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TE 843  
Final

**1950's Culture Unit Plan**  
9<sup>th</sup> Grade United States History Unit

**Objectives, Vocabulary, Big Ideas, Forms of Assessment**

**Page 2-3**

**Lessons plus ideas from class**

**Page 4-7**

**Standards and Benchmarks**

**Page 8**

## **Objectives, Vocabulary, Big Ideas, Forms of Assessment:**

### **Objectives:**

- Interpret patterns of behavior reflecting values and attitudes that contribute or pose obstacles to cross cultural understanding
- Apply concepts such as role, status, and social class in describing the connections and interactions of individuals and institutions in society
- Identify and analyze examples of tensions between expressions of individuality and efforts used to promote social conformity by groups and institutions
- Analyze the role of perceptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs in the development of personal identify

### **Vocabulary:**

- White Collar v. Blue Collar Jobs
- Franchises
- New Consumerism
- Conformity
- Levittown
- Baby Boom
- Ed Sullivan
- Rock N' Roll
- Elvis Presley
- Generation Gap
- Poverty Line
- Urban Renewal Programs
- Bracero Programs
- Appalachia
- Juvenile delinquency

### **Big Ideas:**

- An increase in the service sector and professional jobs led to a great increase in American income from 1940 to 1950
- Technological developments and new conquests improved the lives of Americans and created the idea of conformity
- Cultural shift among teens made it easier for them to conform but harder to relate to adults
- Society aside from whites were not experiencing the American Dream
- Technological advances that increased the popularity of TV
- Rock N' Roll music and literature that defined youth culture
- The impact of African Americans on pop culture

### **Assessment:**

- Group/Partner discussions
- Individual Assignments
- Quick writes/bell ringers

- Verbal Assessment as we read/work
- Unit Test

## **Lessons:**

### **Lesson 1:**

Students will watch the video clip titled *The Traditional Family Dinner*. As the students watched they were asked to list similarities and differences from today.

With a PowerPoint, students will discuss some of the post World War II prosperities that changed life dramatically for people in the 1950's. Students will fill out note guide as we go.

After the PowerPoint students will make a list of all the reasons prosperity led to the birth of the Suburbs.

### **Debrief:**

I think within this lesson during the discussion on family traditions, I will talk to the students about the traditions or day to day things that each student does with their family. It is important to realize that not every student has the "traditional" family and that is why we should compare or contrast the 1950's to now. Obviously times have changed and people eat dinner less and less as a family because of extracurricular activities and other obligations. We will discuss the implications of students who do and do not fit the norms that the video clip suggests. As a class we also will discuss the reasons why this is not the case as much today and make students aware that their own family traditions day to day are the equivalent of families sitting down for dinner in the 1950's. My purpose is to not single out students if they do not practice the traditional norm but that they should embrace what their own traditions are.

### **Lesson 2:**

At the start of class students will read a two page description about Levittowns and the man who invented Levittowns.

As individuals, students will create a flyer that encourages people to move to the suburbs. They must include why prosperity encouraged people to move along with the benefits of leaving the city for suburban life.

### **Debrief:**

The students will be looking at the Levittown reading from a critical perspective. This is because the article discusses how whites in society were able to move to the Levittown in America. I would want to discuss as a prequel to later lessons why minority groups were not able to move to the suburbs. Instead of writing a paper or short prompt, the flyer encouraging people to move to the suburbs is the alternative way to assess that students understand the reasons and implications of Levittown.

### **Lesson 3:**

The prompt on the board discusses conformity. Students are asked to identify conformity in today's terms. What does it mean to conform?

First they discuss as a pair what conformity is, and then their pairs join a four person group to discuss specific examples of conformity.

As a class, discuss how moving to the suburbs and having disposable income led to conformity in the 1950's.

Students will end by watching three, four minute long clips from the TV show *Leave it to Beaver*. As they watch they are to keep a running list of stereotypes of the suburbs and conformity of the 1950's.

#### Debrief:

Even though I teach all students that typically fit the "mold" of white society, I would still like to talk about the implications of conformity in today's terms. This is because students often conform in more ways than what they wear and what music they listen to. In the article *Dear High School Teacher*, the student discusses the fact that what is discussed in school is "reference[d] constantly...to white Europeans such as Pascal, Newton and Mozart instead of Matthew Henson, George Washington Carver, and Louis Armstrong." I think that is important to emphasize that this conformity still takes place but in different ways. I hope to delve into the fact that people conform to fit into certain cliques of people and how to break down those barriers. I think today would be an excellent day to look at a concept map of conformity v. non-conformity like what we did when reading *Freakshow*. I could show them an excerpt from the book and discuss how Bill was being nonconformist during the time period. This would tie in well with the later lesson where the group looks at teenage life during the 1950's. In that lesson we talk about how some teenagers refused to conform and then ultimately how children refused to conform to parents, creating a generation gap. A webspiration concept map showing the students' thoughts and feelings about conformity would be a good transition into the next couple of lessons.

#### **Lesson 4:**

Students will be rotating in pairs through 14 stations. Each station has an advertisement from the 1950's. They are responsible for discussing why the advertisement encouraged conformity or what advances from the 1950's does it represent. For example there are multiple ads for home appliances (conformity) and new medical drugs (medical advances). This assignment should take about two days because they should spend about 6 minutes at each station discussing and filling out their chart.

Students will finish by discussing what implications, stereotypes, or conformist ideas were prevalent in the advertisements as a whole class.

#### Debrief:

I feel that each day it will be important to emphasize that conformity was what was pushed in the 1950's. I hope that my students walk away seeing that this was the idea but that conformity should not be the most significant thing someone should try to do. In these advertisements, I hope that students will see what ideas were present during the

time. I would like them to tie into how advertisements today either accept or reject conformity in their message.

### **Lesson 5:**

Students will watch an episode of *I Love Lucy*. It is referenced in the book and when the students previewed the book they asked what the show was about. They are 9<sup>th</sup> graders so it is probably too old for them to be on TV.

Students will discuss how this episode is similar or different from the TV they watch today.

Students will write a 25 word summary discussing why shows like *I Love Lucy* were so popular.

### **Debrief:**

I think that the 25 word summary is a great way to wrap up what implication television had on other venues such as movies, radio, and conformity in general. Plus it is a good way for students to wrap up their ideas while ensuring that they are brief. Again, I am hoping that through all the talk of conformity in the 1950's that students will see how overblown it was and that being slightly different is acceptable as well. I believe this is especially shown in the episode because Lucy is not your typical housewife. She gets in trouble, is goofy, makes mistakes, and her husband is a minority who is successful. This would be a great time to tie in an activity similar to the one we did for *Fanny's Dream* because it shows that a minority can be successful and despite the show being a comedy it is a good source that disproves the typical stereotypes of books, television shows, and movies today.

### **Lesson 6:**

Students will look at a PowerPoint discussing teenage life in the 1950's. They will keep notes as they go.

Students will listen to Rock N' Roll from the 1950's and compare it to Rock N' Roll today. They will see a video clip of Elvis and discuss why he might have been considered dangerous by parents of the 1950's.

### **Debrief:**

As a class I think it would be good to discuss what parents today think is dangerous to our children. I think an important question to ask would be "Is the danger then or now more of a real danger?" The PowerPoint will discuss the things teenagers were doing at the time plus some of the rebels in their time period. We will look at the beat movement and juvenile delinquents as well. These groups were nonconformists and it shows that they were different. As a class we can discuss the stereotypes that these groups carry and how stereotypes overall can be broken. This again would be a good time for concept map and excerpts from books like *Freakshow* and *The First Part Last*, which both depict teenagers in nonconformist roles.

**Lesson 7:**

Using the textbook, students will look at the reverse side of prosperity in the 1950's. They will look at statistics of poverty rates and a graph that shows racial distribution of cities during that time period.

Students will create a T chart that demonstrates the differences between the suburbs and life for minorities in the city.

**Debrief:**

I believe that this day will be the most challenging for my students because they have access to very little diversity within their school and community. I am hoping that with the right questions the students will begin to understand just how different poverty was from the prosperity and conformity in many American suburbs. I would like to end with this day because I feel that the concept of the American Dream would have come full circle at this point, showing conformity because of prosperity, how conformity affected youth, and lastly how some people could not grasp conformity or prosperity.

**Standards and Benchmarks:**

- K1.3 Understand and analyze temporal relationships and patterns
- K1.5 Understand historical and cultural perspectives
- K1.6 Understand events and circumstances from the vantage point of others
- K1.7 Understand social problems, social structures, institutions, class, groups, and interactions
- P2.2 Understand and interpret data in tables and graphs
- P2.3 Know how to find and organize information from a variety of sources
- 7.2.3 Impact of World War II on American Life
- 8.2.1 Demographic Changes Post World War II
- 8.2.1 Policy Concerning Domestic Issues