Baby Boom and the Culture of the 1950's

Summary

Enduring Understandings:

Students will understand the ripple effect of the baby boom generation on history and on their lives today.

By sequencing events students will understand how the rules and conformity of the 1950's set the stage for the rebellious, anti-establishment sixties.

Use your own expertise and knowledge of the era to help students synthesize the changes from the fifties to the sixties, as a result of the economic, political and social transitions.

Time Frame

2 class periods of 90 minutes each

Group Size

Large Groups

Life Skills

Thinking & Reasoning

Materials

Handout - timeline for sequencing events
Possible Videos: I Love Lucy, Happy Days, Leave It to Beaver, The Century - Peter Jennings
Textbook

Background for Teachers

Excellent resource materials:

David Haberstam: The Fifties

America: A Narrative History by Tindall and Shi

Student Prior Knowledge

Textbook information 1950-1960
Students interviews of people that were teens during this era.

Instructional Procedures

Students will study the textbook on the 1950-1960 and place important events on time-line.

The Teacher will lecture and model the cause effect of events in the 1950's and their outcome in the 1960's.

Students will create a brochure or T-chart comparison of 1950-1960's.

The following topics can be covered to show the ripple effect of the baby boom generation.

GI Bill

Education
Housing
Small Business loans

Redistribution of people

White-flight - to the suburbs

development of economical housing - Levittown

Sunbelt and black migration north

Fewer farmers---> Agribusiness

Megalopolis

Interstate freeways

Families

Dr. Spock

Conformity

- Following rules v. anti- establishment

- Jobs: IBM - "Man in the Gray Flannel Suit"

Economic needs - Appliances, autos "keeping up with the Jones"

Religion - Billy Graham, Norman Vincent Peale

- Fear of communism and godlessness

Teenagers as a cultural group- spending power and rise to rock and roll music

Roles of Middle Class Women

Support husband and cater to family

Betty Friedan's Feminine Mystique

Birth Control

Television

Television sets the standards and values for homes - movie attendance drops

TV shows that portrayed the perfect family v. reality of "real" homes

- Leave it to Beaver, American Bandstand, Mickey Mouse Club,

- I Love Lucy, etc.

Music

- Rise of Rock and Roll (Afro-American rhythm and blues crossing over to the white teenager consumer)

- American Bandstand

- Elvis Presley and other music leaders

Consumerism and Advertising

Credit Cards - Diner's Club

- Buying on Credit (Keeping up with the Jones)

Franchise - Ray Kroc - McDonald's

- The rise of nationwide business chains with standardization products and services (again conformity)

- Eating out more often

John Galbraith's The Affluent Society

Youth Rebellion

Beatniks - Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg

"Rebel Without A Cause" and Catcher in the Rye - creates a youth culture

Hippies - Middle Class White Teenagers actually live off the system they protested against

Education and Technology

Sputnik --> National Education Act

RAND Corp. Think tanks, Calculators, transistors, air conditioning

Assessment Plan

Have students turn in time-lines for a quick visual check of accuracy.

Writing Assignment: Explain how the Baby Boom and its demands on society brought about the cultural and lifestyles changes from the 1950's to the 1960's.

Have students put together a brochure or newsletter describing the 1950's as an era of

conformity. Have students search the Internet for photographs and illustrations to include in their presentation.
Have students work in small groups to present a slide presentation on the computer on one area of the 1950's.(For example, architecture, music, sports, TV, etc.)
Have students interview their parents or grandparents on their experiences in High School.
Have students work on survey questions as a class. Then use the interviews for class discussion about the era.

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