

McCarthyism & Red Scare is at its height in '54  
↳ Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed for espionage

Compliance and attempts at social perfection were hallmarks of the 1950s. Conformity was common, as young and old alike followed group norms rather than striking out on their own

Though men and women had been forced into new employment patterns during WWII, once the war was over traditional roles were reaffirmed.  
↳ Men expected to be breadwinners; women, even when they worked, assumed their "proper" place was at home.

The importance of peer-group expectations is pronounced.  
↳ This society was "other-directed", and as such lent itself to stability as well as conformity. (observation by Sociologist David Riesman)

Civil Rights Movement is gaining traction.  
↳ Emmett Till murder and Rosa Parks on bus  
↳ Emergence of Malcolm X and MLK Jr  
↳ Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 criminalizes segregation, leading to Little Rock 9 in 1957

Burger King (founded 1954) competes with McDonalds (first restaurant in 1940, but corporation founded 1955)

Juvenile delinquency was said to be at unprecedented epidemic proportions in the US

Comic books were blamed for juvenile delinquency and other social ills.  
↳ The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency hearings in April and June 1954 focused specifically on graphic crime and horror comic books

1951, General Douglas MacArthur fired by President Truman for comments about using nuclear weapons on China. Very public dispute.

1954, Roger Bannister of England races first sub-4:00 mile. Emboldens milers throughout world.

1957, first attempt by US to launch a satellite fails when it explodes on the launch pad.  
1958, NASA formed

1951, 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment limits presidents to two terms in office

Regional differences were pronounced: in some parts of the country poverty took hold, while affluency (wealth) was widespread in others.

Charles Schultz comic strip 'Peanuts' appears for the first time 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1950

Popular toys: Hula Hoop and Frisbee (both introduced 1957); Barbie (1959), BB guns, Lincoln Logs, 'Coonskin caps inspired by Davy Crockett, Silly Putty, Slinky, Mr. Potato Head '52

1950, a gallon of fuel is 18 cents; 25 cents by '59  
1950, a car cost \$1,510; by '59, it was \$2,200

The design of the body of cars was influenced by the 'jet age'. All cars built with tail fins and bullet lights

The 1950s saw a high rate of unionization, government social spending and taxes.

"The Day The Earth Stood Still" opens in movie theaters, launching a cycle of Hollywood films in which Cold War fears are manifested through scenarios of alien invasion or mutilation.

Resurgence of evangelical Christianity

Kinsey Reports on human sexual behavior were published. Shocked society because they challenged conventional beliefs about sexuality and discussed previously taboo subjects.

1953, Hugh Hefner launches Playboy. Politicians and religious groups cite it as evidence of a decaying society. Hefner argues 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment protections.

In the post-war period, society viewed marriage as an essential ingredient for a full and happy life.  
↳ "Family togetherness quickly became the national ideal, seized upon by advertisers, ministers and newspaper editors. (historian Steven Mintz)

## The Fifties: The American Dream Blinds us of Realities 1950-1959

*Television and film was not only a form of entertainment, but more so used as family bonding time. Television contributed to the homogenizing trend by providing young and old with shared experience reflecting accepted social patterns.*

- ↳ On television, sitcoms offered a romanticized version of the traditional middle class
  - ↳ Examples: I Love Lucy; Leave It To Beaver
- ↳ Genre series were introduced with Dragnet (1952)
- ↳ Children's tv programming highlighted by Mickey Mouse Club & Adventures of Superman
- ↳ Musicals were popular entertainment: The King and I (1951), The Music Man (1957), My Fair Lady (1956), The Sound of Music (1959)
- ↳ Teen films came into their own during this decade, beginning with 'The Wild One' starring Marlon Brando as an outlaw biker. 'Rebel Without A Cause' (1955), 'Gidget' (1959)
- ↳ Disney films: Davey Crockett, Old Yeller,
- ↳ News casting and journalism were distinguished and well regarded.
- ↳ Quiz and panel shows popular
- ↳ Tv's celebrated traditional American values
- ↳ Drive-in movies prevalent
  - ↳ Drive-through take-out eateries were popular

"Beat generation" / "beatnik" were teenage and young adults who rebelled against conventional values. They stressed spontaneity and spirituality, asserting intuition over reason; Eastern mysticism over Western institutionalized religion. They went out of their way to challenge the patterns of respectability and shock the rest of the culture. (They are the predecessor to the counterculture and Hippie movements of the '60s)  
↳ Jack Kerouac "On the Road", his book glorified the possibilities for a free life.  
↳ Allen Ginsberg (poet) "Howl" was a scathing critique of modern, mechanized civilization.

Elvis Presley, popularized black music in the form of rock and roll, and shocked Americans with his ducktail haircut and hip-emphasized dance moves.

1950, introduction for first modern credit card  
1951, first color television introduced  
1952, seatbelts in automobiles introduced  
1954, report says cigarettes cause cancer  
1955, Polio vaccine, developed by Jonas Salk, introduced to the general public  
1956, The term "artificial intelligence" was coined in by John McCarthy.  
1956, television remote control invented  
1956, Velcro introduced  
1957, Dr. Seuss published 'The Cat In The Hat'  
1958, first passenger airline flight.  
1959, television quiz shows found to be fixed!  
1959, Alaska and Hawaii become states.

War hero Dwight Eisenhower defeats Adlai Stevenson for the presidency, twice! 1952 and 1956 elections.

1950, Brinks robbery in Boston occurs when eleven masked men steal \$2.8 million from an armored car outside their express office.

1952, President Truman orders the seizure of US steel mills in order to avert a strike, but his actions are ruled illegal by the Supreme Court

Increase in consumerism

Creation of suburbs glamorized to the returning servicemen and celebrated in society. By 1959, one-third of population lived there.

Baby boom.  
Average ages for brides and grooms were at record lows, and the marriage rate was at an all-time high.  
↳ By the end of the 1950s, 70% of all women were married by age 24 (in 1940, it was 42%, and in 1988 it was 50%)  
↳ In 1957, the birth rate equaled one child born ever 7 seconds!  
↳ Fertility rates increased as well, with nearly half of all women having first child before age 20.

Many war Veterans made use of the GI Bill  
↳ The GI Bill (became law in 1944) provided money for college and job training education and a full years unemployment compensation. It also provided money to start businesses and to buy homes.  
↳ By 1956, 7.8 million had used it for education or training programs, and 2.4 million for home loans.

American became a more homogeneous nation because of the automobile.

1955, Disneyland opens (40% of the guests came from outside California, most by car)

Atomic anxieties  
↳ Schools routinely practiced duck-and-cover drills to "protect" from an atomic blast

War in Korea, 1950-1952

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

***United States History: Brainstorm review, 1950s***

1. Why were Julius and Ethel Rosenberg executed in 1954?
2. What TWO things were commonplace throughout the 1950s?
3. Once World War II was over, what happened to the war-time pattern of men at war and women working in support of the war in factories at home?
4. What is the observation of sociologist David Riesman?
5. Which came first: McDonalds or Burger King (and when??)
6. Juvenile delinquency was blamed on what?
7. Why did Congress investigate comic books in 1954?
8. What happened to General MacArthur in 1951? Why?
9. What did Roger Barrister do? (*Ok, granted, this was in England and not in the United States, but it did inspire Americans!*)
10. When was NASA formed, and in response to what event?
11. What did the 22<sup>nd</sup> Amendment to the United States Constitution do?
12. Consider “Regional differences were pronounced”; what is needed to be added to explain the meaning of the statement?
13. How much did a car cost in 1950 and 1959?
14. In what ways did the “jet age” influence the design of automobiles
15. How did the Cold War manifest (emerge) in the film industry of the 1950s?
16. Did evangelical Christianity increase or decrease during this decade?
17. Why did the Kinsey Reports (by psychologist Alfred Kinsey) shock the nation?
18. How did religious groups view the start of the magazine Playboy?
19. How did Hugh Heffner argue that his magazine was allowed to be published legally?
20. According to historian Steve Mintz, how did society view marriage in the post-war period?
21. Television was more than just a form of entertainment. What else was it?
22. To what does the term “Beat Generation” or “Beatnik” refer? What did they believe?
23. In terms of a commentary of society, what messages did the works of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg convey?
24. In what year did Alaska and Hawaii become part of the United States?
25. Who did Dwight Eisenhower defeat in the presidential elections of 1952 and 1956?
26. The Baby Boom is epitomized by what statistic from 1957?
27. What did the GI Bill allow returning war Veterans to do?