

Focus questions: What was on young New Yorkers' minds when they envisioned the future of their city in 1965? How did the Cold War inform their writing?

Lesson objective:

- Students will analyze essays written in 1965 to see how the Cold War influenced their authors' worldview.

New Generational Learning Standards:

RH1: Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the source as a whole.

RH2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

11-12SL1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners on complex topics, texts, and issues; express ideas clearly and persuasively, and build on those of others.

Resources and materials:

[Image 1](#): New York's Future As I View It, 1965

[Image 2](#): the United Nations Headquarters in the 1950s

[Image 3](#): Mushroom Cloud from Ivy Mike, 1952

[Image 4](#): Map of current UN Members by year of admission, 2015

[Image 5](#): Flag-Map of the Soviet Union in 1990

[Image 6](#): Nuclear Fallout Shelter in the Bronx, 2024

Bundle 1: Essays from 1965

[Essay 1](#): "It was the beginning of the year 2001 A.D...."

[Essay 2](#): "Many people think of the United Nations as a hopeless cause..."

[Essay 3](#): "EXTRA, EXTRA..."

[Essay 4](#): “In our age New York is the world’s capital...”

[Essay 5](#): “C-O-U-N-T DOWN T-A-K-E O-F-F...”

1. Introduce Unit / Motivate Students

Ask students to write down a few ideas on how they imagine New York’s future.

After a couple of minutes, choose a few volunteers to share their predictions with the class.

Then show students the call for submissions from 1965 (Image 1, “New York’s Future As I View It”), as a way of showing them that New Yorkers their age 60 years ago had to confront the same question they just did. Ask students:

- How do you imagine those New Yorkers from 60 years ago would have responded?
- How was their world different from ours? Do you think this affected their predictions?

After a few volunteers have shared their answers, tell the class that today we will learn about one of the things that made the 1960s a very different time from ours: the Cold War.

2. Model / Teach

Introduce key concepts that are central to this topic:

- Cold War
 - Soviet Union → use Image 5
- Mutually Assured Destruction / World War III → use Image 6
 - Atomic Bomb → use Image 3
- United Nations → use Image 2
- Decolonization → use Image 4

3. Group Work

Divide the class into five groups and distribute an essay to each group (ideally, one copy per student, so each can read individually). Give them time to read the essay.

Once they are done reading, ask each group to discuss the worries and predictions of the author of their essay, making a list.

After they have had some time to talk about that, ask each group how these worries and predictions are connected to the Cold War, if at all, and to make special note of any specific events mentioned in their essays.

4. Assessment

Ask the groups to choose one or two spokespeople, who will share with the rest of the class what their essay was about and how the Cold War.

Optional homework assignment

Visit one of the relevant places!

- Nuclear shelter
- United Nations Building