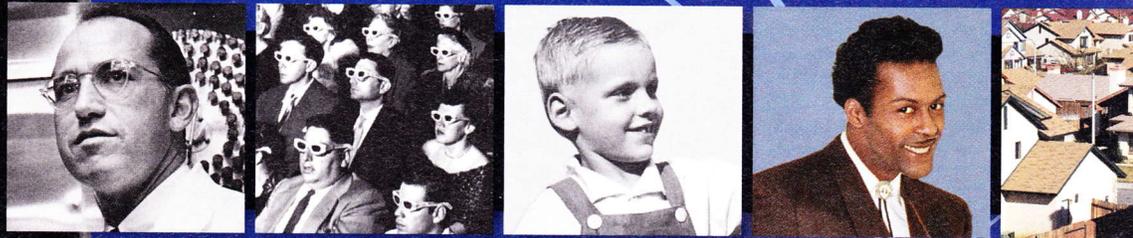


There's More Online!

- ✓ BIOGRAPHY Jack Kerouac
- ✓ BIOGRAPHY Elvis Presley
- ✓ IMAGE American Bandstand
- ✓ IMAGE Computer Technology
- ✓ IMAGE Fighting Polio
- ✓ IMAGE Suburban Housing
- ✓ IMAGE Television
- ✓ VIDEO The Affluent Society
- ✓ INTERACTIVE SELF-CHECK QUIZ



LESSON 2

The Affluent Society

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • How does prosperity change the way people live?

Reading HELPDESK



Academic Vocabulary

- phenomenon
- conform

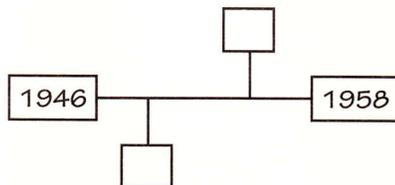
Content Vocabulary

- baby boom
- white-collar job
- blue-collar worker
- multinational corporation
- franchise
- rock 'n' roll
- generation gap

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

Sequencing As you read, use a time line to record major events of science, technology, and popular culture during the late 1940s and 1950s.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

For many Americans, the 1950s was a time of affluence, with many new technological breakthroughs. In addition, new forms of entertainment created a generational divide between young people and adults.

American Abundance

GUIDING QUESTION How did the lives of Americans change after World War II?

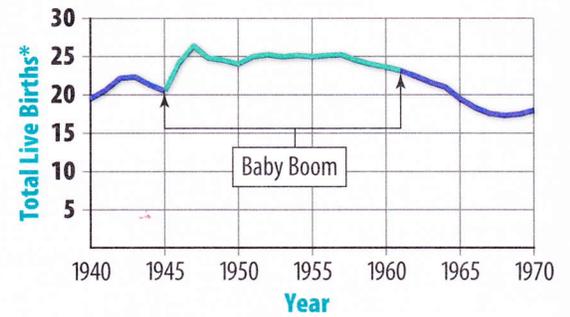
The 1950s was a decade of incredible prosperity. Between 1940 and 1955, the average income of U.S. families roughly tripled. People in all income brackets were experiencing a rapid rise in income. In 1958 economist John Kenneth Galbraith published *The Affluent Society*, in which he claimed that the nation's postwar prosperity was a new **phenomenon**. Galbraith suggested that whereas past societies had an "economy of scarcity" with limited economic productivity, the United States had now created an "economy of abundance." New business techniques and technology enabled the production of abundant goods and services. They dramatically raised the U.S. standard of living.

With more disposable income than ever, Americans began spending on new consumer goods. Advertising helped fuel the spending spree. It became the United States's fastest-growing industry. Manufacturers employed new, carefully planned marketing techniques to create consumer demand for their products.

The Growth of Suburbia

Advertisers targeted consumers with money to spend, many of whom lived in new mass-produced suburbs that grew up around cities in the 1950s. Levittown, New York, was one of the earliest of the mass-produced suburbs. It was the brainchild of Bill Levitt, who mass-produced hundreds of simple, similar-looking homes 10 miles east of New York City. Between 1947 and 1951, families rushed to buy the inexpensive homes. Similar suburbs multiplied throughout the nation. The suburban population doubled, while the population of cities rose only 10 percent.

- Analyzing** In what year was there the greatest increase in the number of live births? Why might this be?
- Drawing Conclusions** What economic consequences does a society with a “baby boom” have to face when that generation reaches retirement age?



*per 1,000 population for women 15–44 years old.

Source: Historical Statistics of the United States.

phenomenon an event or occurrence that is exceptional or unusual

baby boom a marked rise in birthrate, such as occurred in the United States following World War II

white-collar job a job in a field not requiring work clothes or protective clothing, such as sales

blue-collar worker a worker who performs manual labor, particularly work that requires protective clothing

multinational corporation large corporation with overseas investments

franchise the right or license to market a company's goods or services in an area, such as a store of a chain operation

conform to change in a way that fits a standard or authority

Reasons for suburban growth varied. Some people wished to escape the crime and congestion of the city. Others believed suburbs offered a better life and were more affordable. The GI Bill and the government's decision to give income tax deductions for mortgage and property tax payments made home ownership more attractive than ever. Between 1940 and 1960, the percentage of Americans who owned their homes rose from about 41 percent to about 61 percent.

The Baby Boom

The U.S. birthrate exploded after World War II. From 1945 to 1961, more than 65 million children were born in the United States. At the height of this **baby boom**, a child was born every seven seconds. Many factors contributed to the baby boom. First, young couples who had put off getting married during World War II and the Korean War could finally begin their families. Also, the government encouraged the growth of families by offering generous GI benefits for home purchases. Finally, popular culture celebrated pregnancy, parenthood, and large families.

The Changing Workplace

As the economy grew, ongoing mechanization of farms and factories meant more Americans began working in offices in what came to be called **white-collar jobs**. These employees typically wore a white dress shirt and a tie to work instead of the blue denim work shirts of factory workers and laborers. In 1956 white-collar workers outnumbered **blue-collar workers** for the first time.

Many white-collar employees worked for large corporations. To be more competitive, some corporations expanded overseas. They became **multinational corporations**, locating near raw materials and benefiting from a cheap labor pool. Also during this time **franchises** became popular. In a franchise, a person owns and runs one or more stores of a larger chain. Believing that consumers valued dependability and familiarity, the owners of chain operations often demanded that their franchises **conform** to a uniform look and style.

Many other corporate leaders also expected conformity rather than freethinking. Sociologist David Riesman and others criticized this trend. In his 1950 book *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman argued that conformity was changing people. He claimed that people used to judge themselves on the basis of their own values and the esteem of their families. But now, he said, “The American is said to be shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, more demanding of approval. . . .

[This attitude of] other-direction is becoming the typical character of the 'new' middle class." In his 1956 book *The Organization Man*, William H. Whyte, Jr., attacked the similarity many businesses cultivated in their employees to keep any individual from dominating.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Describing How did corporations change the lives of Americans?

Scientific Advances

GUIDING QUESTION How did technological advances change society?

As the United States experienced social changes during the postwar era, it also witnessed important scientific advances. During the 1950s, scientists broke new ground in electronics, aviation, and medicine.

Advances in Electronics and Aviation

The electronics industry advanced rapidly after World War II. In 1947 three U.S. physicists developed the transistor, a tiny electric generator that made it possible to create small portable radios.

The computer age also dawned in the postwar era. In 1946 scientists developed one of the nation's earliest computers, ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), to make military calculations. Several years later, a newer model, UNIVAC (Universal Automatic Computer), processed business data and started the computer revolution.

Aviation progressed rapidly as well. Aircraft designers used more plastics and light metals, swept-back wings, and new jet engine technology to build planes that could fly farther on the same amount of fuel. These advances made airline travel affordable for more people.

Medical Breakthroughs

Prior to the 1950s, there were few effective treatments for cancer and heart attacks. Medical breakthroughs in the 1950s changed that. The development of radiation treatments and chemotherapy helped many cancer patients survive. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), developed in 1950, helped many people survive heart attacks. Doctors also learned to replace worn-out heart valves with artificial valves, and implanted the first pacemakers in 1952.

Tuberculosis and polio had frightened Americans for decades. Tuberculosis patients were isolated in sanatoriums to prevent the spread of this highly contagious lung disease. During the 1950s, a blood test for the disease and new antibiotics helped end fears. In 1956 tuberculosis fell from the list of the top ten fatal diseases.

Polio epidemics typically left their victims dead or paralyzed. Parents frantically tried to protect their children from the disease. Some sent them to the country to avoid excessive contact with others. Public swimming pools and beaches were closed. Parks and playgrounds across the country were deserted. In 1952 a record 58,000 new cases were reported. Finally, research scientist Jonas Salk developed an injectable polio vaccine, which became available to the public in 1955. Researcher Albert Sabin then developed an oral polio vaccine. Safer and more convenient than Salk's vaccine, the Sabin vaccine helped the threat of polio nearly disappear.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Evaluating What technological advancements helped treat cancer?



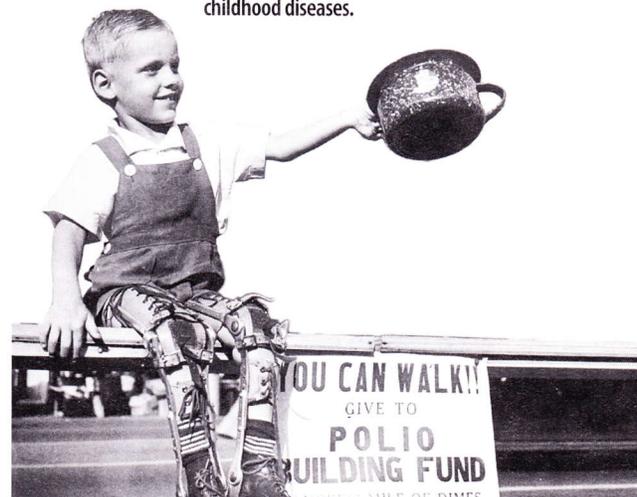
Dr. Jonas Salk (1914–1995)

Jonas Salk enrolled in college as a prelaw student but soon changed his mind. He switched his major to premed and went on to become a research scientist. Sometimes he made rounds in the overcrowded polio wards of a hospital near his lab, where nurses described their feelings of helpless rage. One nurse said, "I can remember how the staff used to kid Dr. Salk—kidding in earnest—telling him to hurry up and do something." Salk became famous for the polio vaccine he developed in 1952.

CRITICAL THINKING

Analyzing What character traits do you think made Dr. Salk a successful research scientist?

Charitable donations funded the medical research that helped cure or control many childhood diseases.



The New Mass Media

GUIDING QUESTION How did the new mass media reflect the characteristics of the time?

Regular television broadcasts had begun in the early 1940s, but there were few stations and sets were expensive. In 1946 no more than 8,000 televisions were in use across the nation. By 1957, though, nearly 40 million sets had been sold, and more than 80 percent of families owned at least one television.

The Rise of Television

Early television programs included comedies, variety shows, and action programs. In 1953 Lucille Ball and her husband, Desi Arnaz, starred in one of the medium's most popular shows ever, a comedy called *I Love Lucy*. One episode attracted an audience of 44 million viewers—more than for the presidential inauguration the following day.

Many early comedy shows, such as those starring Bob Hope and Jack Benny, were adapted from radio programs. Variety shows, such as Ed Sullivan's *Toast of the Town*, provided a mix of comedy, music, dance, and acrobatics. Quiz shows also drew large audiences after the 1955 debut of *The \$64,000 Question*. Westerns such as *The Lone Ranger* and *Gunsmoke* grew quickly in popularity. Viewers also enjoyed police shows such as *Dragnet*, featuring Detective Joe Friday. Television news and sports broadcasts grew in popularity as well.

Hollywood Adapts

As television's popularity grew, movies lost viewers. Attendance plunged from 82 million in 1946 to 36 million by 1950. By 1960, one-fifth of the nation's movie theaters had closed. Hollywood used contests, door prizes, and advertising to attract audiences, but failed. Hollywood tried 3-D movies that required the audience to wear special glasses. Viewers quickly tired of the glasses and the films' often-silly plots.

However, Cinemascope—a process that showed movies on large, panoramic screens—finally gave Hollywood something television could not match. Full-color spectacles like *The Robe* and *Around the World in 80 Days* cost a great deal to make, but drew huge audiences and profits.

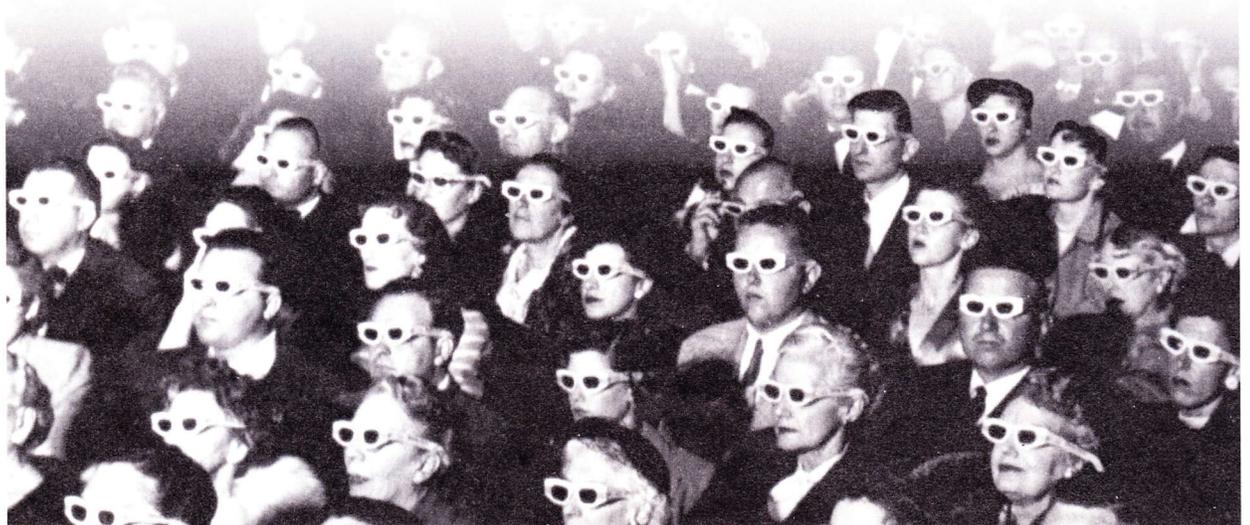
Radio Draws Them In

Television also forced the radio industry to change. Television made radio comedies, dramas, and soap operas obsolete. Radio stations responded by broadcasting recorded music, news, weather, sports, and talk shows.

Hollywood studios tried to recapture audiences with gimmicks such as contests, door prizes, and even 3-D movies requiring special glasses.

► CRITICAL THINKING

Making Inferences Why did audiences steadily desert movies during the 1950s?



Radio had one audience that television could not reach—people traveling in their cars. People commuting from the suburbs, running errands, or traveling on long road trips relied on radio for news and entertainment. As a result, the number of radio stations more than doubled between 1948 and 1957.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Making Connections Why is television considered part of the new mass media?

rock 'n' roll popular music usually played on electronically amplified instruments and characterized by a persistent, heavily accented beat, much repetition of simple phrases, and often country, folk, and blues elements

generation gap a cultural separation between parents and their children

New Music and Poetry

GUIDING QUESTIONS Why did young people in the 1950s develop their own popular culture? Why were the results different from those in previous generations?

Teens in every generation seek to separate themselves from their parents. In that respect, the 1950s were just like earlier decades, but the results were different for two reasons. First, teens had disposable income that could be spent on entertainment designed specifically for them. Second, the new mass media meant that teens around the country could hear the same music or see the same television shows. The new youth culture became an independent market for the entertainment and advertising industries.

Rock 'n' Roll

In 1951, at a record store in downtown Cleveland, Ohio, radio disc jockey Alan Freed noticed white teenagers buying African American rhythm-and-blues records. Teens also were dancing to the music in the store. Freed convinced his station manager to put the music on the air, and listeners went crazy for it. Soon, white artists began making music that stemmed from these African American sounds, creating a new form of music, **rock 'n' roll**.

With a loud and heavy beat that made it ideal for dancing, and lyrics about themes that appealed to young people, rock 'n' roll became wildly popular. Teens bought recordings from artists such as Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, and Bill Haley and the Comets. In 1956 teenagers found their first rock 'n' roll hero in music and movie star Elvis Presley. At first, popular television host Ed Sullivan refused to invite Presley to appear on his variety show. He insisted that rock 'n' roll music was not fit for a family-oriented show. After another show featuring Presley upset Sullivan's high ratings, however, he relented.

Presley owed his popularity as much to his moves as to his music, swinging his hips and dancing during his performances in ways that shocked many people. Many adults condemned rock 'n' roll as loud, mindless, and dangerous. The city council of San Antonio, Texas, banned rock 'n' roll from the jukeboxes at public swimming pools.

The rock 'n' roll hits that teens bought in record numbers united them in a world their parents did not share. Thus, in the 1950s, this new music helped to create what became known as the **generation gap**, or the cultural separation between children and their parents.



During the 1950s, teens around the nation eagerly bought rock 'n' roll records. The music was popular at dances called hops and even on television programs like *American Bandstand*.

CRITICAL THINKING

Predicting Consequences

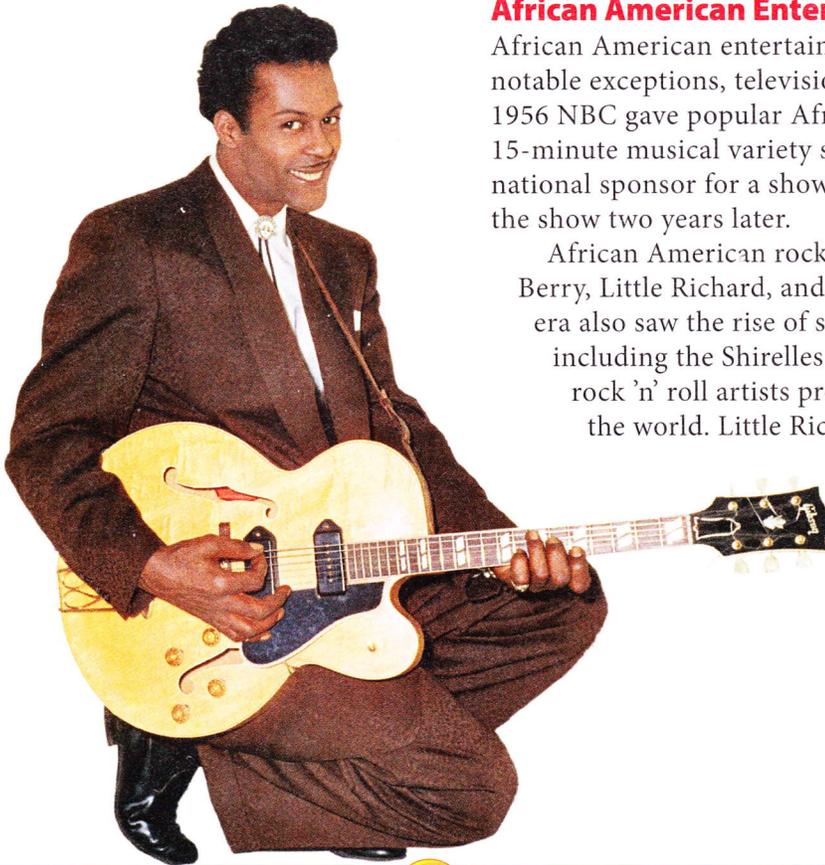
How might the rise of youth culture during the 1950s affect teens of later generations?

Chuck Berry was one of the leading popular music performers of the 1950s.

▶ CRITICAL THINKING

Determining Cause and Effect

How did Berry's popularity influence later generations of musicians?



The Beat Movement

A group of mostly white writers and artists who called themselves *beats*, or *beatniks*, highlighted a values gap in 1950s America. Beat poets, writers, and artists criticized American culture for its sterility, conformity, and emptiness. In 1956, 29-year-old poet Allen Ginsberg published a long poem titled “Howl” blasting American life. It began, “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked . . . burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night.” Beat author Jack Kerouac’s book *On the Road* (1957), about his freewheeling adventures with a car thief and con artist, shocked some readers. Although the beat movement remained small, it laid the foundations for the widespread youth cultural rebellion of the 1960s.

African American Entertainers

African American entertainers struggled to find acceptance. With a few notable exceptions, television tended to shut out African Americans. In 1956 NBC gave popular African American singer Nat King Cole a 15-minute musical variety show. However, NBC was unable to find a national sponsor for a show hosted by an African American, so it canceled the show two years later.

African American rock ’n’ roll singers faced fewer obstacles. Chuck Berry, Little Richard, and Ray Charles all recorded hit songs. The same era also saw the rise of several female African American groups, including the Shirelles and the Ronettes. The music of these early rock ’n’ roll artists profoundly influenced popular music around the world. Little Richard and Chuck Berry, for example, inspired

the Beatles, whose music swept Britain and the world in the 1960s.

Despite the advances in music and the economic boom of the 1950s, not all Americans were part of the new society. For many minorities and rural poor, the American Dream remained well out of reach.

✓ READING PROGRESS CHECK

Determining Cause and Effect What made rock ’n’ roll part of the new culture of the 1950s?

LESSON 2 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

1. **Contrasting** How did white-collar jobs and blue-collar jobs differ?
2. **Defining** What is the generation gap?

Using Your Notes

3. **Explaining** Use the notes you completed during the lesson to write a short paragraph explaining some of the major changes that took place during the 1950s.

Answering the Guiding Questions

4. **Describing** How did the lives of Americans change after World War II?

5. **Analyzing Cause and Effect** How did technological advances change society?

6. **Making Connections** How did the new mass media reflect the characteristics of the time?

7. **Evaluating** Why did young people in the 1950s develop their own popular culture?

Writing Activity

8. **ARGUMENT** Think about U.S. youth culture today. Consider how it is similar to and different from the youth culture of the 1950s. Then write a short essay in which you give your opinions about how youth culture can influence society, and whether youth culture is as important as adult culture.