**Unit 6 Intro: Abstract and Historical Overview:**

*Search for three big themes that emerge from this reading. Highlight lines that lend themselves to those themes. Underline words or sentences you don't understand.*

This era opens with the world in a very desperate condition.  Over 70 million people had been killed in the two world wars, countless other millions died because of disease and poverty generated by depression and the residue of war.  Europe, Asia, and much of North Africa were mired in war-related destruction.  With Europe in crisis, many of its former colonies were fostering independence movements.  The United States emerged from World War II as the major industrial power and, for a brief time, the only atomic power.  As one of the Allied Powers from World War II, the Soviet Union occupied Eastern Europe and the eastern portion of Germany at the war’s end.  Very quickly, however, the Soviet Union and the United States became enemies. These two rivals engaged in an ideological conflict called the “Cold War.”  As economic and political tensions mounted, this war became “hot” as the two superpowers engaged in proxy conflicts.  For example, Americans fought against Communists in Korea and Vietnam, while the Soviet Union attempted to spread communism in Latin America and Afghanistan. The deterrence and containment policies of both blocs rested on the arms race and the fear of mutually assured destruction through nuclear war.  As the Cold War became an economic drain on the Soviet Union, new leaders altered the ideological landscape.  The Cold War abruptly ended in 1989 with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the aftermath of World War II, attempts were made to restore and stabilize world systems through new sets of trade and political policies.  For example, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations were established.  However, what some might call economic nationalism, or a new form of mercantilism, dominated most policies until recent calls for global free markets.  Also during the Cold War period, the pace at which colonized people achieved independence seemed to quicken (e.g., India in 1947, Indonesia in 1949, and Ghana in 1957).  These newly formed nation-states were poor and the international community responded through international governmental and non-governmental organizations.  It is also important to note that democratic ideas spread across the globe impacting political change in South Korea, India, Japan, Brazil, South Africa, and the United States through the civil rights movements.