

The 1950s

Backwards Planning Curriculum Units

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How to Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
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Many today associate the 1950s with the birth of rock ‘n’ roll, hula hoops and coonskin caps, and perfect television families. However, the decade proved much more complex than its apparent superficiality might imply.

The 1950s began with the Korean War and ended with relations between the U.S. and USSR having grown even colder. The arms race began in earnest once the Soviets built their own nuclear weapons, leading to even more powerful and destructive technologies. This competition became almost as much about nationalist pride as technological superiority. Fears of communist infiltration ran rampant, both launching the careers of crusading politicians and destroying the lives of the unjustly accused.

Returning veterans resumed civilian life, settling into affordable housing and engendering the largest population increase in U.S. history. Television became a powerful force in American life, not only for the entertainment value of its programming but for its ability to influence public perceptions. Critics claimed that the pressure to conform to traditional (if unrealistic) family roles and behaviors led many to trade away their individuality for stability and financial success.

Still, undercurrents of rebellion did challenge the status quo. African Americans began to see victories in their fight against second-class citizenship, most notably with the desegregation of public schools. Emerging musicians and actors captured the imaginations of young people whose emulation of these stars distressed their parents; new writers told stories of the underbelly of contemporary, cookie-cutter ’50s life.

By decade’s end, Americans began to look for a new generation of leaders to lead them into a “New Frontier.” For most, social upheaval, assassinations, and an unending quagmire in southeast Asia seemed unimaginable as the nation entered the 1960s, and many eventually longed for the seemingly simpler time of the 1950s.

Essential Questions

- What aspects of post–World War II America shaped the issues that arose in the 1950s?
- How did the Cold War affect American foreign policy during the decade?
- How did changing aspects of culture affect the upbringing of children and adolescents?
- Why did rock ‘n’ roll engender wildly different reactions from various segments of society?
- How did the modern civil rights movement evolve in the mid- and late 1950s?
- What impact did television have on society, economics, and politics during the 1950s?
- How did events and issues in the 1950s help lead to the cultural and social revolutions of the 1960s?

Returning Veterans “Readjust”

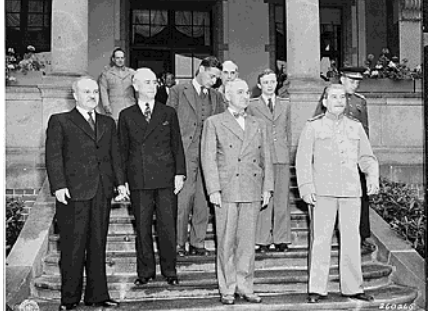
- GI Bill of Rights (Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944)
- Provided vets with education, training, and low-cost loans for businesses and homes
- Millions took advantage of benefits
- College enrollment skyrocketed
- GI Bill helped create “baby boom” of 1950s and 1960s

A major piece of legislation that fueled the social and economic growth of the 1950s was the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, more commonly known as the “GI Bill of Rights.” Designed to help veterans returning from World War II secure jobs, continue schooling, and find housing, the law had a far greater impact than anyone expected.

Veterans took advantage of low-interest loans to start businesses and buy homes. More than 2.4 million loans for mortgages were issued by the time the first GI Bill expired in 1956. In addition, millions took advantage of the law’s educational benefits. Veterans made up more than 49 percent of incoming freshmen college students in 1947; by 1956, more than half of returning WWII vets had taken advantage of college or vocational training programs. Colleges and universities were overwhelmed by the number of new enrollees.

The GI Bill’s provisions for low-cost mortgages and educational training programs allowed many veterans the opportunity to marry and start families, leading to the “baby boom” of the 1950s and 1960s.

President Truman



Truman (center) stands with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin (right foreground) during the 1945 Potsdam Conference

- Became president upon death of FDR (1945)
- Soviet aggression in Europe
- Faced several domestic challenges
- Won election to his own term in 1948
- Korean War began in 1950

President Harry S. Truman dealt with several significant domestic and foreign policy crises during his nearly two terms in office. Having become president upon the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945, Truman ordered the use of atomic bombs against Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and also helped shape the future of postwar Europe and Asia after the surrender of the Axis Powers.

However, Truman also had to deal with Soviet aggression in various parts of Europe during the late 1940s and early 1950s. When the Soviets blocked access to West Berlin in 1948, the Truman Administration initiated the Berlin Airlift to bring in food and supplies to the city. Truman also announced what became known as the “Truman Doctrine,” which declared communism a threat that the U.S. had an obligation to confront. China fell to the communists in the late 1940s, and following the policy of “containment” (in which the spread of communism to neighboring nations was checked, either diplomatically or militarily), Truman sent U.S. troops to fight the North Korean incursion into South Korea in 1950. The war dragged on for three years, with an armistice signed by Truman’s successor Dwight Eisenhower.

On the home front, Truman also dealt with several issues, including the desegregation of the armed forces, as well as several crippling strikes involving the steel, coal, and railroad industries. Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy drew national attention with his investigations into communist infiltration of the U.S. government. In 1952, with his popularity waning, Truman decided not to seek reelection. He retired to Independence, Missouri, where he died in 1972.

Truman and Civil Rights

- Congress rejected his civil rights legislation
- Formed President's Committee on Civil Rights
- Desegregated federal employees and armed forces
- "Dixiecrats" split from Democrats in 1948 due to Truman's policies



Truman shaking hands with
a black soldier

Although Truman had been raised in a family which did not support equality for African Americans, he as president still supported several attempts to help blacks gain equal rights. Southern members of Congress blocked Truman's attempts at fair-employment and voting-rights legislation. He created the President's Committee on Civil Rights to investigate the state of civil rights and to make recommendations for improvements. Truman followed at least two of the committee's recommendations by desegregating both the federal workforce and the armed services.

During the 1948 presidential campaign, a group of Southern delegates, angered by Truman's anti-segregationist positions, walked out of the Democratic National Convention and formed a new political party, popularly called the "Dixiecrats." This party nominated Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina as its presidential candidate. The Dixiecrats ultimately carried four states and 39 electoral votes, but they didn't have a major impact on the results of the election. Truman defeated Republican challenger Thomas E. Dewey by 114 electoral votes.

The Korean War: Outbreak



Marines herding North Korean soldiers taken prisoner, 1951

- June 1950: Truman sent troops to Korea
- U.S. forces part of larger UN force
- U.S. and UN forces suffered major setbacks at first
- Inchon landing helped turn tide

Truman's policy of communist containment was put to the test in June 1950, when communist North Korean troops invaded South Korea. Truman immediately called for U.S. forces to help stop North Korean aggression, and the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution both condemning North Korea's actions and recommending that UN forces fight in defense of South Korea.

Early in the war, the North Korean onslaught sent UN forces reeling, pushing them to the southern end of the Korean peninsula, near Pusan. However, in a daring move UN Supreme Commander Douglas MacArthur landed troops behind the North Korean lines, at Inchon. UN forces then drove the North Koreans back to the Yalu River, North Korea's border with communist China.

The Korean War: Stalemate

- UN forces pushed communists to Yalu River
- MacArthur clashed with Truman over scope of war
- China entered conflict; war became a stalemate
- MacArthur fired
- Truce signed in 1953



UN and North Korean representatives work out the details of the truce

MacArthur's Inchon landing was a brilliant tactical maneuver, and soon the North Koreans found themselves pinned at the Yalu River, the boundary between North Korea and communist China. However, MacArthur made several statements suggesting that the war be widened, including the use of nuclear weapons against Chinese troops massed across the Yalu. Truman clashed with MacArthur by supporting a "limited war" fought with conventional weapons, to meet only its original objective of stopping North Korean aggression. Eventually, Truman elected to remove MacArthur from his position as supreme commander in Korea. This decision proved extremely unpopular, and Truman's approval rating plummeted. MacArthur returned to the U.S., where he was touted for a short time as a possible presidential candidate.

General Matthew Ridgway replaced MacArthur as commander. The intervention of communist Chinese forces had helped bring the war to a stalemate. Truman decided not to run for another term, and his successor, former general Dwight Eisenhower, promised during his campaign to "go to Korea" if elected. By 1953, Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, a major supporter of North Korea, had died. In July 1953, the warring parties reached an armistice that set the boundary between North and South Korea at the 38th parallel, close to the original boundary between the two nations. No formal peace treaty ending the conflict was ever signed.

Nearly 34,000 Americans died in the Korean War, with more than 8000 designated as missing in action and never recovered.

Discussion Questions

1. How did the U.S. government assist veterans returning from WWII? What benefits did they receive?
2. What actions did Truman take on issues of civil rights? How did his positions affect the Democratic Party?
3. How did Truman and MacArthur differ on conducting the war in Korea? Whose point of view do you agree with? Why?

1. Near the close of World War II, the government passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the "GI Bill of Rights." This offered returning servicepersons financial aid to further their education or vocational training, as well as low-cost loans for mortgages or for starting businesses.
2. Truman attempted to get through Congress fair-employment and voting-rights legislation aimed at African Americans, but Southern members of Congress managed to block their passage. As a result, he formed the President's Committee on Civil Rights to investigate problems and determine how the government might improve the state of civil rights. Truman instituted some of the committee's recommendations by desegregating both the federal workforce and the armed forces. Southern Democrats incensed by his actions split from the party and formed their own, the Dixiecrats, which unsuccessfully ran a candidate for president in 1948.
3. Truman believed in waging "limited war"—fighting to achieve stated objectives and then withdrawing—to stop North Korean aggression against South Korea. MacArthur, however, believed in something closer to "total war"—fighting to completely obliterate the enemy by any means necessary; this included possibly deploying nuclear weapons. When MacArthur made statements highly critical of Truman's policies, Truman relieved him of his command. Regarding whose point of view students might support, answers will vary. Some may say that Truman's policy kept the U.S. out of a war with China, which was never the goal; others, that to prevent future North Korean aggression, may say the ends might have justified MacArthur's intended means.

The Election of 1952

- Truman decided not to run again
- Democrats nominated Stevenson; Republicans ran Eisenhower
- Eisenhower promised to “go to Korea” if elected
- Eisenhower won handily



Republican running-mates Eisenhower (left) and Nixon campaigning in 1952

With his popularity dwindling, Truman decided not to seek reelection to a full term in 1952. (The term limits set by the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution didn't yet apply.) Weighed down by the ongoing war in Korea as well as attacks from Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy [discussed in a later slide], Truman withdrew from the race with his popularity at its lowest. The Republicans, aware that they might capture the White House for the first time since 1928, looked for a popular candidate to run for president. They bypassed party leaders, including Thomas E. Dewey and Robert A. Taft, and instead nominated former general Dwight D. Eisenhower, who had been Supreme Allied Commander in Europe during World War II. Eisenhower's friendly personality, as well as his ability to keep allies with different views united toward a common goal, appealed to many voters. His promise to “go to Korea” in an effort to break the stalemate there also proved very popular.

His Democratic opponent was Illinois Governor Adlai E. Stevenson. Stevenson appealed to intellectuals, or as they were frequently called, “eggheads.” The Republicans capitalized on Stevenson's perceived weaknesses: his somewhat dry sense of humor as well as his intellectualism. Eisenhower won in a landslide—442 electoral votes to Stevenson's 89 and nearly 34 million votes to Stevenson's 27 million in the popular vote.

Teacher's note: You may wish to play the video clip of “Ike for President” along with this slide, as an example of early political TV advertising.

Dwight D. Eisenhower



- Nicknamed “Ike”
- Led troops in North Africa, planned and ran D-Day invasion
- President of Columbia University
- NATO commander
- Elected president in 1952 and 1956
- Died 1969

Prior to becoming president, Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower already had played a significant role in U.S. history as commander of Allied forces in Europe during World War II. Born in Texas in 1890, Eisenhower excelled at athletics. He graduated from West Point and later filled several staff positions, including assistant to Gen. Douglas MacArthur. His skillful planning of major operations early in WWII led to appointments of increasing responsibility, such as commander of forces in North Africa and then of the entire Mediterranean Theater. As supreme Allied commander of the European Theater, he planned and executed Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of France (often referred to as “D-Day”).

Eisenhower became president of Columbia University in 1948, but resigned in 1951 to take command of NATO forces. Both Democratic and Republican party leaders tried to recruit him to run for president; in 1952, Ike became the Republican nominee and handily defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson.

Regarding foreign policy, Eisenhower sought to lessen tensions with the Soviet Union, helped along by both the death of Josef Stalin and the end of hostilities in Korea. On the domestic front, Eisenhower spurred the creation of the Interstate Highway System, and famously sent federal troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, in order to integrate that city’s school system. He died in March 1969.

Adlai Stevenson

- Grandfather had been Cleveland's VP
- Governor of Illinois
- Lost to Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956
- UN Ambassador under JFK and LBJ
- Died 1965



A campaign poster issued by organized labor, linking Stevenson with the success of the New Deal

Eisenhower's opponent in 1952 and in 1956 was Illinois Governor Adlai E. Stevenson. A member of a well-established political family, Stevenson's grandfather had been vice president under Grover Cleveland. Stevenson graduated from Princeton University and worked in various New Deal agencies, later serving as a special assistant to the secretary of the navy as well as to the secretary of state during World War II.

In 1948, Stevenson won the governorship of Illinois, but experienced defeat in the 1952 and 1956 presidential elections as the Democratic candidate, beaten by Eisenhower both times. In 1960, he mounted an abortive attempt to secure the nomination a third time, but he could not overcome the lead of the eventual nominee John F. Kennedy.

JFK appointed Stevenson Ambassador to the United Nations in 1961. In a famous confrontation with Soviet Ambassador Zorin over Soviet missiles placed in Cuba, Stevenson told Zorin he was prepared to wait for an answer confirming the existence of the missiles "until hell freezes over." Later in his statement, Stevenson displayed American spy-plane photos showing the missiles in various stages of readiness. The USSR eventually removed the missiles.

Stevenson continued in his post as UN ambassador until his sudden death in London in July 1965.

The Rise of Richard Nixon

- Congressman (later Senator) from CA
- Became famous for prosecuting Alger Hiss
- Eisenhower's VP, 1953–1961
- Lost close presidential election to JFK in 1960
- Elected president in 1968



Richard M. Nixon

California Republican Richard Nixon saw his political career take off in the 1950s. Born in Yorba Linda, CA, in 1913, Nixon rose to prominence in state politics because of his strong anti-communist views. Encouraged by Republicans in the Whittier area to run for the House of Representatives, Nixon defeated incumbent Jerry Voorhis. Once in the House, Nixon took a seat on the House Un-American Activities Committee, actively investigating purported communist activities in the U.S. He famously prosecuted State Department official Alger Hiss, whom former Soviet spy Whittaker Chambers accused of espionage. Nixon and HUAC broke the case with the help of information Chambers had hidden at one point in a hollowed-out pumpkin; Hiss was later convicted of perjury, although doubts remain as to whether he was actually a Soviet spy.

After Nixon's success in the Hiss case, he defeated Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas to become U.S. Senator. Nixon accused Douglas of communist sympathies ("pink down to her underwear"), while Douglas nicknamed Nixon "Tricky Dick," a name that would stick with him throughout his political career.

Nixon's popularity and anticommunist activities brought him to the attention of the national Republican Party, which selected him as Dwight Eisenhower's running mate in 1952. Opponents accused him of secretly receiving improper payments from political supporters, an allegation he confronted and defused with his famous "Checkers speech" to the nation. Nixon was elected with Eisenhower in 1952 and again in 1956.

Nixon ran for president in 1960 against John F. Kennedy. Losing to Kennedy in a close election, he later ran unsuccessfully for California governor in 1962. He announced his retirement from politics then by telling reporters that they "wouldn't have Nixon to kick around any more." However, in 1968, Nixon ran a second time for president and won. Within six years, he resigned in disgrace as a result of the Watergate scandal.

Nixon's "Checkers Speech"



In a nationally televised speech, Nixon stated his case and saved his political career

- Reports of a secret campaign "slush fund"
- Calls for Ike to drop Nixon
- Nixon brought his case to voters on TV
- Refused to give up his kids' dog, Checkers
- Popular opinion kept him on the ticket

Nixon received the 1952 Republican nomination for vice president. During the campaign, opponents accused him of maintaining a secret "slush fund" in which campaign money was diverted for his own personal use, which Nixon denied. The *New York Post* published these allegations, leading several Republican leaders to call for his withdrawal from the campaign. His political future in jeopardy, Nixon decided to take his case directly to the American people. In September 1952, he bought airtime from the major television networks to ask the voters to contact the Republican National Committee with their opinions as to whether he should stay on the ticket. In the speech, Nixon outlined his personal finances and stated why he should not drop out of the race. Nixon referred to one gift that he and his family had received from a supporter, a cocker spaniel his daughters had named "Checkers." He asserted that, "regardless what [the press] say[s] about it, we're going to keep it."

Public response to the "Checkers speech" was overwhelming, and the Republicans decided to keep Nixon on the ticket. After the speech, Nixon traveled to a campaign appearance in West Virginia, where Eisenhower happily greeted him with, "Dick, you're my boy."

From the “Checkers Speech”

I should say this, that Pat [Nixon’s wife] doesn’t have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she would look good in anything.

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don’t they will probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election.

A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog, and, believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was?

It was a little cocker spaniel dog, in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted, and our little girl Tricia, the six year old, named it “Checkers.”

And you know, the kids, like all kids, loved the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it.

Discussion questions:

Give students time to read the excerpt. Ask them the following questions:

- Based on this quote, how does Nixon use references to his family to state his case and explain his finances to the American people? What impact do you think this might have had on the voters? (Nixon specifically mentions his wife Pat, as well as his daughters. He mentions Tricia by name as the one who named the dog. Nixon may have thought that speaking of them and making them an important part of the speech made him look more “human” and ethical to the voters.)
- Do you think that a candidate (or incumbent) today might make a similar presentation in order to protect their political career? Why or why not? (Answers will vary: On the negative side, viewers today might see such a speech as overly defensive and think therefore that the speaker had something much larger to hide; also, in recent decades, TV speeches addressed to the public that aren’t about policy are used to admit guilt, not innocence. On the positive side, such a speech might help maintain the speaker’s popularity, depending on the situation and on whether public approval is already evenly divided.)

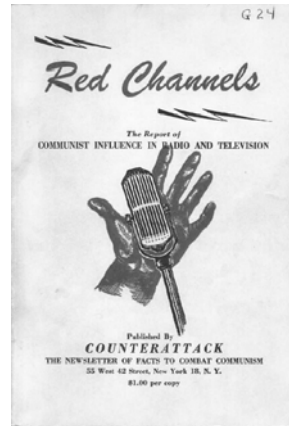
Discussion Questions

1. Who were the candidates in the election of 1952? What attributes of the Democratic candidate did the Republicans capitalize on? Why do you think this was so?
2. How did Richard Nixon become a major political figure in the 1950s? How did the “Checkers speech” affect his career?

1. In the election of 1952, former general Dwight Eisenhower ran for president against Illinois Governor Adlai E. Stevenson. Republican TV commercials and campaign speeches tended to highlight Stevenson’s intellectualism (he was called an “egghead”), as well as his dry sense of humor. The Republicans latched on to this approach probably to manufacture some differences between the candidates to make the contrast strong enough for voters to squarely support on side or the other. Also, the Republicans might have wanted to make Stevenson seem aloof and unconcerned with “the common man,” so that Eisenhower appeared easier to relate to a larger part of the electorate.
2. Nixon rose to prominence as a congressman and then as senator from California because of his strong anti-communist stance. In the House, he joined the House Un-American Activities Committee and became famous for investigating suspected communists, with Alger Hiss as the highest-profile example. Eisenhower selected Senator Nixon as his running mate in 1952, when allegations of a secret campaign “slush fund” (money donated for campaign expenses, but used for personal purposes), including personal gifts from supporters, threatened to derail his career. Nixon stated his case on national television (the “Checkers speech”), for which public approval stayed high enough to keep him on the Republican ticket. He became Ike’s vice president in 1953.

The “Second Red Scare”

- Sen. Joseph McCarthy
- House Un-American Activities Committee
- Accusations of communist ties in the film industry
- Alger Hiss
- The Rosenbergs



This “Red Channels” pamphlet identified “suspect persons” in the media

During and just after World War I, many in the U.S. became increasingly fearful that anarchists, communists, and other suspected radicals might be plotting to bring down the government. This period has become known as the “Red Scare,” after the color associated with the communist government of the Soviet Union. In the 1950s, a second, even greater “Red Scare” erupted in which many Americans thought they saw communists everywhere—in schools, government agencies, even in popular media. Much of this “Second Red Scare” was fueled by Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose demagoguery on the subject became international news.

In the 1950s, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) investigated suspected communist “infiltration” of the film industry, calling several famous actors, screenwriters, and executives to testify. Many refused to speak and were convicted on charges of contempt of Congress; some suffered permanent damage to their careers.

HUAC activities brought to light the case of U.S. State Department employee Alger Hiss, whom the government accused of spying for the Soviets. Implicated by Whittaker Chambers, a former spy turned informant, Hiss’s first trial (for committing perjury while under oath) ended in a hung jury, but his retrial ended in a guilty verdict.

The federal government convicted Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (a married couple) of espionage for selling atomic bomb secrets to the Soviets. Many persons believed that the couple did not receive a fair trial, and that the small amount of information that they sold to the Russians did not merit the punishment they received—execution.

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)



HUAC in session during the 1950s

- Investigated KKK and Nazi activity in 1940s
- Investigated Alger Hiss
- Made Nixon a major figure
- Looked for communist infiltration of the film industry
- Lost clout after McCarthy's downfall

The House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) formed in the late 1930s, originally to investigate German Americans' possible involvement in the Ku Klux Klan as well as the American Nazi Party. Unable to find any concrete connections, HUAC began to investigate possible communist activities in various Works Progress Administration (a New Deal agency) projects, especially the Federal Theater Project.

After WWII, HUAC became a standing committee in the House of Representatives. A HUAC investigation of U.S. State Department employee Alger Hiss led to accusations of espionage. While the government could not try Hiss for spying, it did charge and convict him for perjury for making false statements to Congress. Committee member Richard Nixon stood out as one of Hiss's strongest accusers, and the investigation helped make him the Republican nominee for vice president in 1952.

HUAC also became known for its investigation of communist ties in the Hollywood film industry. Several Hollywood screenwriters and stars received charges of contempt of Congress for refusing to testify, and the investigations permanently damaged many of their careers. Many performers suspected of communist activities were "blacklisted"—that is, banned from employment by an entire industry; in many cases, blacklisted performers could not work for decades. Others, such as silent-film star Charlie Chaplin, instead left the U.S. to work in Europe.

HUAC lost much of its clout in the mid-1950s, after the downfall of Senator Joseph McCarthy (though he was never a member of HUAC), whose reckless anti-communist crusade earned him public disapproval and even censure by the Senate. In 1975, the Senate folded HUAC into its Judiciary Committee.

Joseph McCarthy

- Junior senator from Wisconsin
- Claimed to have names of communists in the U.S. State Department
- Army–McCarthy hearings
- Censured by the Senate for his tactics



Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy

The Hiss case and the activities of the House Un-American Activities Committee provided fertile ground for Republican Joseph McCarthy, junior senator from Wisconsin and the architect of the “Second Red Scare” during the 1950s. His rise began when he made a speech to the Ohio County Republican Women’s Club in Wheeling, WV, on February 9, 1950. McCarthy alleged, “I have here in my hand a list of 205...names that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party, and who nonetheless are still working and shaping...policy.”

While McCarthy didn’t produce one shred of evidence to back his claim, some tended to believe his story. Emboldened, McCarthy spoke out against other intellectuals and government leaders, including General George C. Marshall, former Army Chief of Staff and Secretary of State. McCarthy noted that Marshall was “steeped in falsehood,” and part of “a conspiracy so immense and an infamy so black as to dwarf any previous venture in the history of man.” Many senators and government leaders feared McCarthy. However, many Republicans also saw him as an asset, thinking that his attacks on communists would help the Republicans gain support in the 1952 elections.

McCarthy’s downfall came after attacks on his methods by noted CBS newscaster Edward R. Murrow, as well as his tactics in the televised Army–McCarthy hearings. By the end of 1954, the Senate voted to censure McCarthy, and his career in politics was effectively over.

“McCarthyism”



Edward R. Murrow

- Refers to unfounded accusations of treason or disloyalty
- McCarthy had little or no evidence to back up accusations
- Murrow exposed McCarthy's tactics
- McCarthy stumbled in appearance on Murrow's *See It Now*

McCarthy's emergence as a major force in the anti-communist hysteria of the 1950s led to the coining of a new term to describe the practice of making unfounded accusations of treason or disloyalty: "McCarthyism." While the term was originally used to describe McCarthy's tactics, it has since been used to describe any attempt to smear someone by questioning their patriotism. McCarthy often identified people as possible communists (or other subversives) without providing any evidence to back up his claims. Several entertainers and celebrities became targets, such as folk singer Pete Seeger, Manhattan Project head J. Robert Oppenheimer, and actor Paul Robeson.

However, figures such as Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine and CBS journalist Edward R. Murrow proved willing to expose McCarthy's tactics. Murrow used his popular *See It Now* program to broadcast an expose of McCarthy and his methods. Using film clips of McCarthy's speeches, press conferences, and committee hearings, Murrow asserted that McCarthy had crossed the line between investigation and persecution. In his opening remarks on *See It Now*, he offered McCarthy an opportunity to refute the accusations on a future broadcast of the show. McCarthy accepted the offer, but unaccustomed to debating one-on-one on live television, he did not perform well against Murrow.

The Army–McCarthy Hearings

- Army accused McCarthy and Cohn for seeking “favorable treatment” for former staffer
- McCarthy challenged by army’s chief counsel Welch
- Televised hearings ruined McCarthy



McCarthy and Roy Cohn (right) confer during the hearings

One of McCarthyism’s most memorable moments came during what became known as the “Army–McCarthy” hearings in 1954, in which the U.S. army alleged that McCarthy and his chief counsel Roy Cohn had illegally attempted to get preferential treatment for G. David Schine, a recent draftee and a personal friend of Cohn, as well as a former McCarthy staff member. The 36-day long congressional hearings were among the first to be televised nationally.

Perhaps the hearings’ most dramatic exchange came between McCarthy and Joseph Welch, chief counsel for the army. When McCarthy suggested that an employee of Welch’s law firm, Fred Fisher, had belonged to a communist front organization, Welch fired back with, “Until this moment, Senator, I think I never gauged your cruelty or recklessness...” As McCarthy kept up his attack, Welch continued, “Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You’ve done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir, at long last? Have you left no sense of decency?”

While the committee finally determined that McCarthy personally had not exerted undue influence on Schine’s behalf, the televised hearings gave the American people a front-row seat for McCarthy’s reckless and dishonest behavior. Within weeks, McCarthy’s approval ratings plummeted, and by the end of the year, the Senate had voted to censure him, ruining his career. McCarthy died of alcoholism in 1957.

Discussion Questions

1. What factors made the nation so concerned about communist infiltration during the 1950s?
2. What was the original purpose of the House Un-American Activities Committee? What did HUAC change its focus to? Was it successful?
3. What made Joseph McCarthy an influential figure during the early 1950s? What tactics did he use? What eventually led to his downfall?

1. The relationship between former allies, the U.S. and USSR, deteriorated greatly. Once the Soviets developed their own nuclear weapons, the U.S. lost its position as the world's foremost superpower. Many feared that a communist state with this power might try to bring down the U.S. government, by sabotage or by force of arms. Many Americans had great concern that communists had infiltrated American government and mass culture; the actions of Joseph McCarthy, as well as HUAC, fanned these flames for years.
2. HUAC formed in the late 1930s to investigate German Americans' possible involvement in the Ku Klux Klan, as well as American Nazi Party activity. Unsuccessful, HUAC then looked for communists involved in New Deal agencies. When the USSR became America's main rival, HUAC looked for communist influence in the U.S. State Department, as well as in the entertainment industry. Answers to the last question will vary.
3. McCarthy became prominent for his own anticommunist crusade, which he kicked off by announcing that he had a list of 205 State Department employees who belonged to the Communist Party. While McCarthy produced no evidence, those suspicious of communist activity in the U.S. tended to believe him. Emboldened, McCarthy continued to accuse and speak out against certain intellectuals and government officials. McCarthy's overreaching during the televised Army-McCarthy hearings, along with the work of Edward R. Murrow, exposed his tactics and eroded his popularity. Eventually, the U.S. Senate formally censured McCarthy, effectively ending his career.

Levittown and the Suburbs



Levittown in the late 1950s

- Levittown first developed on Long Island in 1947
- Affordable, mass-produced housing
- Highways spurred shift to suburbs, and from Rust Belt to Sun Belt

As more and more service members returned from World War II, a significant housing shortage made finding reasonably priced dwellings difficult. Two brothers, Bill and Alfred Levitt, developed a system of providing low-cost, modular housing for returning World War II veterans, as well as younger couples looking to purchase their first home.

In May 1947, the Levitts announced their plan to build 2000 homes on Long Island, NY, for rental. Within two days, prospective renters had claimed half of the houses. In order to keep up with demand, the Levitts built their houses on concrete slabs instead of digging basements, and used lumber from their own lumberyard and nails from their own factory. Within a year, the Levitts were turning out 30 houses per day. Soon, “Levittown” became a sprawling community of its own, with phone service, schools, and a post office.

In 1949, the Levitts decided to stop renting houses and instead offered them for purchase—for around \$8000 (about \$72,000 today). A prospective buyer could purchase a 32' x 25' home for \$90 down and payments of \$58 per month. While the roofs of the houses could differ in color, the “ranch”-type houses had very similar layouts. Construction of the federal interstate highway system, as well as a rise in income for many Americans, caused a population shift from the cities to the suburbs, as well as a movement from the “Rust Belt” states of the North to the “Sun Belt” states of the South and the West.

“White Flight”

- Refers to a movement of whites from cities to suburbs
- Populations of inner-city areas remained constant or declined
- Suburbs remained largely white
- Differing theories as to this phenomenon



Development of “Levittowns” and the move to suburbia tended also to have another, less desirable effect on populations in the 1950s. During the decade, more and more whites tended to move from inner-city areas to the suburbs, while African Americans remained in downtown areas; suburban populations increased nearly 60 percent, while urban population growth stayed flat or declined.

Suburbia remained predominantly white. Sociologists disagree as to exactly why: Some see the white movement to suburbs partly as a response to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, which declared public-school segregation unconstitutional. Since blacks tended not to move to the suburbs, school systems there remained nearly totally white. Parents opposed to integration could then ensure their children would attend all-white schools. Other sociologists have theorized that whites would tend not to reside in similar areas as blacks because, in whites’ view, it lowered their social status. Still other sociologists say simply that persons with similar political and social interests tended to congregate together.

Urban Renewal



- Federal Housing Act of 1949
- Pittsburgh an early example of renewal
- 1954 Housing Act popularized term “urban renewal”
- Results of urban renewal mixed

While some cities had attempted revitalization of downtown urban areas as early as the 1930s, urban renewal did not begin to take off in the U.S. until the late 1940s and early 1950s. One of the earliest laws encouraging renewal was the 1949 Federal Housing Act, which provided federal money for cities to buy up properties in declining downtown areas; cities would then raze older buildings and replace them with modern, aesthetically pleasing structures. The act also increased the ability of the Federal Housing Authority to insure mortgage loans as well as guarantee money for rural housing. The act also allowed for the building of public housing units.

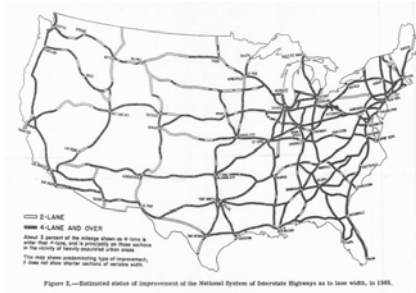
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, served as an early example of urban renewal during this period. Planners revamped much of the central city region into what became known as the “Golden Triangle,” which included commercial buildings, parks, and sports complexes. Other areas of the city received similar treatment, sometimes with mixed results, as urban renewal displaced large number of minorities and demolished historically significant neighborhoods.

The Housing Act of 1954 increased the amount of funding the federal government could provide for urban renewal, but also included incentives for some conservation programs to maintain the historic flavor of some areas.

The legacy of 1950s urban renewal was mixed. In many instances, renewal provided a revitalization of local downtown areas. Elsewhere, urban renewal dislocated ethnic groups from urban neighborhoods and made finding acceptable housing difficult, pushing them into public housing projects. In cities such as Boston, certain historic areas were demolished in order to build highways, commercial buildings, and luxury housing.

The Interstate Highway System

- Created by Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956
- Championed by Eisenhower
- Initial planning had begun in 1920s
- Cost \$114 billion to complete
- Named the “Eisenhower Interstate System”



This government map from 1955 detailed the projected growth of interstate highways through 1965

With the mass acceptance of the automobile, American society became more mobile, leading the federal government to take steps toward creating a system of interstate highways joining major cities. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 (commonly known as the National Interstate and Defense Highways Act) began the effort in earnest.

President Eisenhower championed the project. As a young army officer in 1919, he had been frustrated by the slow going of a truck convoy along the Lincoln Highway, the first coast-to-coast road in the U.S. As allied commander during World War II, he had seen Germany’s autobahn and proposed a similar system for the U.S., based on a 1920s highway-building initiative (itself derived from a map developed by WWI commander Gen. John J. Pershing). Eisenhower argued for the interstates in the name of national defense, since men and materiel could travel much more quickly than on existing roads.

Construction of the highways began nationwide, although three different states (Missouri, Kansas, and Pennsylvania) claim to be the first “interstate highway” state. The original budget for the highway system was set at \$25 billion over 12 years; however, with further construction and rebuilding of roads, the costs skyrocketed to \$114 billion over 35 years. The federal government named the interstate highways the “Eisenhower Interstate System” to commemorate the president’s role in its creation.

The “Baby Boom”

- Term “baby boom” first coined by columnist Sylvia Porter
- Postwar boom ran from 1946–1964
- Estimated 78 million Americans born during boom
- Veterans used GI Bill benefits for mortgages and businesses
- A return to typical gender roles
- Boom leveled off by 1958

In the post-WWII era, many returning veterans found it much easier to settle down and start a family than the prewar, Great Depression era. During what became known as the “Baby Boom” era, the average number of children per family jumped from slightly over three in 1950, to nearly four in 1957. The term “baby boom” was first used by *New York Post* columnist Sylvia Porter, who noted, “Take the 3,548,000 babies born in 1950. Bundle them into a batch, bounce them all over the bountiful land that is America. What do you get? Boom. The biggest, boomiest boom ever known in history.” By 1954, the number of live births in the U.S. topped four million, and the number increased until 1965, when 40 percent of Americans were under 20 years of age. An estimated 78 million Americans were born during the boom.

Several factors played a role in the Baby Boom. Returning veterans took advantage of benefits provided by the government through the GI Bill of Rights. Able to further their education as well as get low-cost loans for housing and for businesses, many decided to start a family. In addition, the postwar years saw a return to the traditional male and female roles in American society. Male veterans generally returned to their role as head of the household and breadwinner, while women who might have worked in defense plants during the war frequently quit their jobs to concentrate on child rearing.

While the number of American births continued to rise throughout the late 1950s, the number leveled off by 1958. An economic recession caused the birthrate to level off, and women began to use the birth-control pill, which became available during the late 1950s. However, children born while the rate was climbing began to enter schools, overcrowding them. Other social services provided to children began to feel the strain as well.

Dr. Benjamin Spock

- Noted author and pediatrician
- *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1946)
- Revolutionized how parents raised their children
- Later became an activist against the Vietnam War



The Baby Boom left many parents unsure about how to raise children. Dr. Benjamin Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* sought to assure parents that they did have the resources and ability to successfully raise their children. Written in 1946, Spock's book became a staple for new parents. His opening words, "You know more than you think you do...", reassured millions of new parents that they could solve any problem that might arise in the care of babies and young children. Spock refuted many of the commonly held concepts of child rearing from earlier generations. He suggested that parents should trust themselves. He advised staying away from rigid schedules for their children and also to be flexible in discipline. In Spock's view, parents should "be reasonable, friendly, and consistent" with their children.

Spock updated his book to reflect changes in the make-up and values of the average family. He added chapters dealing with divorce, "blended" families, and families in which both parents worked. He affirmed the equality of boys and girls, and advocated that both parents share in raising children.

While the book remained hugely popular, some criticized it for suggesting that parents be too permissive, and claimed that the book had a negative influence on several generations of children. However, many believed that Spock's book helped make them more confident parents. In later editions, Spock suggested that parents become active in politics and their community in order to make a better world for their children. He took his own advice to heart: during the 1960s he became a vocal anti-Vietnam War activist.

Defeating the Polio Menace



Government posters encouraged parents to have their children vaccinated

- Salk vaccination tested in 1952
- Injected an inactive form of the virus into subjects
- Sabin oral vaccine began testing in 1957
- Polio nearly eradicated worldwide

The 1950s saw the general eradication of polio, a disease that attacks the motor neurons, and one of the nation's most feared diseases. In 1952, Dr. Jonas Salk of the University of Pittsburgh developed the first polio vaccine. Salk's vaccine involved injecting subjects with an inactive poliovirus dosage that provided immunity to polio. In 1954, the vaccine was tested in several elementary schools and homes in the Pittsburgh area, and eventually nationwide by administering it to 1.8 million children in 44 states. The vaccine proved to be highly effective: by 1957, the U.S. had only 5600 reported cases, and by 1961, the number dropped to 161.

Dr. Albert Sabin of the University of Cincinnati developed an oral polio vaccine in 1957, which utilized a mutated form of live poliovirus that built immunity to the virus for much longer than the Salk vaccine. In clinical trials, 99 percent of those receiving the Sabin oral vaccination developed immunity to the three major strains of poliovirus.

Beginning in the 1950s, international health organizations began to administer the vaccinations in Third World countries, greatly reducing the number of cases in those nations as well. As of 2008, the number of polio cases reported worldwide was less than 1700.

Nationwide Vaccination Programs



People lining up in Columbus, Georgia, to receive doses of the Salk vaccine

Teacher's notes:

Give students approximately one minute to view the photograph, then lead the class in discussion on the following questions:

1. Note that the photograph shows several adults lining up for vaccinations. Why do you think adults might have also wanted to be vaccinated against polio? (Most students will probably note that while polio primarily affected children, some adults did contract the illness, as believed in the case of Franklin D. Roosevelt.)
2. What sort of atmosphere did this vaccination station have? Why do you think this was? (The station includes an umbrella similar to one found at the beach or poolside, and balloons are flying from the top of the umbrella. The decorations and posters are brightly colored. The organizers of the event may have wanted to put many of the persons getting vaccinated at ease or simply wanted to equate the carefree mood at the location with the peace of mind that those getting vaccinations might feel as a result of being protected from polio virus.)

Discussion Questions

1. What factors led to the rise of suburbs such as Levittown? How did this trend relate to the Baby Boom?
2. Why was Dr. Spock's book so popular in the 1950s? How did it revolutionize the concept of child rearing? How did later editions reflect changes in the concept of family?

1. Large numbers of returning WWII veterans created a housing shortage that low-interest mortgages offered under the GI Bill made worse. Since cities could not accommodate the demand, builders such as the Levitts began construction projects outside of urban areas. Improved systems of roads and the ubiquity of the automobile made the distance manageable, and loans made homes affordable, so many people (especially whites) moved to the suburbs. Young veterans could start families on better footing and did so in large numbers, resulting in the period of population growth called the Baby Boom.
2. Spock's *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* was designed to give the legions of new parents confidence and reassurance that they could effectively raise their children. Some of its advice ran contrary to traditional ideas of child rearing, such as not putting children on rigid schedules, being "reasonable, friendly, and consistent" in parenting duties, and encouraging equal treatment of boys and girls. Later editions of the book addressed changes from the traditional family unit, such as families with two working parents, how to deal with divorce, and having men share in the raising of children.

Social Conformity in the 1950s

- People “too timid to be individuals”
- Women encouraged to be obedient housewives
- Popular culture defined “typical” family roles
- Likely helped spur later countercultural movements



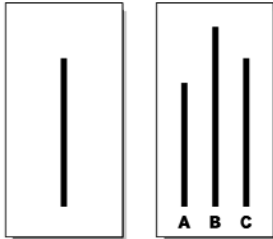
Many have described the 1950s as a period of rigid social conformity, in which many Americans proved willing to forego individuality for stability and personal gain. Some writers and sociologists tended to derisively label the 1950s as a time in which many were “too timid to be individuals.”

The 1950s American woman was encouraged to be a housewife devoted to her husband and children. Women’s magazines of the period advocated that wives be subservient to their husbands, suggesting that the man of the house had absolute authority in matters relating to the running of the household. Women were also discouraged from furthering their education in order to support their husbands, who could then pursue their own educational goals.

Television programming in the 1950s also reinforced this conformity. Weekly shows such as *Leave It to Beaver*, *Father Knows Best*, and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* typically portrayed the father figure as all-knowing and in control of his domain, while the mother stayed home to clean the house, cook meals, and raise the children. In this same television world, children had to be polite, studious, and obedient.

However, women did enter the working world in greater numbers, primarily to supplement the household income. Some of these women felt empowered by their ability to help support the family, and some sociologists believe that these feelings led to the rise of the feminist movement of the late 1950s and into the 1960s.

Asch's Experiments in Conformity

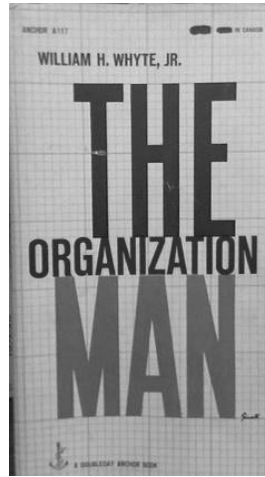


- Asch asked the group to visually compare lengths of lines on cards
- All but one (the subject) were in on the experiment
- When the group gave incorrect answer, subject tended to go along, though obviously wrong
- When at least one other gave the correct answer, subject would agree

The work of 1950s psychologist Solomon Asch starkly demonstrated the phenomenon of social conformity. In a famous experiment, Asch asked a room of “subjects” to visually compare the lengths of lines on cards. All but one of the subjects were the doctor’s confederates, secretly in on the experiment. As assistants showed the cards to the room, the confederates purposely gave incorrect answers (though not always, so that the subject wouldn’t easily see the pattern). Giving the correct answer at first, the actual subjects quickly changed their responses to match the rest of the group, even if it the answers were obviously incorrect. In some of Asch’s experiments, more than 75 percent of the actual subjects answered incorrectly at least once. However, when at least one of the confederates gave the correct answer, the subject answered correctly.

The Organization Man

- William H. Whyte (1956)
- Indictment of impact of conformity on American society
- Individuality a handicap; conformity needed for success in business
- Organization Man must not only accept being controlled, but must “accept it as if he liked it”



An indictment of the flaws of social conformity came in William H. Whyte’s 1956 book, *The Organization Man*. Whyte, an editor at *Fortune* magazine, noted that certain segments of society seemed to have exchanged traditionally “American” virtues of self-reliance and individuality for more modern ethics of loyalty, security, and belongingness. In order to achieve these ethics, according to Whyte, the “Organization Man” had to not only accept one’s control over him, but “accept it as if he liked it.” Whyte wrote that the philosophy of the employee of the 1950s needed to be less goal-centered and more employee-centered. According to his book, Whyte noted that the prevalent view had become, “be good to the company, and the company will be good to you.”

The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit



Gregory Peck

- Sloan Wilson (1955)
- A fictional indictment of the Organization Man
- Shows career men having dysfunctional family lives
- Book (and film) stressed importance of family over advancement

Just as *The Organization Man* vilified the pressure of conformity and sacrifice in business, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* exposed the pitfalls involved in climbing the corporate ladder. The book, written in 1955 by Sloan Wilson, tells the story of a WWII veteran urged by his stay-at-home wife to look for a more financially rewarding job. The book (made in 1956 into a popular film starring Gregory Peck) portrays the main character's family as dysfunctional, and as career stresses overwhelm him, he and his wife realize that "money isn't everything," and he elects to take a job that requires him to work normal hours and be able to spend time with his family, rather than take a position involving a great deal of traveling and associated stress.

1950s Teenage Rebellion

- James Dean and Marlon Brando as antiheroes
- Juvenile delinquency hyped by '50s mass media
- Dress and hair styles became more “rebellious”
- Influence of rock music and the “Beats”



James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*

Although many films and television shows of the 1950s touted social conformity, undercurrents of potential rebellion did appear in the period's young people. Films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* and *The Wild Ones* made anti-establishment heroes of James Dean and Marlon Brando, respectively. Millions of teenagers wanted to emulate Dean and Brando, in appearance as well as in rejecting traditional values as their characters did.

Mass media, popular magazines, and Hollywood all attempted to portray American youth as rife with delinquency. Films such as *The Blackboard Jungle* depicted delinquency in an inner-city school. Teenagers fueled concern about their morals and values by the way they dressed; for instance, boys might wear leather jackets similar to Brando's, and comb their hair into a “ducktail” similar to Dean's. However, a number of sociological surveys indicated delinquency rates were about the same as in past generations.

Parents and political and religious leaders also tended to point to rock 'n' roll music as well as the “Beat” movement (discussed in a later slide) as the main factors corrupting America's youth. Early rock musicians and “beat” writers and poets later heavily influenced prominent musicians and writers of the 1960s.

Discussion Questions

1. How did Asch's experiments in conformity work, and what did they reveal? Do you agree with Asch's findings? Why?
2. In Whyte's book, who was the Organization Man? How did Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* resist becoming an Organization Man?
3. In your view, were the 1950s more a decade of social conformity or teenage rebellion? Why?

1. Asch gathered a group of "subjects" to visually compare the lengths of lines on cards. Only one was the actual subject; the rest were secretly in on the experiment and gave predetermined answers. When an assistant showed the group a card, everyone but the subject might give an obviously incorrect answer, but a majority of subjects would nonetheless agree with the group; if one group member (besides the subject) gave the correct answer but the rest did not, the subject would generally agree with that one person. Asch demonstrated that people tend to willingly follow the group, even if aware that the group was incorrect; similarly, people would go against the group if they weren't completely alone in their stance.
2. Whyte defined the Organization Man as a person who trades away individuality and self-reliance for loyalty, security, and a sense of belonging—all in pursuit of success in business. Perhaps most importantly, Organization Man not only accepts being controlled by his superiors, but acts as if he's happy with the situation. Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* realized that (if nothing else) his drive for career advancement was damaging his relationship with his family; the character decides to take a lower-paying or less prestigious job in order to work stable hours and spend more time with his family.
3. Answers will vary. Some students may believe that the lack of social unrest and activism that later marked the 1960s indicates that social conformity was more the rule. Furthermore, some may say that rebellion can only occur against a much stronger trend or force—i.e., that once a majority "rebels," that rebellion has effectively become the status quo. On the other hand, some may think that the constant reinforcement of gender roles and "appropriate" behavior, along with the sensationalism of juvenile delinquency by the mass media indicated an undercurrent of rebellion great enough to warrant constant opposition.

The Affluent Society

- Written by John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958
- Held that America had great “private sector” wealth but little in the “public sector”
- Advocated putting federal money into public works
- Helped shape U.S. economic policy into the 1960s
- Coined phrase “conventional wisdom”



John Kenneth Galbraith

John Kenneth Galbraith's 1958 work *The Affluent Society* examined post-WWII American prosperity. The 1950s demonstrated that postwar private wealth had increased dramatically. However, Galbraith noted that so-called “private sector” wealth did not translate into “public sector” wealth; the public sector, including many city and state services, remained poor. Galbraith advocated that large sums of federal money be pumped into public works projects such as bridges, schools, and highways in order to provide for an increase in public wealth. Galbraith's work first caught the attention of President John F. Kennedy, and later President Lyndon B. Johnson, who used Galbraith's theories in developing New Frontier and Great Society “war on poverty” programs. In addition, Galbraith's book introduced the phrase “conventional wisdom,” referring to ideas or explanations generally accepted as truthful by experts in a particular field or by the public at large.

Rise of the “Affluent Society”



A 1950s kitchen filled with new appliances, including a top-loading dishwasher

- Increase in availability of consumer goods
- Gross national product and median family income grew
- Majority of Americans considered “middle class”
- Rise in consumer borrowing
- More two-income households

The 1950s proved to be the decade of the “Affluent Society,” as private wealth grew dynamically. More than half of Americans owned their own homes by 1960, and nearly three-fourths owned an automobile. Nearly four-fifths of Americans had a television by 1960.

Increased productivity and consumer demand pushed the gross national product up 50 percent during the decade. As a result of this economic growth, nearly 60 percent of Americans qualified as “middle class” during the 1950s. Rising consumer demand led to a boom in the development of shopping centers, a more than 400 percent increase in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The rise in consumer demand brought with it an increase in consumer borrowing. Private debt doubled during the 1950s, partially because of the expanded use of the installment plan, as well as the development of the credit card. As a result of increased debt and demand, more women found it necessary to work outside the home; the desire to maintain this lifestyle often required two incomes.

Credit Cards

- Used on a small scale in the 1920s
- Diners Club formed in 1949
- Technically a charge card; could not carry a balance
- American Express and Bank of America cards (later called “Visa”) appeared in 1958



Comedian Marty Allen holding up a wallet full of credit cards, including Diners Club and American Express

American merchants had introduced credit cards on a small scale in the 1920s, but generally consumers could use them at those particular stores. Soon after WWII, forms of bank-issued debit cards became popular in the New York City area. However, not until the creation of the Diners Club card by Frank McNamara in 1949 did the concept of the credit card catch on.

A Diners Club member would use the card (made of cardboard) to purchase dinners at participating restaurants. The restaurants would then bill Diners Club, which in turn sent an invoice to the cardholder for reimbursement. The first Diners Club cards functioned more as charge cards rather than credit cards, because the cardholder was expected to pay off the entire balance upon receiving the statement and could not carry a balance from month to month.

With the success of the Diners Club card, other companies soon followed suit. In 1958, both American Express and Bank of America (who later renamed its BankAmericard, “Visa”) began offering credit cards. Traveling salesmen became early adopters of credit cards, and later advertising campaigns made the cards more mainstream, highlighting their convenience to the average consumer.

The Creation of Franchises



The oldest operating McDonald's, in
Downey, California

- Roots in the Singer Company in the 1850s
- Coca-Cola soon followed with bottling franchise
- Franchisees paid fee to sell a company's product
- Instant name recognition and consumer confidence
- Franchising boom after WWII
- Ray Kroc and McDonald's

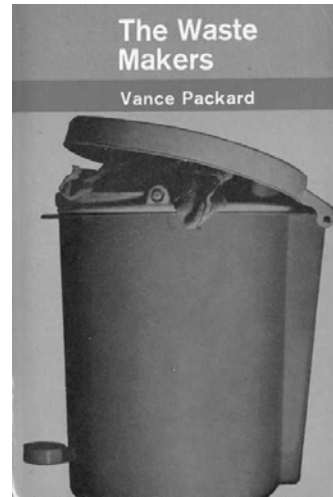
Although the concept of the franchise didn't catch on until the 1950s, its origins actually dated back more than 100 years. Isaac Singer, looking for a way to market his sewing machines, allowed representatives to sell and provide training with the devices in return for a licensing fee. A few years later, Coca-Cola devised a similar system, allowing independent bottlers to sell their product. As franchisees, individual owners managed the businesses and paid a fee for the right to use the company name and product. The franchisee could sell a product with name recognition, as well as the consumer's confidence in its uniform quality, regardless of which franchise outlet they bought from.

Franchising became more popular after WWII, when a rapidly growing population called for a large number of products to be available nationwide. Ray Kroc perhaps elevated franchising to an art form. A salesman who sold milkshake-making machines, Kroc partnered with the McDonald brothers in 1953 to franchise their hamburger restaurants. With the success of McDonald's, other business chains became familiar nationwide, including Kentucky Fried Chicken, Midas Mufflers, Holiday Inn, and Budget Rent-a-Car.

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“Planned Obsolescence”

- Coined by industrial designer Brooks Stevens
- Commonly describes products that quickly break or go out of style
- Further developed by Vance Packard:
 - Obsolescence of desirability
 - Obsolescence of function



While many Americans enjoyed a higher standard of living and the ability to purchase luxury goods, many also decried what they considered a deliberate attempt by manufacturers to get consumers to continually return to purchase more—the concept of “planned obsolescence.”

American industrial designer Brooks Stevens coined the phrase in 1954, and to his surprise it caught on and became his catch phrase. According to Stevens, “planned obsolescence” referred to “instilling in the buyer the desire to own something a little newer, a little better, a little sooner than is necessary.” Soon, other authors and designers began to refine the definition, as in the case of products that “break quickly, or are designed to quickly go out of style.”

In 1960, writer Vance Packard further defined the term in his book, *The Waste Makers*, to include “the systematic attempt of business to make us wasteful, debt-ridden, permanently discontented individuals.” Packard developed two different forms of planned obsolescence in his work: obsolescence of desirability, in which the product is worn out in the consumer’s mind, and obsolescence of function, in which changes in styling create the illusion of improvements in design.

The Ford Edsel



- Car hit the market in 1957
- Named after Henry Ford's son, Edsel
- Failed miserably:
 - Public hated its styling
 - Released during a recession
 - Ford management divided
 - Poor workmanship
- Scrapped in 1960

Developments in technology did not necessarily translate to broad consumer acceptance. The Ford Edsel has in the intervening years become the embodiment of commercial failure in the booming automotive industry. The Edsel (named after founder Henry Ford's son) came in several models and styles. However, consumers strongly disliked the styling—some likened the oval grille to a toilet seat. Historians point to other reasons for its horrible sales: it came out amidst an economic recession; Ford executives had disagreed on whether to build it at all; and *Consumer Reports* cited shoddy workmanship. Ford finally pulled the plug on the car in 1960, after spending \$400 million on product development, construction, and marketing.

Teacher's note: You may wish to show students the short clip advertising the Edsel, included on the CD. Ask students if they think the commercial encouraged people to buy the car. Have students speculate as to whether the car's styling might have turned consumers off in the 1950s. (If you have any trouble playing the video file, you can watch a streaming version of the clip at http://www.archive.org/details/Edsel_Commercial.)

Discussion Questions

1. How did Galbraith describe his concept of the “affluent society”? What did he suggest be done to improve such a society?
2. How did the development of credit cards and franchising change Americans’ spending habits during the 1950s?

1. In Galbraith’s book, *The Affluent Society*, he pointed out that while wealth had increased dramatically in the U.S. since WWII, this “private sector” prosperity did not translate into “public sector” wealth. Galbraith suggested that this problem be solved by pumping large amounts of tax dollars into public-works projects, including bridges, schools, and roads, to increase the public benefits of this wealth.
2. The development of credit cards and franchising allowed substantial change for a more mobile American population during the 1950s. With credit cards, consumers could buy things that they could not immediately afford, though early cards wouldn’t allow a balance to carry from month to month. As the decade progressed, cards became accepted nationwide. Franchising made many brands recognizable nationally, including McDonald’s and Holiday Inn. Since customers could have confidence that franchises of a single company sold a uniform product, they would be more likely to buy from these companies.

Television in the 1950s



- Television ownership boomed
- In 90 percent of homes by 1961
- Radio networks bought TV stations
- Iconic pitchmen
- TV encouraged fads

Just as radio had helped shape American culture in the 1920s and 1930s, television had a similar impact on American life in the 1950s. While only one out of 18,000 households owned a television in 1946, television ownership jumped to 90 percent of homes just 15 years later.

Quickly recognizing the power of television, the three major radio networks (ABC, CBS, and NBC) bought hundreds of stations, becoming the “Big Three” networks. The networks sold airtime to companies for advertising, soon generating nearly \$2 billion per year in advertising fees. Ads frequently featured stars of shows hawking products, perhaps reciting catchy slogans and themes. Cigarette manufacturers spent millions on advertising during the decade, when the “Marlboro Man” became an American icon. A slogan for Winston cigarettes—“Winston tastes good *like* a cigarette should”—caused an uproar by grammar purists who insisted the word *like* be replaced with the word *as*. Other product spokespersons, such as Betty Furness, who demonstrated Westinghouse refrigerators, became as recognizable as the products they hawked.

Television programming also spawned fads which encouraged consumers to spend. When Disney aired a series on Davy Crockett in 1955, millions of American children demanded that their parents buy them coonskin caps like the one the lead actor wore on the show. Advertising on television also helped sell millions of Barbie dolls and hula-hoops.

Television in the 1950s (cont.)

- TV reinforced gender and racial stereotypes
- Called a “vast wasteland” by FCC chairman
- Negatively affected movies and magazines
- Greatly affected politics



The cast of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*

As the new medium of television transformed American society in the 1950s, its thematic content tended to reinforce social conformity as well as traditional family roles. Shows such as *Father Knows Best* and *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* depicted upper-middle-class suburban families in which moms with perfectly brushed hair did housework in dresses and pearls, kids who tended to get into trouble but always solved their problems by the end of the show, and wise and understanding dads. Shows such as *The Honeymooners* depicted working-class lifestyles, but such types of shows were rare. African Americans almost never appeared on TV, except in stereotypical roles such as domestics or buffoons; however, performers such as Nat “King” Cole did make some inroads as hosts of shows.

By 1961, FCC chairman Newton Minow decried the lack of interesting themes and plots in television, calling it a “vast wasteland.” Readership of news magazines plummeted during the 1950s as more people opted to watch TV. Movie theaters across the nation closed as more decided to stay in and watch the “tube” while eating a TV dinner, another innovation of the decade, which provided a metal tray with separate compartments for the entrée and each course of the meal.

However, TV did have a major impact on politics. Millions watched the Army–McCarthy hearings and Senator Estes Kefauver’s hearings on organized crime, and watched news programs such as Edward R. Murrow’s *See It Now*. Political leaders soon began to understand the importance of television. Vice presidential candidate Richard Nixon used it effectively with his “Checkers speech” to stay on the Republican ticket in 1952. However, Nixon later found TV a double-edged sword eight years later, when he debated Senator John F. Kennedy during the 1960 presidential campaign. While many considered Nixon a skilled debater, he could not counter Kennedy’s on-air charisma, and he lost the presidency by one of the closest margins in history.

The Beat Generation



Jack Kerouac

- Group of American writers
- Included Ginsberg, Burroughs, Kerouac
- Rejected much of American values and culture
- Started in New York; later San Francisco
- Gave way to 1960s counterculture

During the 1950s, defiantly nonconformist writers known as “beats” wrote about their dissatisfaction with middle-class American society. Though many writers and poets were considered “beatniks” (a play on the name *Sputnik*), some of the more famous included poet Allen Ginsberg (“Howl”), William S. Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*), and Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*). In their works, beats criticized “family values” and American culture. They tended to highlight and applaud society’s so-called outcasts. Kerouac wrote in *On the Road* : “The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn, like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes ‘Awww!’”

Beat writings generally included intense emotion as well as graphic descriptions of sometimes abnormal behavior. Several locales banned beats’ works, including “Howl” and *Naked Lunch*, declaring them obscene for their treatment of drug use, sexuality, and behavior. Kerouac’s publisher released *On the Road* only after he had removed most of the objectionable material.

As the 1960s counterculture grew, many of the beatniks migrated to the San Francisco area and became involved in the “hippie” movement. Sixties-era writers and artists such as Jackson Pollock, Ken Kesey, and Bob Dylan are frequently mentioned as carriers of the beat movement.

Rock ‘n’ Roll

- Elements of gospel, country, blues, other music forms
- Considered subversive
- DJ Alan Freed
- White artists made rock acceptable to a wider audience
- *The Blackboard Jungle*



Bill Haley and His Comets

Many parents in the 1950s (as well as political and religious leaders) feared “rock ‘n’ roll,” a new type of music that many American teenagers had embraced. “Rock” had roots as diverse as the musicians who played the songs and the young people who listened to the music. Elements of several musical forms of the early 20th century coalesced into rock, including gospel, folk, blues, and country and western. Some derided rock as derived from “hillbilly” music (country and western music) and “race” music (what whites called rhythm-and-blues music, because of its popularity among African Americans), and claimed that rock caused social unrest and juvenile delinquency.

Cleveland disk jockey Alan Freed popularized the phrase “rock ‘n’ roll,” though it had existed (with various and sometimes contradictory meanings) in the African American community for years. By 1952, his rock music radio show had become a feature on New York radio.

Mainstream radio outlets frequently ignored early rock musicians, but some artists—primarily white musicians, such as Elvis Presley—managed to take the African American sound and make it acceptable to a wider audience. The 1955 film *The Blackboard Jungle* (which featured Bill Haley and His Comets performing “Rock Around the Clock”) also put rock ‘n’ roll before a mainstream audience.

Rock ‘n’ Roll: Cultural Backlash

- Strong African American influences
- Said to encourage race mixing and immoral behavior
- Variouslly called:
 - the devil’s music
 - a communist plot
 - a communicable disease

While teenagers soon became fans of the new music style, many members of the establishment opposed rock ‘n’ roll. For instance, segregationists decried its African American influences as encouraging race mixing. Some religious leaders saw rock as conducive to “immoral behavior” among American youth, calling it “the devil’s music.” Some looking for a new target since the end of the McCarthy era believed rock ‘n’ roll to be a communist plot to corrupt American youth. Some psychiatrists went as far as to label rock a “communicable disease” by which “straight arrow” kids might be led astray by their less desirable companions.

Elvis Presley

- Born 1935, in MS
- First recordings for Sun Records in 1953
- Became famous for songs such as “Hound Dog,” “Jailhouse Rock,” “Heartbreak Hotel”
- Died 1977



Perhaps no rock musician had more impact on the 1950s than Elvis Presley. Born in Mississippi in 1935, he demonstrated musical talent at an early age. He lived in poverty throughout most of his childhood, and when Sun Records owner Sam Phillips discovered him, he was driving a truck for a Memphis electrical supply company.

In July 1953, Elvis recorded two songs at Sun Records, supposedly as a present for his mother. When a receptionist asked him who he sounded like, Elvis replied, “I don’t sound like nobody.” Phillips, looking for a white musician who could sing a combination of blues and “boogie-woogie” music, began to market Elvis’s recordings. Eventually, “Colonel” Tom Parker signed on as Elvis’s manager, and in 1955, Parker and Phillips sold Presley’s recording contract to RCA for an unheard-of \$40,000. Presley released his first album, which included later staples such as “Hound Dog,” “Jailhouse Rock,” and “Heartbreak Hotel.”

While Elvis remained popular through the 1960s, his fan base eroded with the introduction of groups such as the Beatles. He continued to tour and perform throughout the late 1960s and 1970s, but years of overindulgence took their toll when Elvis Presley died in 1977.

“Elvis the Pelvis”



A promotional picture shows Elvis during the recording of *Jailhouse Rock*

- Elvis made TV appearances (including Ed Sullivan)
- Some saw his dancing as lewd behavior
- Seen as symbol of ‘50s “teenage rebellion”
- Religious and political leaders critical of his performances

Although teenage America flocked to see Elvis in concert or buy his latest recordings, some saw him as a danger to morality and as corrupting American youth. Many adults viewed Presley’s performing style (specifically his hip gyrations) as lewd behavior. During his performances on Ed Sullivan’s CBS variety show, cameras only shot Presley from the waist up to avoid showing his so-called obscene movements. A columnist for a New York newspaper criticized Elvis’s stage show, remarking that “popular music has reached its lowest depths in the ‘grunt and groin’ antics of one Elvis Presley.” Music legend Frank Sinatra also panned Elvis, stating, “His kind of music is deplorable, a rancid-smelling aphrodisiac. It fosters almost totally negative and destructive reactions in young people.”

Other religious and political leaders weighed in as well. In 1956, a Florida judge commented that Presley was a “savage” and threatened to have him arrested if he performed his gyrations during a Jacksonville concert. He ordered police to film the concert as evidence.

However, Presley wasn’t immune from criticism by young people: teenaged boys, upset that teenaged girls found Elvis attractive, frequently tried to disrupt his early performances.

Discussion Questions

1. What impact did television have on American society in the 1950s? Give examples of specific areas it affected.
2. Why did Elvis Presley have so great an influence on early rock 'n' roll? Why were many people fearful of him?

1. Television dramatically affected American society, buying habits, and the nature of politics during the decade. Most network shows promoted conformity by reinforcing unrealistic ideas of the family: Fathers supported the family and always made the right decisions, mothers stayed at home and did housework in dresses, pearls, and high heels, and although children sometimes misbehaved, they were usually polite and studious. Moreover, problems were always resolved by the end of the episode. Television commercials could reach millions of homes and often used celebrities to pitch products (or even made celebrities out of pitchmen). In the area of politics, both parties heavily used TV to “sell” their candidates, similar to how a company might sell soap, automobiles, or cigarettes. Therefore, coming across well on TV significantly helped a politician get votes, as in the Kennedy–Nixon debates in the election of 1960.
2. Elvis secured his first recording contract at Sun Records because owner Sam Phillips thought he fit the bill for a performer who could break into the mainstream: he was handsome, charismatic, could sing the combination of styles popular at the time (blues and “boogie-woogie” music that composed early rock ‘n’ roll), and most importantly was white. Therefore, Elvis made black music more palatable to a mainstream audience. Since most early rock musicians were African Americans, groups such as the religious, segregationists, and older people feared that rock would “corrupt” young whites and inspire juvenile delinquency (or other “immoral” behaviors, such as race mixing or communist sympathies). Even though Elvis was white, the establishment still found reasons to revile him—specifically his pelvic gyrations, which appeared lewd or suggestive.

Women in the 1950s

- Roles began to evolve
- Number of women entering workforce increased
- Wages about half of male counterparts'
- Schools and media reinforced traditional roles
- Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* questioned these roles



Many women returned to homemaking at the conclusion of WWII, but a large percentage took jobs outside of the home. The number of women working outside the home more than doubled between 1940 and 1960. White women usually took clerical positions, while their African American counterparts tended to fill service-oriented jobs such as maids, cooks, and cleaning ladies. Many joined the workforce not out of a sense of fulfillment or challenge, but to help supplement their family's income. Women, however, generally received about half the wages of their male counterparts.

Even though many women did seek employment outside the home, schools and mass media still sought to keep women in traditional roles. Schools guided male students to take technical classes and placed female students in home economics. Female students were typically advised not to take courses in math and science, because they were "too challenging" for girls. Similarly, television shows of the period typically portrayed female characters as stay-at-home moms who dressed impeccably to do daily housework. Women's magazines stressed a woman's obligation to cater to her husband's needs.

However, by the late 1950s, women began to rebel from traditional stereotypes. Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique*, in which she surveyed members of her 1942 Smith College graduating class. Many reported dissatisfaction and uneasiness with their lives; Friedan concluded that they had effectively replaced their own identity with their family's, in having to find fulfillment through the achievements of their husbands and children. By the late 1960s, many women began to rebel against traditional roles in what would become the women's rights movement.

Hispanics in the 1950s



Mexican *braceros*

- Discrimination common
- Puerto Ricans:
 - Migrated to New York
 - Culture faded with assimilation
- Mexican Americans:
 - *Bracero* program
 - Deportations by Eisenhower
- Some gains by Hispanics

Hispanic Americans faced nearly insurmountable discrimination during the 1950s. Thousands of Puerto Ricans migrated to New York due to high unemployment in the Caribbean, as well as easy access to the city since they were already American citizens. The new arrivals dealt with poor schools as well as harassment from law enforcement. In addition, many families lost their cultural identities, as their children learned English (not Spanish), and relationships between husbands and wives changed.

Mexican Americans had similar experiences. They rarely saw equal pay for equal work, and were kept segregated from the white population. In addition, they faced prejudice due to the large numbers of undocumented aliens living in the U.S. In an effort to reduce the problem of illegal Mexican immigrants, Congress reintroduced the *bracero* program, which provided the U.S. with Mexican farm workers on a temporary basis; some nevertheless remained in the U.S. The Eisenhower Administration later instituted a program to round up and deport illegal Mexican immigrants.

However, some Hispanics did make gains in the U.S. in the 1950s: Roberto Clemente became a baseball star playing for the Pittsburgh Pirates, while Anthony Quinn and Ricardo Montalban became well-known actors.

Native Americans in the 1950s

- Among the poorest minorities
- High death rates
- U.S. policy changed from preserving tribal identities to assimilation
- Several treaties terminated
- Voluntary relocation policy a failure



A Navajo dwelling

Native Americans made up another group that saw discrimination in the 1950s. Life on reservations was generally hopeless, with a death rate nearly three times the national average, with extremely high unemployment. After WWII, Congress moved from a policy of preserving tribal identity to a policy of assimilation, which included terminating several treaty agreements and the special relationship of Indians with the federal government. As a result, Native Americans sank deeper into poverty and lost thousands of acres of land to non-Natives. Indian leaders vocally opposed the termination policy in favor of Indian sovereignty, by which Indians would maintain their special rights of land ownership.

The government also established a Voluntary Relocation Program to help move Native Americans off of reservations. It helped to defray moving costs, as well as to find jobs and housing. The program was generally considered a failure: thousands couldn't find work, and lost themselves in alcoholism, poverty, and despair. Others who assimilated into American culture lost their tribal identity. About 30 percent eventually returned to the reservation.

The Civil Rights Movement: Origins

- Became more organized and vocal in the 1950s
- Strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience
- *Brown* decision (1954) integrated public schools
- Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955)
- Leaders included Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Southern Christian Leadership Council

The 1950s saw the emergence of the modern civil rights movement for African Americans. Blacks looked to new leaders (including a 27-year-old minister named Martin Luther King Jr.) and new tactics based on nonviolent civil disobedience to achieve their goals.

The U.S. Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* decision (1954) integrated public schools nationwide and gave impetus to those looking to eliminate Jim Crow laws from all aspects of American society. The next year, blacks in Montgomery, Alabama, united to protest laws forcing them to surrender seats on public buses to white passengers. Led by King, the Montgomery Improvement Association got the city's African Americans to boycott city buses until the laws were repealed. The success of the bus boycott spurred King and other black ministers to form the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. The SCLC coordinated the civil rights movement through the 1960s and made substantial gains toward ensuring equal rights for African Americans.

The *Brown* Decision (1954)

- U.S. Supreme Court ruled “separate but equal” schools inherently unequal
- Public-school segregation declared unconstitutional
- Second decision ordered schools desegregated “with all deliberate speed”



The *Brown* lawyers rejoice after the decision

Civil rights activists won a major victory in 1954 with the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. The decision, written by Chief Justice Earl Warren, declared public school segregation unconstitutional.

The case began when Oliver Brown of Topeka wanted to enroll his daughter in a public school. As an African American, Brown’s daughter had to walk 21 blocks to a bus stop for a segregated school much farther away, even though a white school sat six blocks from the Brown home. The Browns and other families filed a suit claiming the violation of their equal protection rights under the 14th Amendment. When the families’ case lost in district court, they appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. Thurgood Marshall, an African American lawyer for the NAACP, represented the Browns. Marshall had already won significant victories in similar cases. Shortly before the Court heard the case, Chief Justice Fred Vinson died, to be replaced by Warren.

The 1954 landmark decision struck down public-school segregation. The unanimous decision, written by Warren, stated that “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal,” adding that nothing could be done to equalize all-black and all-white schools.

The next year, the Court tackled the issue of a time frame for desegregation. In the *Brown II* decision, the Court ruled that schools be desegregated “with all deliberate speed.” Many who supported the original *Brown* ruling were disappointed with the decision, having hoped for a definite schedule for school integration.

The “Little Rock Nine”



Federal troops escort members of the Little Rock Nine to school

- Early attempt at integration after *Brown* decision
- Little Rock schools selected nine black students
- Gov. Faubus had National Guard block their entry
- Eisenhower sent federal troops to restore order
- School district integrated after the next year

Many Southern school districts refused to immediately comply with the *Brown* ruling. However, city administrators in Little Rock, Arkansas, decided to integrate their schools, starting with the 1957 school year.

Through an extensive screening program, Little Rock officials selected nine black students to be admitted to the previously all-white Little Rock Central High School. However, Governor Orville Faubus dispatched the state’s National Guard to block the students’ entry, asserting that school integration would pose a threat to public order. Later, Faubus removed the troops, leaving only a small contingent of Little Rock police officers to maintain order. A large crowd began to form, made up primarily of parents of white Central students, and confronted the outmanned police officers. Under threat of violence, the black students were escorted out of the school.

Little Rock’s mayor asked President Eisenhower for assistance in dealing with possible violence at the school. Eisenhower sent troops from the army’s 101st Airborne Division, and also federalized the Arkansas National Guard to relieve the regular army troops. The African American students completed the school year under military guard. Eight of the nine graduated from Central; the school had expelled the ninth over a verbal altercation with a white student.

However, under pressure from local whites, the school board buckled and closed Little Rock’s three public high schools for the next school year. Many students continued their education either by attending out-of-town schools, or by attending special all-white “academies.” A court order reopened the school the next year fully integrated.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

- Rosa Parks arrested, Dec. 1, 1955
- Refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white woman
- Blacks planned boycott of city buses until ordinance was changed
- King led Montgomery Improvement Association
- Courts ruled segregated busing unconstitutional
- Boycott ended after 385 days

While the *Brown* decision constituted a legal challenge to Jim Crow laws, the Montgomery (Alabama) Bus Boycott of 1955 challenged the policy of segregation economically. The arrest of Rosa Parks, a 42-year-old local seamstress and NAACP volunteer, galvanized the city's African American community against ordinances requiring blacks to enter buses through a rear door, rather than the front, and to give up their seats to white passengers if the whites-only section filled up. A group of local black ministers formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to coordinate the nascent boycott. Leading the MIA was a 27-year-old Baptist minister who had only recently moved to Montgomery: Martin Luther King Jr.

As more and more of the city's blacks joined the boycott, they found alternative ways of getting to work, school, or shopping. Some walked, others rode bicycles, and others hitchhiked. Blacks who owned automobiles started carpooling. Taxi drivers agreed to charge black passengers at the same fare as city buses (10 cents), rather than the typical 45 cent fare. Churches also used their own buses to help transport people.

Montgomery's white citizens reacted in different ways. Most significantly, the houses of King and fellow activist Ralph Abernathy were fire-bombed. Authorities arrested some of the boycotters under the terms of an obscure city ordinance, including King, whom they ordered to pay a \$500 fine or serve 386 days in jail. He chose jail and stayed for two weeks.

In June 1956, a federal district court ruled segregation on Montgomery city buses unconstitutional. The U.S. Supreme Court upheld the lower court's ruling in November. Montgomery's city council soon passed an ordinance repealing the earlier discriminatory law, and the 385-day boycott ended.

MLK's Philosophy of Nonviolence

- Influenced by Thoreau and Gandhi
- Nonviolent civil disobedience
- No fighting back, even if assaulted or arrested
- Explained in "Letter From Birmingham Jail"



A nonviolent protester being arrested

Martin Luther King Jr. developed his philosophy on and strategy for dealing with segregation during his years studying for a career in the ministry. During this time, he read the works of Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi, and formulated his own ideas about using nonviolent civil disobedience in order to achieve goals. King believed that nonviolent protests could be just as passionate as violent protest, and also that boycotts and demonstrations helped reveal the "moral shame" of injustice, thereby creating a climate of redemption and reconciliation. He warned that those practicing nonviolent resistance should be prepared to suffer, but that in the end the world would stand on the side of justice.

Nonviolent disobedience included such tactics as marching even after being denied a permit, or "sitting-in" at a segregated lunch counter. When confronted by authorities, the protesters were not to resist or fight back, but to accept arrest and possible harm. King outlined his nonviolent approach in "Letter from Birmingham Jail," which he wrote in 1963 following his arrest for demonstrating against segregation.

Southern Christian Leadership Conference



SCLC leader Ralph Abernathy

- Founded 1957 in Atlanta
- Included several prominent activists, including MLK and Ralph Abernathy
- Relied on influence of black Southern religious leaders
- Led 1963 protests in Birmingham as well as the March on Washington

After the success of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, blacks staged boycotts in several Southern cities. In 1957, a group of more than 60 civil rights activists met in Atlanta to discuss strategies for achieving goals through nonviolent disobedience. The activists formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and decided to use the influence of the “black church” (African American ministers and congregations) to spread its message and gain support.

Early in the movement, the SCLC focused on education as well as voter registration. Some other civil rights groups criticized the SCLC for not conducting more visible protests such as sit-ins and freedom rides. However, the SCLC had some notable successes in changing segregationist policies and bringing attention to the cause. For example, it coordinated the 1963 marches in Birmingham, Alabama, in which protesters opposed discrimination by the city’s downtown merchants, and, perhaps most famously, the March on Washington later that summer.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the Supreme Court rule public school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown*? How quickly did it later say that integration should occur?
2. What was MLK's philosophy regarding demonstrating for civil rights? What historical figures influenced him? What dangers did protesters face with this strategy?

1. In the *Brown* decision, the Supreme Court ruled that schools segregated under the "separate but equal" doctrine schools were inherently unequal; that is, that "separate" by definition implied inequality. Therefore, segregated public schools violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. The Supreme Court ruled in a separate decision that districts should integrate schools "with all deliberate speed," which allowed for much leeway for those opposed to desegregation.
2. Martin Luther King Jr. adopted the philosophy of nonviolent civil disobedience, in which protesters would demonstrate peacefully and not fight back even if physically attacked. This approach was influenced by the work of Henry David Thoreau and Mahatma Gandhi. In King's view, boycotts and demonstrations would help reveal the moral shame of injustice, and create a climate of redemption and reconciliation. However, demonstrators had to prepare themselves for possible arrest or physical harm while engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience.

1950s Technology

- Chemical industry created pesticides, fertilizers, fibers, plastics
- Electronics and appliances
- Nuclear power
- Computers and the transistor
- Birth of Silicon Valley



This 1950s-era computer took up most of a room

The 1950s saw the introduction of new industries as well as the continuing strength of WWII-era industries. The chemical industry flourished during the '50s, with its development of new types of pesticides, fertilizers, and other consumer goods, including Saran Wrap, Dacron, Orlon, and Teflon. However, the advent of chemical consumer goods had its costs: the pesticides and fertilizers polluted the environment, and the new artificial fibers did not biodegrade, taking up landfill space.

Demand for big-ticket electronic items grew as more consumers bought refrigerators, washers and dryers, TVs, stereos, and other goods. This resulted in greater demand for electricity, spurring the building of new power plants, including the first nuclear power plant, built in 1954 in Shippingport, Pennsylvania.

For the first time in American history, computers became an integral part of industry, although still far too large and cumbersome (let alone expensive) for home use. AT&T's Bell Labs invented the transistor in late 1947, to replace the ungainly and temperamental vacuum tubes that computers previously used. The growing reliance on computers required greater capacity for producing the machines, and the first firms set up shop in California's Silicon Valley in 1951. Fairchild Electronics and Hewlett-Packard soon became leading computer hardware producers.

The H-Bomb and Brinksmanship



A mushroom cloud rises from a nuclear test site

- USSR tested A-bomb in 1949
- U.S. made first H-bomb test in 1953; Soviets in 1955
- Dulles's brinksmanship involved huge stocks of nuclear weapons
- "Mutually assured destruction"

The Soviet Union tested an atomic bomb in 1949, ending America's monopoly on nuclear weapons. U.S. scientists looked to design the next big weapon, a hydrogen bomb they nicknamed the "Super." On November 1, 1953, the U.S. successfully tested the first bomb, codenamed "Mike." Within a few months, the Soviets built a prototype "boosted fusion" bomb, and constructed their own H-bomb by 1955.

U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles developed the policy of "brinksmanship" to better fight the emerging arms race. In this policy, the U.S. committed itself to meet Soviet aggression head-on and resist the spread of communism by any and all means necessary, including the use of thermonuclear weapons. The Department of Defense reduced spending on ships and planes and instead increased the budget for aircraft, and later, missiles. Brinksmanship also involved what became known as "mutually assured destruction" (MAD). The U.S. built up its stocks of thermonuclear weapons in an attempt to convince the Soviet Union that it might use them all if necessary. Both sides recognized that an all-out nuclear war would bring about the total destruction of both nations, as well as the rest of the world.

Fallout Shelters



A cutaway view of a CD fallout shelter

- Civil Defense encouraged citizens to build shelters
- Unlikely they would have been effective
- Shelters' impact more psychological
- Made public believe a nuclear war survivable

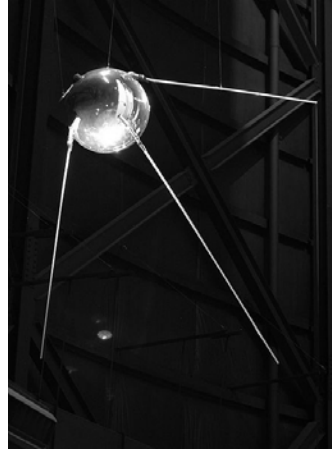
Once the Soviet Union detonated their first atomic bomb in 1949, Americans became concerned about the possibility of all-out nuclear war between the two nations. Citizens looked for the best way to prepare for a probable nuclear attack.

Civil Defense provided the answer: homemade fallout shelters. CD provided plans for shelters, as well as how to stock them with nonperishable food, radios, medical equipment, and other necessities. In the end, no one ever needed the shelters, and it is doubtful that they would have sufficiently protected people from a nuclear blast. First, people would have to reach the shelter in time, and even if they could, the reinforced concrete probably wouldn't have withstood the blast, and no amount of insulation would have protected the inhabitants from the related fireball.

However, the shelters did provide a significant psychological benefit. Since the government advocated building shelters and distributed plans for their construction, people believed that they could survive an "inevitable" nuclear war. With that knowledge, Americans became more accepting of the arms race and the policies of brinkmanship and mutually assured destruction.

The Space Race

- International Geophysical Year (1957–1958)
- USSR launched *Sputnik I* in 1957
- Blow to U.S. prestige
- Implied superiority of Soviet missiles
- U.S. sent up *Explorer I* in 1958



A reproduction of *Sputnik I*

The International Geophysical Year was an international scientific event involving 11 various disciplines, held from July 1, 1957, to June 30, 1958. During this period, the USSR and U.S. accomplished the herculean task of launching of the first artificial satellites into space: the Soviet *Sputnik I* in 1957, and the American *Explorer I* in 1958.

Sputnik (roughly, “travelling companion” in Russian) orbited the Earth at 18,000 miles per hour. Visible in the night sky to some, it gave a constant reminder of Soviet scientific prowess. Americans theorized that if the Soviets could launch a satellite into orbit, they could likely also propel nuclear warheads into space. Americans were embarrassed that they had been upstaged by Soviet technology, and fearful that it might mean the Soviets had the advantage in the Cold War.

Its orbit having decayed after three months, *Sputnik* burned up as it reentered the earth’s atmosphere. In January 1958, the U.S. finally launched its own satellite into orbit, *Explorer I*. It also stopped transmitting after a few months, but remained in orbit for more than 12 years until it too burned up.

Teacher’s note: You may wish to also show students the related “New Moon” clip depicting how *Sputnik* was launched and including the radio signal it emitted. Ask students whether the creators of the clip intended it to be congratulatory to the USSR or to challenge America’s space program to catch up.

The U-2 Incident

- U-2 shot down over Soviet territory in 1960
- Major setback in U.S./USSR relations
- Incident forced summit cancellation
- Powers convicted of espionage; released in 1962



Francis Gary Powers looks at a model of the U-2

The CIA, concerned about a Soviet offensive military build-up, began to increase reconnaissance flights over Soviet territory in the late 1950s. Using the U-2 spy plane, pilots could fly at extremely high altitudes with little risk of detection and take detailed photographs of ground installations. Regardless of the U-2's capabilities, the Soviet Union became aware of the flights and managed to shoot down a U-2 in Soviet airspace on May 1, 1960. The CIA had believed that a pilot could not survive such an incident, and was astonished to learn that the Soviets had not only recovered parts of the plane, but also the surviving pilot, Francis Gary Powers, a civilian contracted by the CIA.

Eisenhower at first denied that the aircraft was a spy plane, but had to admit the truth once the Soviets recovered Powers and the plane's wreckage. When Eisenhower refused to apologize for the mission, Soviet Premier Khrushchev cancelled a planned summit between the two leaders.

The Soviet Union tried Powers on charges of spying for the U.S., and convicted and sentenced him to 10 years in prison. However, his captors freed him in 1962, as part of a prisoner exchange with the U.S. for captured Soviet spy Rudolf Abel.

Discussion Questions

1. What sorts of new technologies were developed during the 1950s? What kinds of problems did these new technologies bring?
2. How did the launch of *Sputnik* affect the Cold War between the U.S. and USSR?
3. How did the U-2 incident affect Cold War tensions? What might Eisenhower have done to minimize the controversy?

1. Research and development continued after WWII resulted in several innovations: chemical fertilizers and pesticides, artificial fibers, plastics, and other substances for household use; new or improved consumer electronics and appliances such as televisions, washing machines, dryers, and stereos; and computers, which became commonplace in industry. These devices increased the demand for electricity, and therefore new power plants (including nuclear plants) were constructed. However, many did not yet understand the environmental impact of poisonous fertilizers and pesticides, chemicals and plastics that did not dissipate or decompose, and the hazards of nuclear power.
2. The launch exacerbated Cold War tensions: Americans became fearful of the apparent superiority of Soviet technology. That the Soviets could even lift a satellite into space implied that they had more powerful rockets than the U.S. and could in theory send nuclear missiles into space; that *Sputnik* was visible with the naked eye in some locales served as a constant reminder of this. In addition, many Americans simply didn't like being upstaged by any other country. As a result, the U.S. poured vast sums of money into the space program and missile technology.
3. The U-2 incident worsened tensions between the U.S. and Soviet Union by calling attention to the espionage conducted constantly by both sides; this time the U.S. got caught. The U.S. had not only violated Soviet airspace, but did so on reconnaissance missions. Once the USSR produced undeniable evidence, Eisenhower's earlier denials of the U-2 missions made the U.S. appear to both the world and its own citizens to have been acting in bad faith, lessening its credibility and prestige. Regarding what Eisenhower might have done, most students will probably state that he should have admitted the flights earlier to avoid the added embarrassment of being caught in a lie; others may believe that Eisenhower said what he had to based on the situation as it unfolded, and could not have made it any better.

Early U.S. Involvement in Vietnam



- U.S. first supported Vietnamese independence from France
- Later backed French against Ho's Viet Minh
- French defeated at Dien Bien Phu
- Geneva Accords partitioned the country

During World War II, the U.S. backed the Viet Minh, an communist independence movement in Vietnam, in its fight against both the (Nazi-controlled) French and Japanese occupiers. At the war's end, the Viet Minh's leader Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam an independent nation, a move the U.S. also supported. However, the Viet Minh again fought to drive the French army out of Vietnam, and this time received help from communist China, which turned U.S. support toward France. By 1952, the U.S. had paid about two-thirds of the cost of this First Indochina War.

In 1954, the French suffered a major defeat at Dien Bien Phu, in the northern part of Vietnam. The U.S. elected not to intervene militarily to assist the French (so as not to start a war with the Viet Minh), leading the French to agree to a July withdrawal. The Geneva Accords ended France's involvement and divided Vietnam into two sections: Viet Minh loyalists received control of North Vietnam (with Hanoi as its capital), and the formerly pro-French faction got South Vietnam (making Saigon its capital). The U.S. took the side of the South Vietnamese government, though neither participated directly in the accords. Meanwhile, communists from the North had begun to supply communist holdovers in the South via a network of roads known as the "Ho Chi Minh Trail."

Hostilities Begin in Vietnam

- Diem seized power in South
- Southern communists formed Viet Cong
- U.S. opposed elections to unify Vietnam
- Viet Cong began guerilla war in South



Ngo Dinh Diem

Ngo Dinh Diem took control of South Vietnam a year after the Geneva Accords. As a Catholic, he alienated a large segment of South Vietnam's Buddhist population. Communist sympathy grew in the South as its economic and political conditions worsened. In 1960, South Vietnamese communists formed the National Liberation Front (NLF), which became known as the "Viet Cong."

The Geneva Accords had stipulated an election to unify the governments of the North and South. However, the U.S. had not signed the Geneva Accords and also did not support the election, primarily because of the fear that Ho Chi Minh would win, and all of Vietnam would fall to the communists.

The Viet Cong began a guerilla war against the South Vietnamese government. The Viet Cong usually attacked at night, and used networks of tunnels to move undetected. They used torture, terror, and booby-traps to disrupt operations in South Vietnam. To assist South Vietnam, President Eisenhower elected to send civilian and military "advisors" to the country. When Kennedy became president in 1961, he inherited a limited war in Vietnam in which U.S. forces were noncombatants.

The Election of 1960

- Vice President Richard M. Nixon (R)
- Senator John F. Kennedy (D)
- Nixon promised to continue Eisenhower's peace and prosperity
- JFK sought to “get the country moving again” in the rivalry with the USSR
- JFK's Roman Catholicism an issue



Nixon



Kennedy

The presidential election of 1960 proved significant in that it demonstrated the rise of the World War II generation in American politics. Both candidates—Republican Richard M. Nixon and Democrat John F. Kennedy—had served in the war, and both were relatively young (Nixon was 47; Kennedy was 43).

Nixon was finishing up two terms as Eisenhower's vice president, and had previously served in both houses of Congress. He pledged that if elected, he would maintain the peace and prosperity that America experienced under the Eisenhower Administration. Kennedy, on the other hand, had an unremarkable career in the House and as the junior senator from Massachusetts. He was relatively unknown politically, but his good looks as well as his family's wealth made him a frontrunner. Kennedy suggested that the U.S. had fallen behind in the rivalry with the Soviet Union and promised to “get the country moving again.”

Kennedy's religion, Roman Catholicism, proved problematic for his campaign. No Roman Catholic had ever been elected president, and concerns about the separation of church and state (e.g., whether Kennedy might show more loyalty to the Pope than to the U.S.) threatened to derail the Kennedy campaign. However, he successfully defused the issue in a stirring speech delivered to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association.

The First Debate



- Nixon:
 - an experienced debater
 - looked scruffy, ill, and sweaty
- Kennedy:
 - looked and sounded “presidential”
 - made effective use of television
- TV viewers tended to think that JFK won, but radio listeners said the opposite

Kennedy’s breakthrough came during the summer of 1960 when the chairmen of the Democratic and Republican Parties appeared on the TV news show *Meet the Press*, and agreed that the two presidential candidates should meet in a series of debates.

Nixon, a champion debater in high school and college, did not fare well in the first debate, held in Chicago a few weeks before the election. He appeared ill and underweight, as he’d been recently hospitalized for a bacterial infection in his knee. He tended to look as if he needed a shave, and perspired heavily under the studio lights. In addition, he wore a light-colored suit, which blended in with the background in the era of black-and-white TV.

As the challenger, Kennedy had nothing to lose by debating. Compare to Nixon, he looked and sounded “presidential.” When asked before the debate, Kennedy opted not to wear television make-up (though later reports said that he’d already been made-up in the car on the way to the studio). Hearing that Kennedy had refused make-up, Nixon did as well. In addition, Kennedy wore a dark suit that contrasted well with the set.

The majority of persons who saw the debate on TV agreed that Kennedy had won or at least fought to a draw. However, a near-equal number of people who had listened to the debate on radio believed that Nixon had fared better than Kennedy. Kennedy quickly became a master of using TV to reach the public, a skill he perfected as president.

Teacher’s note: You may wish to show students a clip of the debate, included on the CD. (If you have any trouble playing the video file, you can watch a streaming version of the clip at http://www.archive.org/details/1960_kennedy-nixon_1.)

A Close Election

- About 68 million votes cast
- JFK won popular vote by about 118,000
- Key states Texas and Illinois
- Rumors of voter fraud in IL
- Nixon lost by 84 electoral votes
- Byrd got 15 electoral votes

On the night of the election, the race was too close to call. The results came in the next day, when Nixon conceded the closest presidential election since 1888. Kennedy won the popular vote by an extremely narrow margin—only about 118,000 votes out of a record 68 million cast. Kennedy’s running mate, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson, delivered his home state of Texas. Most credit the political machine of Chicago Mayor Richard Daley for Kennedy’s razor-thin win in Illinois. Rumors of fraud swirled around the tallies from both states, but later investigations showed that the irregularities uncovered still wouldn’t have cost Kennedy these states. Nixon did carry more states than Kennedy in the Electoral College, but lost by 84 votes.

Fifteen electors—eight from Mississippi, six from Alabama, and one from Oklahoma—voted not for the winner of their state’s popular vote, but instead for Virginia Senator Harry F. Byrd, an ardent segregationist.

1960 Electoral Results



Teacher's note: Have students view the map of the 1960 electoral results.

- Ask students why might Kennedy have won the electoral vote by a comfortable margin, even though the popular vote was so close. (Most states have a system in which the winner of the state's popular vote takes its entire slate of electors, even if the margin of victory is a handful of votes.)
- Ask students to speculate as to the impact of Senator Harry F. Byrd's receiving electoral votes. Did it change the outcome of the election? Why or why not? Why might those electors have voted for him, knowing that he stood no chance of winning? (Byrd took electoral votes from both Kennedy and Nixon, but Kennedy's lead was much greater than the 14 votes he lost. The electors who voted for Byrd were probably making more of a statement against the Democratic status quo and its relaxed stance on segregation, than trying to win the presidency.)

JFK Takes Office

- Kennedy promised a “New Frontier”
- Asked Americans to work to make the country great
- Idealism inspired many to help out in U.S. and abroad



The new president called the plans for his incoming administration “The New Frontier,” in reference to a quote from a speech he gave during the 1960 campaign. His inaugural address challenged Americans to help make the country great, as expressed by the famous quote, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” Kennedy’s idealism proved infectious. Millions of Americans wanted to volunteer to help people both at home and abroad through programs such as the Peace Corps, which brought education and technological advances largely to Third World countries.

The Legacy of the 1950s

- Cold War got “colder”
- Civil rights movement led to Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965)
- Women’s rights movement and NOW
- Beats and other symbols of rebellion contributed to social activism
- 1960s “British invasion” built on early rock ‘n’ roll

Cold War tensions worsened: Though Kennedy pulled away from Dulles’s “brinksmanship” policy in favor of “flexible response,” which gave the U.S. options besides the use of nuclear weapons, he soon found his administration embroiled in several foreign policy crises. Only three months into his term, he approved the failed Bay of Pigs invasion of communist Cuba. In August of that year, the Soviets erected the Berlin Wall. The Soviets also placed offensive nuclear missiles in Cuba in the fall of 1962, causing the 13-day nuclear standoff known as the Cuban Missile Crisis. JFK also upped U.S. involvement in Vietnam, in line with the Cold War policy of communist containment.

The civil rights movement continued its struggle: JFK introduced legislation that became the Civil Rights Act of 1964; his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, ensured its passage as a tribute to the assassinated president. Further confrontations during voting rights marches led to the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which gave the federal government the power to protect black suffrage.

Works like Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* combined with the growing sense of the power of social activism to help start a full-fledged women’s movement. Friedan herself became one of the founding members of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. Many young people, inspired by 1950s anti-establishment figures, became social activists during the 1960s. Leading voices in folk music and the social change movement such as Bob Dylan and Joan Baez were strongly influenced by Beat writers. Rock ‘n’ roll continued to develop, becoming even more widely popular with the “British invasion,” a period in the early 1960s when many British rock groups first became known in America. Out of these, the Beatles emerged as the biggest band in the world; throughout their career, its members elevated rock from a so-called lowbrow symbol of teenage rebellion to an art form, influencing countless musicians to this day.

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the U.S. stop supporting the Viet Minh in its struggle against the French? What were the results of the Geneva Accords?
2. Why did the U.S. not support elections to reunify Vietnam?
3. Why you think that television had helped Nixon stay on Eisenhower's ticket in 1952, but hurt his presidential campaign in 1960?

1. The U.S. ended its support for the Viet Minh because it received aid from communist China in its fight against the French. At the Geneva Accords, the participants agreed to divide Vietnam into two sections, with Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Minh controlling North Vietnam and supporters of the French running South Vietnam. The agreement also stipulated that free elections to unify the country take place within a few years.
2. The U.S. had not signed the Geneva Accords and therefore was not bound to support reunification elections. Most importantly, the U.S. feared that growing communist sympathies in the South, due to deteriorating conditions under the U.S.-backed Ngo Dinh Diem, would result in a win for Ho Chi Minh and the subsequent communist takeover of the South.
3. Answers will vary. In 1952 (the "Checkers speech"), the concept of candidates appearing on TV was novel and didn't necessarily imply that what viewers were watching was an advertisement per se. Therefore, when Nixon spoke to the nation in 1952, he likely seemed sincere and a sympathetic figure (especially when he refused to give Checkers back to its donor). Also, the 1952 appearance didn't involve directly or immediately comparing Nixon to the other vice presidential candidates, either on policy or physically. The 1960 appearances included significant differences. First, viewers were aware that they were watching a presidential campaign, and not a plea for understanding, as the "Checkers speech" had been. Second, viewers had become more accustomed to seeing on TV people who (and products that) looked good; Kennedy seemed youthful and energetic, especially compared to the pallid and perspiring Nixon, and therefore a better "value." The latter point seems more significant in light of the fact that the radio audience for the first debate tended to think that Nixon won, while TV viewers generally felt that Kennedy had outshone his opponent.



Essential Questions

- What aspects of post–World War II America shaped the issues that arose in the 1950s?
- How did the Cold War affect American foreign policy during the decade?
- How did changing aspects of culture affect the upbringing of children and adolescents?
- Why did rock ‘n’ roll engender wildly different reactions from various segments of society?
- How did the modern civil rights movement evolve in the mid- and late 1950s?
- What impact did television have on society, economics, and politics during the 1950s?
- How did events and issues in the 1950s help lead to the cultural and social revolutions of the 1960s?

Returning Veterans “Readjust”

- GI Bill of Rights (Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944)
- Provided vets with education, training, and low-cost loans for businesses and homes
- Millions took advantage of benefits
- College enrollment skyrocketed
- GI Bill helped create “baby boom” of 1950s and 1960s

President Truman



Truman (center) stands with Soviet Premier Josef Stalin (right foreground) during the 1945 Potsdam Conference

- Became president upon death of FDR (1945)
- Soviet aggression in Europe
- Faced several domestic challenges
- Won election to his own term in 1948
- Korean War began in 1950

Truman and Civil Rights

- Congress rejected his civil rights legislation
- Formed President's Committee on Civil Rights
- Desegregated federal employees and armed forces
- "Dixiecrats" split from Democrats in 1948 due to Truman's policies



Truman shaking hands with a black soldier

The Korean War: Outbreak



Marines herding North Korean soldiers taken prisoner, 1951

- June 1950: Truman sent troops to Korea
- U.S. forces part of larger UN force
- U.S. and UN forces suffered major setbacks at first
- Inchon landing helped turn tide

The Korean War: Stalemate

- UN forces pushed communists to Yalu River
- MacArthur clashed with Truman over scope of war
- China entered conflict; war became a stalemate
- MacArthur fired
- Truce signed in 1953



UN and North Korean representatives work out the details of the truce

Discussion Questions

1. How did the U.S. government assist veterans returning from WWII? What benefits did they receive?
2. What actions did Truman take on issues of civil rights? How did his positions affect the Democratic Party?
3. How did Truman and MacArthur differ on conducting the war in Korea? Whose point of view do you agree with? Why?

The Election of 1952

- Truman decided not to run again
- Democrats nominated Stevenson; Republicans ran Eisenhower
- Eisenhower promised to “go to Korea” if elected
- Eisenhower won handily



Republican running-mates Eisenhower (left) and Nixon campaigning in 1952

Dwight D. Eisenhower



- Nicknamed “Ike”
- Led troops in North Africa, planned and ran D-Day invasion
- President of Columbia University
- NATO commander
- Elected president in 1952 and 1956
- Died 1969

Adlai Stevenson

- Grandfather had been Cleveland’s VP
- Governor of Illinois
- Lost to Eisenhower in 1952 and 1956
- UN Ambassador under JFK and LBJ
- Died 1965



A campaign poster issued by organized labor, linking Stevenson with the success of the New Deal

The Rise of Richard Nixon

- Congressman (later Senator) from CA
- Became famous for prosecuting Alger Hiss
- Eisenhower’s VP, 1953–1961
- Lost close presidential election to JFK in 1960
- Elected president in 1968



Richard M. Nixon

Nixon's "Checkers Speech"



In a nationally televised speech, Nixon stated his case and saved his political career

- Reports of a secret campaign "slush fund"
- Calls for Ike to drop Nixon
- Nixon brought his case to voters on TV
- Refused to give up his kids' dog, Checkers
- Popular opinion kept him on the ticket

From the "Checkers Speech"

I should say this, that Pat [Nixon's wife] doesn't have a mink coat. But she does have a respectable Republican cloth coat, and I always tell her she would look good in anything.

One other thing I probably should tell you, because if I don't they will probably be saying this about me, too. We did get something, a gift, after the election.

A man down in Texas heard Pat on the radio mention the fact that our two youngsters would like to have a dog, and, believe it or not, the day before we left on this campaign trip we got a message from Union Station in Baltimore, saying they had a package for us. We went down to get it. You know what it was?

It was a little cocker spaniel dog, in a crate that he had sent all the way from Texas, black and white, spotted, and our little girl Tricia, the six year old, named it "Checkers."

And you know, the kids, like all kids, loved the dog, and I just want to say this, right now, that regardless of what they say about it, we are going to keep it.

Discussion Questions

1. Who were the candidates in the election of 1952? What attributes of the Democratic candidate did the Republicans capitalize on? Why do you think this was so?
2. How did Richard Nixon become a major political figure in the 1950s? How did the "Checkers speech" affect his career?

The “Second Red Scare”

- Sen. Joseph McCarthy
- House Un-American Activities Committee
- Accusations of communist ties in the film industry
- Alger Hiss
- The Rosenbergs



This “Red Channels” pamphlet identified “suspect persons” in the media

House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)



HUAC in session during the 1950s

- Investigated KKK and Nazi activity in 1940s
- Investigated Alger Hiss
- Made Nixon a major figure
- Looked for communist infiltration of the film industry
- Lost clout after McCarthy’s downfall

Joseph McCarthy

- Junior senator from Wisconsin
- Claimed to have names of communists in the U.S. State Department
- Army–McCarthy hearings
- Censured by the Senate for his tactics



Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy

“McCarthyism”



Edward R. Murrow

- Refers to unfounded accusations of treason or disloyalty
- McCarthy had little or no evidence to back up accusations
- Murrow exposed McCarthy’s tactics
- McCarthy stumbled in appearance on Murrow’s *See It Now*

The Army–McCarthy Hearings

- Army accused McCarthy and Cohn for seeking “favorable treatment” for former staffer
- McCarthy challenged by army’s chief counsel Welch
- Televised hearings ruined McCarthy



McCarthy and Roy Cohn (right) confer during the hearings

Discussion Questions

1. What factors made the nation so concerned about communist infiltration during the 1950s?
2. What was the original purpose of the House Un-American Activities Committee? What did HUAC change its focus to? Was it successful?
3. What made Joseph McCarthy an influential figure during the early 1950s? What tactics did he use? What eventually led to his downfall?

Levittown and the Suburbs



Levittown in the late 1950s

- Levittown first developed on Long Island in 1947
- Affordable, mass-produced housing
- Highways spurred shift to suburbs, and from Rust Belt to Sun Belt

“White Flight”

- Refers to a movement of whites from cities to suburbs
- Populations of inner-city areas remained constant or declined
- Suburbs remained largely white
- Differing theories as to this phenomenon



Urban Renewal



- Federal Housing Act of 1949
- Pittsburgh an early example of renewal
- 1954 Housing Act popularized term “urban renewal”
- Results of urban renewal mixed

Defeating the Polio Menace



Government posters encouraged parents to have their children vaccinated

- Salk vaccination tested in 1952
- Injected an inactive form of the virus into subjects
- Sabin oral vaccine began testing in 1957
- Polio nearly eradicated worldwide

Nationwide Vaccination Programs



People lining up in Columbus, Georgia, to receive doses of the Salk vaccine

Discussion Questions

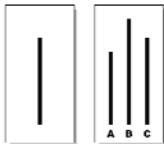
1. What factors led to the rise of suburbs such as Levittown? How did this trend relate to the Baby Boom?
2. Why was Dr. Spock's book so popular in the 1950s? How did it revolutionize the concept of child rearing? How did later editions reflect changes in the concept of family?

Social Conformity in the 1950s

- People “too timid to be individuals”
- Women encouraged to be obedient housewives
- Popular culture defined “typical” family roles
- Likely helped spur later countercultural movements



Asch's Experiments in Conformity



- Asch asked the group to visually compare lengths of lines on cards
- All but one (the subject) were in on the experiment
- When the group gave incorrect answer, subject tended to go along, though obviously wrong
- When at least one other gave the correct answer, subject would agree

The Organization Man

- William H. Whyte (1956)
- Indictment of impact of conformity on American society
- Individuality a handicap; conformity needed for success in business
- Organization Man must not only accept being controlled, but must “accept it as if he liked it”



The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit



Gregory Peck

- Sloan Wilson (1955)
- A fictional indictment of the Organization Man
- Shows career men having dysfunctional family lives
- Book (and film) stressed importance of family over advancement

1950s Teenage Rebellion

- James Dean and Marlon Brando as antiheroes
- Juvenile delinquency hyped by '50s mass media
- Dress and hair styles became more “rebellious”
- Influence of rock music and the “Beats”



James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause*

Discussion Questions

1. How did Asch's experiments in conformity work, and what did they reveal? Do you agree with Asch's findings? Why?
2. In Whyte's book, who was the Organization Man? How did Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* resist becoming an Organization Man?
3. In your view, were the 1950s more a decade of social conformity or teenage rebellion? Why?

The Affluent Society

- Written by John Kenneth Galbraith in 1958
- Held that America had great “private sector” wealth but little in the “public sector”
- Advocated putting federal money into public works
- Helped shape U.S. economic policy into the 1960s
- Coined phrase “conventional wisdom”



John Kenneth Galbraith

Rise of the “Affluent Society”



A 1950s kitchen filled with new appliances, including a top-loading dishwasher

- Increase in availability of consumer goods
- Gross national product and median family income grew
- Majority of Americans considered “middle class”
- Rise in consumer borrowing
- More two-income households

Credit Cards

- Used on a small scale in the 1920s
- Diners Club formed in 1949
- Technically a charge card; could not carry a balance
- American Express and Bank of America cards (later called “Visa”) appeared in 1958



Comedian Marty Allen holding up a wallet full of credit cards, including Diners Club and American Express

The Creation of Franchises

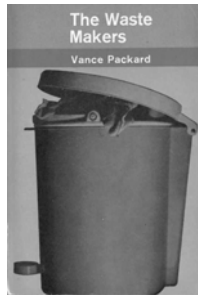


The oldest operating McDonald's, in Downey, California

- Roots in the Singer Company in the 1850s
- Coca-Cola soon followed with bottling franchise
- Franchisees paid fee to sell a company's product
- Instant name recognition and consumer confidence
- Franchising boom after WWII
- Ray Kroc and McDonald's

“Planned Obsolescence”

- Coined by industrial designer Brooks Stevens
- Commonly describes products that quickly break or go out of style
- Further developed by Vance Packard:
 - Obsolescence of desirability
 - Obsolescence of function



The Ford Edsel



- Car hit the market in 1957
- Named after Henry Ford's son, Edsel
- Failed miserably:
 - Public hated its styling
 - Released during a recession
 - Ford management divided
 - Poor workmanship
- Scrapped in 1960

Discussion Questions

1. How did Galbraith describe his concept of the “affluent society”? What did he suggest be done to improve such a society?
2. How did the development of credit cards and franchising change Americans’ spending habits during the 1950s?

Television in the 1950s



- Television ownership boomed
- In 90 percent of homes by 1961
- Radio networks bought TV stations
- Iconic pitchmen
- TV encouraged fads

Television in the 1950s (cont.)

- TV reinforced gender and racial stereotypes
- Called a “vast wasteland” by FCC chairman
- Negatively affected movies and magazines
- Greatly affected politics



The cast of *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*

The Beat Generation



Jack Kerouac

- Group of American writers
- Included Ginsberg, Burroughs, Kerouac
- Rejected much of American values and culture
- Started in New York; later San Francisco
- Gave way to 1960s counterculture

Rock 'n' Roll

- Elements of gospel, country, blues, other music forms
- Considered subversive
- DJ Alan Freed
- White artists made rock acceptable to a wider audience
- *The Blackboard Jungle*



Bill Haley and His Comets

Rock 'n' Roll: Cultural Backlash

- Strong African American influences
- Said to encourage race mixing and immoral behavior
- Various called:
 - the devil's music
 - a communist plot
 - a communicable disease

Elvis Presley

- Born 1935, in MS
- First recordings for Sun Records in 1953
- Became famous for songs such as “Hound Dog,” “Jailhouse Rock,” “Heartbreak Hotel”
- Died 1977



“Elvis the Pelvis”



A promotional picture shows Elvis during the recording of *Jailhouse Rock*

- Elvis made TV appearances (including Ed Sullivan)
- Some saw his dancing as lewd behavior
- Seen as symbol of ‘50s “teenage rebellion”
- Religious and political leaders critical of his performances

Discussion Questions

1. What impact did television have on American society in the 1950s? Give examples of specific areas it affected.
2. Why did Elvis Presley have so great an influence on early rock ‘n’ roll? Why were many people fearful of him?

Women in the 1950s

- Roles began to evolve
- Number of women entering workforce increased
- Wages about half of male counterparts'
- Schools and media reinforced traditional roles
- Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* questioned these roles



Hispanics in the 1950s



Mexican braceros

- Discrimination common
- Puerto Ricans:
 - Migrated to New York
 - Culture faded with assimilation
- Mexican Americans:
 - *Bracero* program
 - Deportations by Eisenhower
- Some gains by Hispanics

Native Americans in the 1950s

- Among the poorest minorities
- High death rates
- U.S. policy changed from preserving tribal identities to assimilation
- Several treaties terminated
- Voluntary relocation policy a failure



A Navajo dwelling

The Civil Rights Movement: Origins

- Became more organized and vocal in the 1950s
- Strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience
- *Brown* decision (1954) integrated public schools
- Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955)
- Leaders included Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
- Southern Christian Leadership Council

The *Brown* Decision (1954)

- U.S. Supreme Court ruled “separate but equal” schools inherently unequal
- Public-school segregation declared unconstitutional
- Second decision ordered schools desegregated “with all deliberate speed”



The *Brown* lawyers rejoice after the decision

The “Little Rock Nine”



Federal troops escort members of the Little Rock Nine to school

- Early attempt at integration after *Brown* decision
- Little Rock schools selected nine black students
- Gov. Faubus had National Guard block their entry
- Eisenhower sent federal troops to restore order
- School district integrated after the next year

The Montgomery Bus Boycott

- Rosa Parks arrested, Dec. 1, 1955
- Refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white woman
- Blacks planned boycott of city buses until ordinance was changed
- King led Montgomery Improvement Association
- Courts ruled segregated busing unconstitutional
- Boycott ended after 385 days

MLK's Philosophy of Nonviolence

- Influenced by Thoreau and Gandhi
- Nonviolent civil disobedience
- No fighting back, even if assaulted or arrested
- Explained in "Letter From Birmingham Jail"



A nonviolent protester being arrested

Southern Christian Leadership Conference



SCLC leader Ralph Abernathy

- Founded 1957 in Atlanta
- Included several prominent activists, including MLK and Ralph Abernathy
- Relied on influence of black Southern religious leaders
- Led 1963 protests in Birmingham as well as the March on Washington

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the Supreme Court rule public school segregation unconstitutional in *Brown*? How quickly did it later say that integration should occur?
2. What was MLK's philosophy regarding demonstrating for civil rights? What historical figures influenced him? What dangers did protesters face with this strategy?

1950s Technology

- Chemical industry created pesticides, fertilizers, fibers, plastics
- Electronics and appliances
- Nuclear power
- Computers and the transistor
- Birth of Silicon Valley



This 1950s-era computer took up most of a room

The H-Bomb and Brinksmanship



A mushroom cloud rises from a nuclear test site

- USSR tested A-bomb in 1949
- U.S. made first H-bomb test in 1953; Soviets in 1955
- Dulles's brinksmanship involved huge stocks of nuclear weapons
- "Mutually assured destruction"

Fallout Shelters



TEMPORARY BASEMENT FALLOUT SHELTER
A cutaway view of a CD fallout shelter

- Civil Defense encouraged citizens to build shelters
- Unlikely they would have been effective
- Shelters' impact more psychological
- Made public believe a nuclear war survivable

The Space Race

- International Geophysical Year (1957–1958)
- USSR launched *Sputnik 1* in 1957
- Blow to U.S. prestige
- Implied superiority of Soviet missiles
- U.S. sent up *Explorer 1* in 1958



A reproduction of *Sputnik 1*

The U-2 Incident

- U-2 shot down over Soviet territory in 1960
- Major setback in U.S./USSR relations
- Incident forced summit cancellation
- Powers convicted of espionage; released in 1962



Francis Gary Powers looks at a model of the U-2

Discussion Questions

1. What sorts of new technologies were developed during the 1950s? What kinds of problems did these new technologies bring?
2. How did the launch of *Sputnik* affect the Cold War between the U.S. and USSR?
3. How did the U-2 incident affect Cold War tensions? What might Eisenhower have done to minimize the controversy?

Early U.S. Involvement in Vietnam



- U.S. first supported Vietnamese independence from France
- Later backed French against Ho's Viet Minh
- French defeated at Dien Bien Phu
- Geneva Accords partitioned the country

Hostilities Begin in Vietnam

- Diem seized power in South
- Southern communists formed Viet Cong
- U.S. opposed elections to unify Vietnam
- Viet Cong began guerilla war in South



Ngo Dinh Diem

The Election of 1960

- Vice President Richard M. Nixon (R)
- Senator John F. Kennedy (D)
- Nixon promised to continue Eisenhower's peace and prosperity
- JFK sought to "get the country moving again" in the rivalry with the USSR
- JFK's Roman Catholicism an issue



Nixon



Kennedy

The First Debate

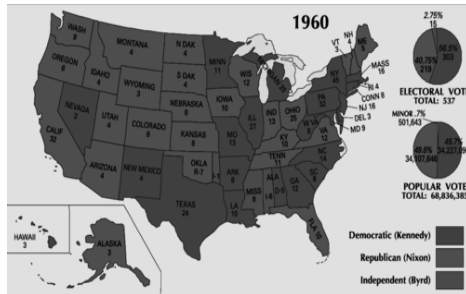


- Nixon:
 - an experienced debater
 - looked scruffy, ill, and sweaty
- Kennedy:
 - looked and sounded "presidential"
 - made effective use of television
- TV viewers tended to think that JFK won, but radio listeners said the opposite

A Close Election

- About 68 million votes cast
- JFK won popular vote by about 118,000
- Key states Texas and Illinois
- Rumors of voter fraud in IL
- Nixon lost by 84 electoral votes
- Byrd got 15 electoral votes

1960 Electoral Results



JFK Takes Office

- Kennedy promised a “New Frontier”
- Asked Americans to work to make the country great
- Idealism inspired many to help out in U.S. and abroad



The Legacy of the 1950s

- Cold War got “colder”
- Civil rights movement led to Civil Rights Act (1964) and Voting Rights Act (1965)
- Women’s rights movement and NOW
- Beats and other symbols of rebellion contributed to social activism
- 1960s “British invasion” built on early rock ‘n’ roll

Discussion Questions

1. Why did the U.S. stop supporting the Viet Minh in its struggle against the French? What were the results of the Geneva Accords?
2. Why did the U.S. not support elections to reunify Vietnam?
3. Why you think that television had helped Nixon stay on Eisenhower's ticket in 1952, but hurt his presidential campaign in 1960?

The 1950s: Backwards Planning Activities

Enduring understandings:

- The 1950s were a decade in which relations between the United States and Soviet Union worsened
- The 1950s saw great technological advancements, especially in the areas of chemical production, consumer electronics, and computers
- The 1950s demonstrated significant cultural differences between generations, as well as social changes such as the civil rights movement
- Television emerged as a major influence in shaping American culture, economics, and politics
- The 1950s seemed an era of tight social conformity, but in a real sense demonstrated tensions among various groups
- Many of the issues and concerns of the 1950s affected American society into the next decade and beyond

Essential questions:

- What aspects of post–World War II America shaped the issues that arose in the 1950s?
- How did the Cold War affect American foreign policy during the decade?
- How did changing aspects of culture affect the upbringing of children and adolescents?
- Why did rock ‘n’ roll engender wildly different reactions from various segments of society?
- How did the modern civil rights movement evolve in the mid- and late 1950s?
- What impact did television have on society, economics, and politics during the 1950s?
- How did events and issues in the 1950s help lead to the cultural and social revolutions of the 1960s?

Learning Experiences and Instruction

Students will need to know...	Students will need to be able to...
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Major figures from the 1950s, including cultural, political, and civil rights leaders 2. How the Cold War evolved from the late 1940s through the 1950s 3. Social changes that affected gender roles during the decade 4. How African American leaders managed to make significant gains during the 1950s 5. Social and cultural issues that led to the rise of the Beat movement 6. How new technology and consumer demand affected economic trends 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read and interpret primary source documents from the 1950s 2. Make conclusions about various events and themes 3. Identify key persons associated with economic, political, and social movements 4. Recognize how American life and culture changed throughout the decade 5. Determine how innovation and invention affected everyday life 6. Theorize how events that occurred in the 1950s affected U.S. politics and culture in the 1960s

Teaching and learning activities that equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:

- An overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of questions posed in the PowerPoint presentation
- Introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Providing students with primary source materials from which they will complete the unit's related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and cooperative projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Delivering feedback and evaluations on projects and research reports
- Student creation and presentation of their projects
- A posttest on the presentation, made up of multiple-choice questions and one or more essential questions as essay questions

Project #1: The 1950s in My Hometown

Overview:

In this lesson, students look for evidence as to what the 1950s might have been like in their community. Using 21st-century technology (the Internet, including an appropriate social-networking site), student groups construct Web pages comparing school and daily life in the 1950s with those of the present day.

Objectives:

After completing the lesson, students will:

- understand how life in the 1950s affected their school and local communities
- develop research skills targeted at gathering information on local history
- synthesize this information and make conclusions regarding life in the 1950s
- develop an understanding of typical American life in the 1950s and how it compares with modern culture
- compare and contrast local communities in the 1950s and the present day

Time:

Five to seven class periods, depending on the time allotted for research

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access; sources of local historical information; scanner and digital camera (if desired)

Methodology:

Begin the lesson by discussing various changes that affected ordinary Americans during the '50s. The PowerPoint presentation touches on several of these themes, including rock 'n' roll, teenage rebellion, the impact of the Cold War, and others. Explain that high school students in the 1950s went through various stresses and changes that affected society as a whole.

At the end of the discussion, explain to the students that they will work in groups to research and collect information about life in the 1950s specifically regarding their school (or a school in the immediate vicinity, if their school didn't exist at the time) and their hometown, and compare that information to life in their community and school today.

(Note: You should base the size of each group on the size and abilities of the class. You may also wish to assign tasks to individual students in each group; for example, one student might focus on finding related photos, while another might concentrate on writing.)

Divide the class up into groups investigating the following topics:

- School social events (dances, proms, clubs, etc.)
- Academics
- Community businesses and economic conditions
- Community issues and concerns
- Community recreation (movies, amusement parks, etc.)
- Any other categories you or the class feels appropriate

Once you've introduced the project, allow students sufficient time to research and collect information about their school and community during the 1950s. Encourage students to conduct conventional searches and explore things such as newspaper microfilm archives, oral histories from people who were present at local and/or school events, or other local history resources. In regard to resources regarding school events during the 1950s, some schools keep archival copies of school newspapers and yearbooks. Instruct the students to not only look for textual information, but visual information as well to include in their pages.

You may wish to have students collect and sort information using a graphic organizer, such as the four-column chart provided.

Once students have completed their research, have them assemble their blog or social-networking page. You may also wish to make the page public and invite others in the community to share information and remembrances of their experiences during the 1950s on the blog or social network.

Evaluation:

Once students have completed their projects, evaluate their work using a suitable rubric that mirrors the objectives of the lesson. You may elect to use a school- or district-created rubric, develop your own, or use the rubric included with this activity.

Suggested Web Resources:

Blogging sites:

- Blogger (<https://www.blogger.com/start>)
- EduBlogs (<http://edublogs.org/>)

Conventional social-networking sites:

- Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com>)
- MySpace (<http://www.myspace.com/>)

Education-based social-networking sites:

- Classroom 2.0 (<http://www.classroom20.com/>)
- Ning in Education (<http://education.ning.com/>)

Edutopia: “My School, Meet MySpace: Social Networking at School” (<http://www.edutopia.org/my-school-meet-myspace>)

Federal Trade Commission: “Social Networking Sites: Safety Tips for Tweens and Teens” (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/edu/pubs/consumer/tech/tec14.pdf>)

Microsoft: “10 Tips for Social Networking Safety” (<http://www.microsoft.com/protect/yourself/phishing/socialnet.mspx>)

The 1950s in My Hometown Information Collection Chart

Topic investigated: _____

Time period (1950s or today)	Event or location selected	Description of selected item	Impact of item on 1950s or today's culture	Other pertinent information regarding item

The 1950s in My Hometown

Evaluation Rubric

Category:	0–5 (poor):	6–10 (fair):	11–15 (good):	16–20 (excellent):	Total:
Originality	No evidence of unique thought; work is a collection of others' ideas	Little evidence of unique thought; work is a general collection of others' ideas	Project shows some originality; still includes a significant number of others' ideas	Project shows significant evidence of original thought and invention; majority of content demonstrates originality	
Depth of research	No evidence of topical research	Little evidence of significant research into the subject	Evidence of a fair amount of research; most topics backed by significant evidence	Evidence of significant research; all topics are backed by significant evidence	
Evidence of knowledge	Little evidence showing understanding of material	Some evidence of group understanding of material	Evidence that group grasps material and concepts of the lesson	Evidence that group understands all material and concepts of the lesson	
Organization of materials	No organization; difficult to understand	Little organization; difficult to understand	Some organization; generally easy to understand	Significant organization; easy to understand	
Aesthetics	Colors and text extremely difficult to read	Colors and text somewhat difficult to read	Colors and text fairly pleasing to the eye	Colors and text very pleasing to the eye	
Other teacher-established criteria					
Overall score					

Project #2: 1950s Television Hall of Fame

Overview:

In this lesson, student groups research the impact of television on the 1950s and select a single television show that in their view exemplifies the “golden age of television” and should be included in a television “hall of fame.” They then create a multimedia presentation describing the impact of television in the 1950s, including a persuasive argument as to why their selected show deserves admission to the hall of fame.

Objectives:

As a result of completing this lesson, students will:

- gain a historical appreciation of the impact and role of television in the 1950s
- research various television shows of the era and how they changed American culture
- make conclusions as to why their selected show deserves inclusion in a 1950s television “hall of fame”

Time:

Approximately five to seven class periods

Materials:

Computers with Internet access; television with DVD or VCR (if desired); multimedia software for developing presentations (such as Apple Keynote or Microsoft PowerPoint), storage-media solutions for larger presentations (e.g., CD burner, flash drive, or portable hard drive) if desired; video editing software, if desired

Methodology:

Begin the lesson with a discussion about the role of television in 21st-century America. Ask students to share the names of TV shows they watch regularly. Make note of the genres of the more popular shows (i.e., situation comedies, action/adventure shows). You may wish to write the names of shows on the chalkboard or project them onto an overhead screen.

Next, ask students if they are familiar with older television shows that still appear in reruns. (Students familiar with Nickelodeon’s TV Land network, as well as other stations that frequently show “classic TV” programs will probably offer names such as *I Love Lucy*, *The Andy Griffith Show*, *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *The Cosby Show*, et al. Students may also have heard their parents talk about specific shows they themselves watched while growing up.)

After concluding the brainstorming session, read the assignment statement, project it, or duplicate and distribute it to the students.

Examples of 1950s-era TV shows that students may select as possible nominees include:

- *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*
- *Dragnet*
- *Father Knows Best*
- *Gunsmoke*
- *I Love Lucy*
- *Have Gun, Will Travel*
- *The Honeymooners*
- *Howdy Doody*
- *I Married Joan*
- *Leave It to Beaver*
- *The Mickey Mouse Club*
- *The Texaco Star Theater* (hosted by Milton Berle)
- *Your Show of Shows*

(Note: There are hundreds of 1950s television shows to select from. You may wish to supplement this list with students' own examples, or request that students to do a Web search for alternatives. Since some shows still have a loyal following, you may instead wish to randomly assign shows.)

Prior to assigning groups, determine the size of each group based on class size and ability. You should also decide ahead of time what requirements students should fulfill regarding the presentation's length, number of pictures and/or audiovisual components, and other relevant criteria. While you should take into account the class's ability, the assignment should be challenging and engaging. You may find a sample (and adaptable) criteria sheet at <http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/staff/mhutchison/thewar/project.htm>.

Once you've introduced the project, assigned groups, and selected shows to research, give students adequate time to conduct research. While a great deal of information about 1950s television can be found online, it is highly suggested that students also use conventional forms of research such as encyclopedias and textbooks. You should consider asking students to use primary source materials as well, such as accounts from the shows' stars or specific episodes of various series. Episodes of several of the shows listed in the activity are available online at the Internet Archive (<http://www.archive.org/index.php>) or YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com>). While these episodes will not be of the highest quality, students may still view them to get the flavor of particular shows and of early TV in general.

As students collect information about their group's TV show selection, have them record it on the "TV Hall of Fame Information Chart" provided.

Once students have had the opportunity to research their show, they can begin to work on the presentation. Allow students sufficient time to create their presentations.

(Note: Depending on what requirements you have specified for each presentation, some may grow to be quite large. In those instances, you may wish to consider a project storage solution, such as a jump drive, portable hard drive, or network storage space.)

Evaluation:

After the project has concluded, evaluate student work with a suitable rubric based on the requirements you've established. A sample rubric is included, which you may adapt or use as is.

Suggested Web Resources:

While students should focus on learning about 1950s television and its effect on American culture, they should also devote some attention to PowerPoint mechanics. Many students have some background knowledge of the software, and some may be quite proficient. The following resources are suggested for either students wanting a basic how-to or a "refresher" course:

PowerPoint in the Classroom (<http://www.actden.com/pp/>)

PowerPoint Tips (<http://www.geocities.com/~webwinds/classes/powerpt.htm>)

Due to the large number of possible subjects for the presentation, this list includes only a sampling of resources. You may also wish to guide students in online research using a suitable search engine. Check <http://www.vcsc.k12.in.us/tcr/searching.htm> for information regarding effective strategies for searching, as well as links to various search engines.

The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/A/htmlA/adventuresof/adventuresof.htm>
- <http://www.geocities.com/alcus2/nelsons.html>

Dragnet:

- <http://www.badge714.com/>
- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/D/htmlD/dragnet/dragnet.htm>

Father Knows Best (also known as *Father Knows Best?*):

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/F/htmlF/fatherknows/fatherknows.htm>
- <http://www.fatherknowsbest.us/>

Gunsmoke:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/G/htmlG/gunsmoke/gunsmoke.htm>
- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0047736/>

Have Gun, Will Travel:

- <http://www.hgwt.com/>
- http://www.cbs.com/classics/have_gun_will_travel/

The Honeymooners:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/H/htmlH/honeymooners/honeymooners.htm>
- <http://www.tv.com/honeymooners/show/2507/summary.html>

Howdy Doody:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/H/htmlH/howdydoodys/howdydoodys.htm>
- <http://www.tvparty.com/50howdy.html>

I Love Lucy:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/I/htmlI/ilovelucy/ilovelucy.htm>
- <http://www.geocities.com/televisioncity/6066/epgulove.html>

I Married Joan:

- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0044269/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/I_Married_Joan

Leave It to Beaver:

- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/L/htmlL/leaveittob/leaveittob.htm>
- <http://www.geocities.com/alcus2/beaver.html>

The Mickey Mouse Club:

- <http://www.originalmmc.com/index.html>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mickey_Mouse_Club

The Texaco Star Theater:

- <http://crazyabouttv.com/texacostartheater.html>
- <http://www.classicthemes.com/50sTVThemes/themePages/texacoStarTheater.html>

Your Show of Shows

- <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0042173/>
- <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/C/htmlC/caesarsid/caesarsid.htm>

1950s Television “Hall of Fame”: Assignment Sheet

The Smithsonian Institution has decided to create an exhibit on famous television shows of the 1950s. Your class has been chosen to create persuasive multimedia presentations to help select the candidates for this honor.

You will choose one classic television show from the 1950s, work in groups to create the presentation, and present it to the class. Remember, you will want to do your best to persuade your audience that your show deserves the honor of inclusion in the 1950s Television Hall of Fame.

Be sure to include the following in your presentation:

- Biographical information about the show and/or stars
- Information about the star or stars’ career (other shows or movies they may have starred in)
- Pictures, video, and sound files (if available) of your show
- A persuasive statement explaining why your show deserves inclusion in the Hall of Fame
- A bibliography of sources you used to assemble your presentation
- Any other information you feel will make your presentation more persuasive and informative

Your teacher will give you further information regarding group assignments and other requirements for the presentation.

1950s Television “Hall of Fame” Information Sheet

Show selected: _____

Star(s): _____

Airdates: _____

Network(s): _____

The show’s premise or plot:

Awards or honors the show won:

Significant episodes that aired (with synopsis):

Other significant events in the star's career (movie roles, other television roles, awards?):

Evidence or rationale for why this show deserves a spot in the Hall of Fame:

Bibliography of Web sites or other resources used to develop the presentation:

1950s Television “Hall of Fame” Presentation Rubric

Criteria:	Level 1 (1–10):	Level 2 (11–20):	Level 3 (21–30):	Level 4 (31–40):	Group score:
Clear expression of ideas	Communicates information as random, isolated pieces	Communicates important information, but without a clear theme or overall structure	Clearly communicates main idea, theme, and point of view	Clearly and effectively communicates main idea, theme, and point of view	
Presentation of a point of view	Limited evidence of a point of view	Point of view apparent but unclear at times	Demonstrates a clear point of view	Provides a strong point of view using rich and persuasive details	
Evidence of research	Demonstrates little evidence of research	Some evidence of research	Clear evidence of research	Evidence of considerable research	
Effective use of colors and graphics	Color and/or graphics used unclearly	Colors and/or graphics not clearly supportive of theme	Colors and/or graphics support theme	Colors and/or graphics make purpose of presentation obvious	
Effective use of text	Minimally displayed; purpose unclear	Clearly displayed but unsupportive of theme or message	Supports the theme or message	Delivers theme or message with impact	
Overall impact and creativity	Shows little effort; visuals and text of poor quality; limited innovation and appeal	Visuals and text clear, though their connection may not be obvious; may show a hint of innovation	Effort and thoughtful preparation clearly shown; elements of innovation in text or visuals	Visuals and text make for an eye-catching and powerful design	
Other teacher-established criteria					
Total group score					

Project #3: “Teenage Rebellion” Editorial

Overview:

In this lesson, students review the lives of teenagers in the 1950s and write editorials about the effects of the Beat movement, popular media, and rock ‘n’ roll on young people during the decade.

Objectives:

As a result of completing this lesson, students will:

- recognize differing viewpoints about social and cultural influences on youth during the 1950s
- speculate as to how those influences shaped the life of the “average” teenager during the decade
- develop persuasive statements about the positive or negative effects of these influences

Time:

Two to three class periods

Materials:

Computer(s) with Internet access; word processing software (if desired); printer for completed editorials (if desired)

Methodology:

Prior to starting the project, you should acquaint students with the concepts of 1950s social conformity and the “teenage rebellion” of the decade, including rock ‘n’ roll, Beat literature, movies, and how popular media influenced perceptions of youth, as discussed in the PowerPoint presentation.

Ask students to brainstorm the concept of the “average” 1950s teenager. Some may mention specific stars or characters from movies and television, such as James Dean, Marlon Brando, “Wally Cleaver” (*Leave It to Beaver*), Elvis Presley, and others. Based on what they may recall from the presentation, students may believe that these were accurate depictions of 1950s youth, or may recognize them as advancing stereotypes.

After the conclusion of the brainstorming session, explain the general purpose of an editorial as an opinion piece that states the collective view of the publication regarding a particular issue. Stress that an editorial is the publication's view, and not necessarily that of an individual author.

Next, tell the students that they will be writing an editorial about 1950s-era teenagers and the impact of Beat writers, rock 'n' roll, and popular media on their development. Write the following list of questions on the chalkboard or overhead projector. Suggest to students that they should seek to answer the questions as they write:

- Was there a “teenage rebellion” during the 1950s?
- What popular media (movies, television, books, etc.) had an impact on youth culture?
- What effect did rock 'n' roll have on young people during the 1950s?
- Did parents effectively deal with cultural changes that affected teenagers in the 1950s? Explain.

Depending on the class's frame of reference, you may wish to assign specific positions to students (i.e., have some students write editorials decrying the music and culture of the 1950s, while having others argue that such cultural influences did not cause teenage rebellion).

Once students have their viewpoints, have them begin research for information supporting their view, using the “‘Teenage Rebellion’ Opinion Chart” and related Web resources. Allow students sufficient time to research their point of view and write their editorials, using the opinion chart as a framework for their views.

Evaluation:

After students have completed the writing assignment, evaluate their work using a suitable rubric. You may elect to use a rubric created by the school or district, use the one included with this lesson, or create one of your own.

Suggested Web resources:

(Note: There is a large selection of Web resources on the culture of the 1950s. You are encouraged to have students conduct their own research as well as utilize the sites included below.)

American Movie Classics Filmsite: “Film History of the 1950s” (<http://www.filmsite.org/50sintro.html>)

Beat Generation Resource Page (<http://www.connectotel.com/beat/index.html>)

Fifties Web (<http://www.fiftiesweb.com/>)

The History of Rock n' Roll: “The Golden Decade 1954–1963” (<http://www.history-of-rock.com/>)

Literary Kicks: “The Beat Generation” (<http://www.litkicks.com/BeatGen/>)

The Literature and Culture of the American 1950s (<http://www.writing.upenn.edu/~afilreis/50s/home.html>)

Mr. Pop Culture: “1950s Week by Week Archive” (http://www.mrpopculture.com/1950s_popculture_index.htm)

The Museum of Broadcast Communications: “American Bandstand” (<http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/A/htmlA/americanband/americanband.htm>)

Rewind the Fifties: “Teenage Life in the 1950s” (http://www.lotl.com/fifties_history/Teenage_Life_in_the_1950s.htm)

WWV-VL: “United States History Index, 1950–1959” (<http://vlib.iue.it/history/USA/ERAS/20TH/1950s.html>)

“Teenage Rebellion” Opinion Chart

Source	What I Read	Does this support my view?	Why or why not?	How would I include this point in my editorial?

“Teenage Rebellion” Editorial Rubric

Structure—introduction: Editorial states introduction; introduces main points	Level 1 (0–5): Simple opening statement; limited identification of main points Level 2 (6–10): Thesis stated but unclear; main points unclear Level 3 (11–15): Thesis stated but somewhat unclear; main points introduced with moderate clarity Level 4 (16–20): Thesis precisely stated; main points clearly introduced	Score:
Structure—conclusion: Summarizes thesis/main idea; summarizes main points	Level 1 (0–5): Abrupt ending; limited identification of main points Level 2 (6–10): Thesis stated but unclear; main points unclear Level 3 (11–15): Thesis stated but somewhat unclear; main points summarized but unclear Level 4 (16–20): Thesis and main points clearly summarized	Score:
Supporting reasons or arguments: Arguments logically related to main idea	Level 1 (0–5): Arguments are unrelated Level 2 (6–10): Arguments unclear, not logically related to main idea Level 3 (11–15): Arguments usually clear and logically related to main idea Level 4 (16–20): Arguments very clear and logically related to main idea	Score:
Other teacher-established criteria:		Score:
Overall student score:		

The 1950s: Backwards Planning

Multiple-Choice Quiz

1. Which of the following is true about President Truman's position on civil rights in the late 1940s and early 1950s?
 - a. He did not make any policies regarding civil rights
 - b. He selected the first black Cabinet member
 - c. He appointed the first black army general
 - d. He desegregated the armed forces
2. Which general engineered the daring UN landing at Inchon during the Korean War?
 - a. Dwight Eisenhower
 - b. Douglas MacArthur
 - c. Matthew Ridgway
 - d. William Westmoreland
3. Which of the following best describes the outcome of the Korean War?
 - a. The truce put the boundary between North and South Korea where it was before the war
 - b. A coalition government between North and South Korea was created
 - c. North Korea surrendered to the UN forces
 - d. The Chinese Army destroyed the city of Seoul, South Korea
4. The House Un-American Activities Committee investigated the possibility of communist infiltration in:
 - a. The Ku Klux Klan
 - b. Harvard University
 - c. The United States Information Agency
 - d. The film industry
5. Which of the following did not occur as a result of the development of suburbs in the 1950s?
 - a. A population shift from the "Rust Belt" to the "Sun Belt"
 - b. Development of affordable housing
 - c. Houses tended to look the same because they were prefabricated
 - d. Most middle-class people tended to stay in the cities because they were closer to schools
6. Which of the following is true about Richard M. Nixon in the 1950s?
 - a. He saved his political career with his famous "Checkers speech"
 - b. He was Eisenhower's running mate in 1952 and 1956
 - c. He lost the popular vote in the 1960 presidential election by less than one percent
 - d. All of the above

7. In his speech to the Republican Women's Club, which government agency did Senator Joseph McCarthy allege was employing communists?
- The Department of State
 - The Central Intelligence Agency
 - The Department of Transportation
 - The Department of Defense
8. Which journalist conducted an expose on Joseph McCarthy on CBS's *See It Now*?
- Walter Cronkite
 - Edward R. Murrow
 - Ernie Pyle
 - Dan Rather
9. Who wrote *The Affluent Society*?
- Levitt
 - Asch
 - Galbraith
 - Friedan
10. Which of the following was not true regarding 1950s social conformity?
- Many saw American society as "mass produced" in cookie-cutter fashion
 - It included the presumed role of women as housewives
 - Social undercurrents belied perceptions of conformity
 - Popular media made great strides in promoting gender and racial equality
- Which of the following could be considered a symbol of 1950s "teenage rebellion"?
- Frank Sinatra
 - James Dean
 - John Foster Dulles
 - Solomon Asch
11. Who issued the nation's first widely used credit card?
- Diners Club
 - BankAmerica
 - American Express
 - Visa
12. Which is an example of "obsolescence of desirability"?
- When a product's design cannot be improved, changes are made to its styling
 - A product is "worn out" in the consumer's mind
 - Fewer products are produced in order to raise demand
 - More products are produced, but consumers do not buy the entire inventory

13. Who wrote *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*?
- a. Dr. Seuss
 - b. Dr. Spock
 - c. Dr. Kildare
 - d. Dr. Salk
14. Which of the following is not true of Salk's and Sabin's polio vaccinations?
- a. Salk's vaccination was injected
 - b. Sabin's vaccination was taken orally
 - c. The immunity lasted only two years, so the vaccination had to be readministered
 - d. The number of polio cases worldwide decreased dramatically
15. Which government official is credited for helping develop the Interstate Highway system?
- a. Gottlieb Daimler
 - b. Dwight Eisenhower
 - c. Henry Ford
 - d. Joseph McCarthy
16. Which of the following was true about television in the 1950s?
- a. It tended to reinforce traditional gender and racial stereotypes
 - b. It was called "a vast wasteland"
 - c. It changed how politicians communicated with the public
 - d. All of the above
17. Which of the following is NOT true about Elvis Presley?
- a. Elvis was first signed by Sam Phillips of Sun Records
 - b. Many "establishment" types supported him for his clean cut looks and lack of controversy
 - c. He made African American music palatable to white audiences
 - d. He was shown on the *Ed Sullivan Show* only from the waist up
18. Which groups worked in the U.S. under the *bracero* program?
- a. Puerto Ricans
 - b. Mexicans
 - c. Guatemalans
 - d. Brazilians
19. In what case did the U.S. Supreme Court rule that school segregation was unconstitutional?
- a. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*
 - b. *Schechter Brothers v. United States*
 - c. *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg School District*
 - d. *Roe v. Wade*

- 20.** Which event sparked the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott?
- a. A speech by Martin Luther King Jr.
 - b. The arrest of Rosa Parks
 - c. The shooting of a black bus passenger by a white bus driver
 - d. The integration of schools in Little Rock
- 21.** Which of the following best describes the philosophy of Dr. Martin Luther King?
- a. King believed in “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”
 - b. King believed that civil rights could only be gained through violent protest
 - c. King believed that nonviolent disobedience was the best way to gain equal rights
 - d. King believed that blacks should not ask for more rights than they already had
- 22.** Who was the pilot of the U-2 shot down over the Soviet Union?
- a. Chuck Yeager
 - b. John Glenn
 - c. D.B. Cooper
 - d. Francis Gary Powers
- 23.** Which was Earth’s first artificial satellite?
- a. Explorer I
 - b. Sputnik I
 - c. Mercury VII
 - d. Apollo I
- 24.** Which nation suffered a major defeat at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu?
- a. The United States
 - b. North Vietnam
 - c. South Vietnam
 - d. France

The 1950s:

Multiple-Choice Quiz Answer Key

1. D
2. B
3. A
4. D
5. D
6. D
7. A
8. B
9. C
10. D
11. B
12. A
13. B
14. B
15. C
16. B
17. D
18. B
19. B
20. A
21. B
22. C
23. D
24. B
25. D