

June 19, 1953 — Julius and Ethel Rosenberg are executed for spying for the U.S.S.R.

June 21, 1957 — Rudolf Abel is arrested as a Soviet spy.

October 4, 1957 — U.S.S.R. launches the first satellite, Sputnik I, touching off the "space race."

October 25, 1957 — Abel is convicted of espionage and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

3. What evidence is there in *Bridge of Spies* that the events of the Cold War period were having an impact on the U.S. judicial system? On Jim Donovan's family?
4. Find out more about the actions of HUAC and Senator McCarthy, to which Rudolf Abel refers in his conversation with Donovan about art. Why does Abel say that American artists live in fear? How did the actions of Congress affect the arts?
5. Watch the videos Duck and Cover (1951) (Bert the Turtle Civil Defense Film) and How to Protect Yourself from Nuclear Fallout and Survive an Atomic Attack on YouTube. How accurate are they? What effect would such videos have on the children and adults watching them?

The U-2 Program

The U-2 spy plane is a technological marvel that pushes the extreme limits of powered flight; it can fly for more than 10 hours with a range of 7,000 miles, farther than most commercial airliners, and can reach altitudes of 70,000 feet. Despite being fragile and difficult to maneuver, it has proved valuable from its early flights over the Soviet Union, to the modern conflict in Afghanistan. Although now equipped with a computerized instrument panel and digital photography equipment, the U-2 will soon be replaced by drones.


Francis Gary Powers

U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers (1929–1977) left the Air Force and joined the CIA's U-2 pilots. After his U-2 was shot down and he was captured in 1960—and finally released—he was at first criticized for not destroying his plane and for not committing suicide. After being cleared, he worked as a test pilot and then as a helicopter pilot for a television station until his death in an accident.

At first the United States claimed that a weather plane had crashed, but eventually President Dwight Eisenhower acknowledged the existence of spy flights. However, instead of apologizing as the Soviets demanded, he stated that such flights were necessary and would continue. In protest, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev then refused to attend a Paris summit meeting that had been convened to discuss the situation in divided Germany, the possibility of an arms control treaty, and a detente in relations between the U.S.S.R. and the United States.

Timeline of events

July 4, 1956 — A U-2 flies over the U.S.S.R. for the first time.

May 1, 1960 — Francis Gary Powers is shot down over the U.S.S.R.

August 17, 1960 — Powers is convicted of espionage and sentenced to three years in prison and seven at hard labor.

February 1962 — Powers is released in exchange for Rudolf Abel.

Discussion Questions

1. What special preparations and precautions were taken by pilots to prepare for a U-2 flight? Judging from the events portrayed in the film, were they adequate?
2. Why were U-2 pilots required to carry a "suicide pill" (a coin with a toxin embedded in its grooves)? Should the U.S. government have required such an extreme measure?
3. President Eisenhower had suggested an "Open Skies" policy, under which both Soviet and U.S. planes could make overflights to inspect each other's nuclear weapons facilities. Would such a plan have worked?
4. Francis Gary Powers was awarded the Prisoner of War Medal, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the National Defense Service Medal, the CIA's Director's Medal for extreme fidelity and extraordinary courage in the line of duty, and the Silver Star, all of them posthumously. Why were these awards not presented in his lifetime? Should they have been?

Going to Berlin

Since the occupation of Germany by the Allied Powers at the end of World War II, and its division into four sectors (British, French, American, and Soviet), Berlin had been a particular issue of contention. West Berlin was an island inside Soviet-controlled East German territory. In an effort to gain complete control, the Soviets blockaded the city, refusing to allow supplies to reach its 2.5 million inhabitants. Rather than risk another war, the West responded with an airlift, providing food, medicines, gasoline, and other necessities in almost 300,000 flights. The Soviets finally lifted the blockade in May 1949.

West Germany was far more prosperous than East Germany, which had been stripped of much of its manufacturing capacity by the Soviets at the end of the war. Consequently, many East Germans tried to leave to go to the West through Berlin, an embarrassment to the Communist nations. East Germany, backed by the Soviets, built a wall more than a hundred miles long around West Berlin to prevent anyone from East Germany escaping to West Berlin. Watchtowers studded the wall, and anyone trying to get into West Berlin risked imprisonment or death. The wall served as a menacing symbol of the Cold War.



Denounced by presidents from John Kennedy *("Ich bin ein Berliner")* to Ronald Reagan "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"), the wall was demolished in 1989 after protests by the East German people. Its removal was a major step toward the reunification of Germany.

Timeline of events

March 1946 — Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech acknowledges the division of Germany.

1948–49 — The Soviets blockade West Berlin and the West responds with the Berlin Airlift.

1949 — The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic are created.

1958–1961 — Berlin Crisis occurs when Nikita Khrushchev issues ultimatums about West Berlin.

August 31, 1961 — East German workers begin building wall around Berlin.

November 1989 — East Germany opens the border with the West in response to popular pressure.

October 3, 1990 — Germany is reunited.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the Soviets use the fiction of Abel's wife as a way to open negotiations?
2. Why was the trip to Berlin a dangerous assignment for Jim Donovan? What techniques and incidents did the filmmakers use to enhance the sense of danger? How did they create suspense when most viewers were aware of what the outcome would be?
3. Who was Frederic Pryor? Why was he imprisoned by the East Germans? Why did Jim Donovan put the Powers–Abel exchange at risk in order to include Pryor in the "package"? Do you agree with Donovan's decision?
4. While waiting on the bridge, Donovan states to Hoffman, "Look, he [Pryor] matters too. Every person matters." In matters of espionage and counterintelligence, is this principle enforceable? Should it be?