

Technology - Activity 2

MAD: How serious was the nuclear threat in the Cold War?

Aims

- Understand the policy and thinking behind MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction)
- Investigate and explain one piece of Cold War technology in depth
- Use evidence in a supported and persuasive argument

Resources

coldwarTEA2.lgfl.net is your one-stop link to curriculum resources for this activity; you will find videos, photographs and links to the relevant main Cold War sections.

Introduction

During the Cold War, each side had more than enough nuclear weapons to destroy the other side, and the entire human civilisation with it! The theory was that each side acted as a deterrent to the other side, because if one side used its weapons, there would be Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD).

Step 1 – Did the world ever come close to Mutually Assured Destruction?

Study the videos “Cold War at its Height” and “Most Dangerous Part of the Cold War” at coldwarTEA2.lgfl.net; search the Guardian / Observer Archive (newsarchive.lgfl.net) or use a search engine, BUT think carefully about which keywords to search for. Compare your view with those of your classmates.

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Step 2 – Was MAD mad...or clever?

Use the same resources as in step 1 to research the advantages and disadvantages of MAD, and decide whether you think it was sensible or completely mad. There were plenty of people during the Cold War who held each view, and interestingly both sides often used the same evidence to supported their view. For example, opponents of nuclear weapons claimed that the destructive power of nuclear weapons supported the view that they should be scrapped. But supporters argued that this was the main reason why they should be kept. There is no right answer here, but no balanced answer either. This time you have to come down on one side or the other. Set out your views in a piece of writing – your teacher will tell how long you have to prepare and write, and how many words to write. You may choose to use this writing frame, but do not have to:

Name:	Class:
On balance, I believe that MAD was	because...
On one level MAD really does seem crazy. Opponents of nuclear weapons would have said	
On the other hand supporters would have said	
But after considering both sides, my view is that MAD	