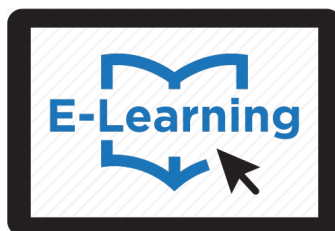


**CHARLES COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

**APEX U.S. History  
Grade 10  
Learning Packet**



**Student:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Block/Period:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Packet Directions for Students

Students should complete the following sections of the APEX U.S. History course.

#### **7 Unit Overview: The Cold War Begins**

##### **WEEK 3 – 7.3 Lesson Overview: Early Civil Rights**

7.3.5 Study: Mass Movements

Examine the way African Americans used popular nonviolent protest to get voting rights.

7.3.7 Quiz: Mass Movements

Take a quiz to check your understanding of what you have learned.

##### **WEEK 4 – 7.4 Lesson Overview: Culture of Prosperity**

7.4.1 Study: Culture of Prosperity

Look at how the end of World War II led to good economic times.

7.4.2 Quiz: Culture of Prosperity

Take a quiz to check your understanding of what you have learned.

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#### **WEEK 3 – 7.3 Early Civil Rights**

##### **Early Civil Rights**

In this lesson you will examine the origins of the modern civil rights movement. You will begin by looking at the effects of World War II and the Cold War on race relations in the United States. Then you will learn about the NAACP's legal strategy, its success with *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the effects of that important ruling. Finally, you will discover how African Americans and their supporters formed mass movements to get the nation to live up to its ideal of equality.

##### **Objectives**

- Describe how the Cold War affected government policies toward African Americans.
- Examine strategies used by the NAACP to challenge racial segregation.
- Analyze the goals and strategies of the early civil rights movement.



### 7.3.5 Study: Mass Movements

Answer the following questions as you move through the material.

1. Write the correct key term in the blank preceding each definition.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ : A famous public speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. on August 28, 1963, in Washington, D.C. The speech called for equality between the races and an end to discrimination, or treating people of color differently.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ : A civil rights organization that was formed in 1942. It was involved in the March on Washington and the freedom rides in the early 1960s.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ : Bus trips taken by civil rights activists to make sure buses and bus stations were not segregated.
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ : (1919 - 1998) The governor of Alabama in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. He is best known for his support of segregation, or separation of the races, in the South.
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ : A 1963 civil rights march of over 200,000 people to show support for civil rights advances. Martin Luther King Jr. gave his "I have a dream" speech here. The March on Washington is given credit for helping to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- f. \_\_\_\_\_ : (1929 - 1968) An African American leader during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. He helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957. His work led to the March on Washington, where he delivered his "I have a dream" speech. He was assassinated, or murdered, in 1968.
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ : A 1955 boycott of, or refusal to use, public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama. It was started by an African American woman who refused to give her seat to a white man as required by state law. Her arrest led to the boycott, which lasted more than a year and ended the segregation of Alabama buses.
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ : (1913 - 2005) An African American woman whose arrest for refusing to give her bus seat to a white person set off the Montgomery bus boycott.
- i. \_\_\_\_\_ : Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an American civil rights organization closely associated with its first president, Martin Luther King Jr.
- j. \_\_\_\_\_ : A form of nonviolent protest in which people bring attention to a social or political issue by occupying an area and refusing to leave until demands are met.
- k. \_\_\_\_\_ : Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, one of the major organizations in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. It played a major role in sit-ins, freedom rides, and the March on Washington.

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2. What happened in Montgomery Alabama in 1955 to change the course of race relations in the United States?

3. What is the power of nonviolent protest? Give examples of its application in the civil rights movement in the United States.

4. How did Martin Luther King Jr. achieve success for the Civil Rights Movement? What did Martin Luther King Jr. believe was possible between African Americans and whites?

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**Primary Source: Letter from a Birmingham Jail**

This document is part of a letter written by Martin Luther King Jr., from a jail in Birmingham, Alabama. King had been arrested after refusing to obey an order by city officials to stop their marches and sit-ins. King's letter was a response to white church leaders who had written him to argue for negotiation instead of protest.

**Assignment:** Write an extended paragraph of 8-12 sentences on the document below responding to the writing prompt (see next page).

**Letter from a Birmingham Jail**

You deplore the demonstrations taking place in Birmingham. But your statement, I am sorry to say, fails to express a similar concern for the conditions that brought about the demonstrations. I am sure that none of you would want to rest content with the superficial kind of social analysis that deals merely with effects and does not grapple with underlying causes. It is unfortunate that demonstrations are taking place in Birmingham, but it is even more unfortunate that the city's white power structure left the Negro community with no alternative.

In any nonviolent campaign there are four basic steps: collection of the facts to determine whether injustices exist; negotiation; self-purification; and direct action. We have gone through all these steps in Birmingham. There can be no gainsaying the fact that racial injustice engulfs this community. Birmingham is probably the most thoroughly segregated city in the United States. Its ugly record of brutality is widely known. Negroes have experienced grossly unjust treatment in the courts. There have been more unsolved bombings of Negro homes and churches in Birmingham than in any other city in the nation. These are the hard, brutal facts of the case. On the basis of these conditions, Negro leaders sought to negotiate with the city fathers. But the latter consistently refused to engage in good faith negotiation. ...

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half-truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue. ...

We know through painful experience that freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed. Frankly, I have yet to engage in a direct action campaign that was "well timed" in the view of those who have not suffered unduly from the disease of segregation. For years now I have heard the word "Wait!" It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity.



## Mass Movements



*Rosa Parks stood up to a racist law and helped start a successful civil rights action.*

Imagine that you're sitting on a city bus. You're on your way home after a long day at work. Your tired legs enjoy the rest. At the next bus stop, a white man gets on the bus. The bus is already full, so there is nowhere for him to sit. Since you're black, a state law says you have to give the man your seat.

This was the situation Rosa Parks faced in 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama. She refused to give up her seat on that bus, and she was sent to jail. This one act got civil rights activists to begin pushing harder for change. The Montgomery bus boycott that followed helped bring an end to racist laws in Montgomery. It also started the career of civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.

## Dangerous Times

When civil rights activists like Rosa Parks stood up to segregation laws, they not only faced jail, they risked injury or death.

Ever since the end of Reconstruction, African Americans in the South had been beaten, shot, and lynched by angry whites — often simply to make other African Americans afraid. After *Brown v. Board of Education*, tensions were high between whites and blacks in the South.

Four events in 1954 show the challenges African Americans still faced even with segregation now ruled unconstitutional:

- In May, Reverend George Wesley Lee was shot and killed in Belzoni, Mississippi because he helped African Americans sign up to vote.
- In August, Lamar Smith was shot and killed in Brookhaven, Mississippi in broad daylight. Like Reverend Lee, he had been working to sign up African Americans to vote. The white man who shot him never went to court.
- In August, 14-year-old Emmett Till was taken at night from a relative's home, beaten, shot, and thrown in a river in Money, Mississippi. The men who murdered him went to court, but the all-white jury said the two white men were not guilty of the crime.
- In October, 16-year-old John Earl Reese was shot and killed by two white men while dancing in a club in Mayflower, Texas. The men were put on trial and found guilty, but they never served a day in jail.

### **The KKK Strikes**

These dangerous times were not restricted to blacks or southerners. When white college students from northern cities went to Mississippi to help in 1954, they were the victims of violence, as well.

Two New York students and a local activist were arrested for registering blacks to vote. Then they were let out of jail after midnight, where KKK members were waiting for them. They were all murdered.

### **Nonviolent Protest**

The NAACP's legal strategy was one approach in the struggle for equality. But it wasn't the only approach. Many civil rights leaders chose to follow the path of nonviolent protest. They protested against segregation by marching or working in other peaceful ways.

The nonviolent methods used by Martin Luther King Jr. and other civil rights leaders had a long history. Nonviolent protests were used by Thoreau in the 1800s and later in India by Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi used such techniques as the mass march, the boycott, and the hunger strike to bring an end to British rule in India. Gandhi and other activists broke laws to show how those laws were morally wrong. Gandhi told his followers never to use violence, even when police attacked them. He also said that his followers must be willing to face anything that resulted from their actions, even going to jail.

### **Strike for Equality**

The Montgomery bus boycott was the civil rights movement's first important use of nonviolent methods. The boycott was difficult, but the protestors eventually won. This action was effective for several reasons:

- African Americans were the main people who used the city bus system. When they refused to ride, the bus company lost money.
- The vast majority of blacks in the city joined the boycott.
- The black community stuck together and organized carpools to give African Americans needed transportation.

### **A New Civil Rights Leader**

The boycott's success made Martin Luther King Jr. the leader of the civil rights movement. King's own abilities helped bring this about:

- Excellent writing and a powerful voice gave King the ability to convince others to join the movement and to stay with its principles.
- King's deep belief in the importance of nonviolent action brought a peaceful message that many people supported, including many whites.
- King planned peaceful protests in locations where violent response was likely. This helped win support for the movement, and it showed the country how the segregationists used violence to get their way.

A year after the Montgomery bus boycott ended, King organized the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). It was made up of African American church leaders from across the South. The SCLC's goal was "to seek justice and end all injustice." Activists working with the SCLC were encouraged not to respond violently to poor treatment or arrests. Instead, they stressed nonviolent protests and urged church communities to take action against injustice through boycotts.



### **Sitting and Riding for Freedom**

In 1960, nonviolent action really began to pay off. That February, four black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, began a sit-in at a store lunch counter reserved for whites. They hoped to end the store's segregation policy. They did this each day, with more students taking part each time.

Their protest started others across the nation. It also inspired Ella Baker to organize African American college students to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

In 1961, James Farmer's group, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), started a new form of protest known as freedom rides.

The Supreme Court had banned segregation on buses that traveled from one state to another and in bus stations that served these buses. CORE wanted to make sure these court orders were being followed. Although freedom riders faced violence, the freedom rides continued throughout the summer of 1961. SNCC members played a major role, sending members to stand up to the Ku Klux Klan and other white groups that attacked bus passengers. Television brought these events into the homes of Americans and raised many questions about American ideals and freedoms.

### **The Birmingham Action**

In 1963, King focused his efforts on Birmingham, Alabama, where public places were still segregated and violence against African Americans was common.

King called for a boycott of stores that did not hire blacks or that treated black customers badly. There were marches and sit-ins as well. After a week of protests, city officials ordered the activists to stop their protests. Movement leaders refused to stop, and King was sent to jail.

Images of the violence in Birmingham were seen around the world. Americans were shocked by the steps some southerners were willing to take to protect segregation.

The SCLC then organized a children's march. Over 1,000 African American children marched through Birmingham's streets. Many were sent to jail. When the march was repeated the next day, police attacked the children with dogs, clubs, and powerful fire hoses.

When the public saw the violent images of peaceful protesters being attacked, many Americans felt that the segregationists had gone too far.

Responding to this public pressure, city officials finally agreed to end segregation, and the protests ended.

### **Martin Luther King Jr. in jail**

While King was in jail, he wrote a letter that explained the thinking behind the nonviolent civil rights movement. His letter was a response to eight white church leaders who had told him that negotiation was a better strategy than protest.

King's *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* made the following arguments in response:

- "The purpose of our direct-action program is to create a situation so crisis-packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation."
- "Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed...For years now I have heard the word 'Wait!' It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This 'Wait' has almost always meant 'Never.' "
- "There are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws..."

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For King, the time for waiting had passed. He wanted action *now*. And he felt that while people had a responsibility to follow laws that were fair, they also had a responsibility to break laws that were unfair.

### **President Kennedy Gets Involved**

Kennedy gave some support to the goals of civil rights activists. But he also feared that supporting activists too much would upset southern Democrats in Congress.

In 1961, the Justice Department tried to protect the freedom riders.

In 1962, it forced Mississippi's governor to let James Meredith attend the University of Mississippi. He was the first African American to attend that school. The administration sent soldiers to protect Meredith.

In 1963, when George Wallace blocked two black students from going to the University of Alabama, Kennedy forced Wallace to accept the students. He also took control of the Alabama National Guard to guarantee order at the university.

Later in 1963, Kennedy spoke on TV, calling the situation "a moral crisis." He asked Congress, state and local leaders, and all Americans to take action to bring about a change. Soon after, he sent Congress a civil rights bill.

### **The March on Washington**

Civil rights leaders knew that they had pushed the Kennedy administration to act. They decided to put more pressure on the White House — and on Congress.

In August 1963, several civil rights groups came together to stage the March on Washington (1963). They wanted thousands of people to come to the capital and demand rights for African Americans.

With more than 200,000 people of all races taking part, it was the largest civil rights event in history. Besides its size, the March on Washington is also memorable for a speech given by Martin Luther King Jr. Many consider this event the high point of the civil rights movement.

### **Moving Forward**

Martin Luther King Jr. originally had four goals:

1. He wanted to end segregation.
2. He wanted to do it morally.
3. He wanted to do it immediately.
4. He wanted blacks and whites to live together peacefully.

Although racial harmony was not achieved, King's work helped produce two important civil rights laws. He was also able to keep his movement nonviolent and to inspire other groups to join in the use of nonviolent methods.

After the March on Washington, King became increasingly concerned about how poverty and war affected the black community. He began to work to better African Americans' economic situation. He also began to speak out against the Vietnam War, which he believed took away resources that could be used to help blacks.

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**Quiz: Mass Movements**

Question 1 of 10

What happened to the men who were accused of shooting Emmett Till?

- A. They were found guilty, but did not go to jail.
- B. They went to prison.
- C. They were found not guilty.
- D. They were found guilty and executed.

Question 2 of 10

How did civil rights leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. develop a nonviolent strategy?

- A. They learned this from the success of Gandhi.
- B. They learned this from Rosa Parks.
- C. They learned this from Communists.
- D. They learned this from heroes of the Revolution.

Question 3 of 10

How did James Farmer help the cause of civil rights?

- A. He organized violent protests.
- B. He was a war hero from World War II.
- C. He organized the Congress for Racial Equality.
- D. He argued cases before the Supreme Court.

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Question 4 of 10

What short-term effect did sit-ins and other civil rights protests have on life in the South?

- A. Segregationists became more violent.
- B. There was very fast progress toward civil rights.
- C. Many people moved out of the cities.
- D. Society became more peaceful.

Question 5 of 10

Which of the following was *not* one of Martin Luther King Jr.'s goals?

- A. To achieve racial harmony
- B. To use nonviolent methods
- C. To end segregation by any means necessary
- D. To improve the economic conditions of African Americans

Question 6 of 10

The Montgomery bus boycott raised public awareness of which civil rights leader?

- A. Bayard Rustin
- B. Martin Luther King Jr.
- C. Ella Baker
- D. James Farmer

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Question 7 of 10

What was an effect of peaceful protests organized by Martin Luther King Jr.?

- A. The violence used by segregationists against the protests was shown across the country.
- B. The methods had no impact against violence.
- C. The leadership of the protests disagreed with Martin Luther King Jr.
- D. All of the above

Question 8 of 10

When Americans saw images of the violence in Birmingham in 1963, they were:

- A. In favor of voting to protect segregation in the South.
- B. Outraged with the activists who organized the children's march.
- C. shocked by the violent methods of southerners.
- D. happy with the methods of southerners.

Question 9 of 10

In his "I Have a Dream" speech, Martin Luther King Jr. argued:

- A. Americans could live together in peace.
- B. Americans should not support Communism.
- C. segregation should be legal in the South.
- D. African Americans should violently resist racism.

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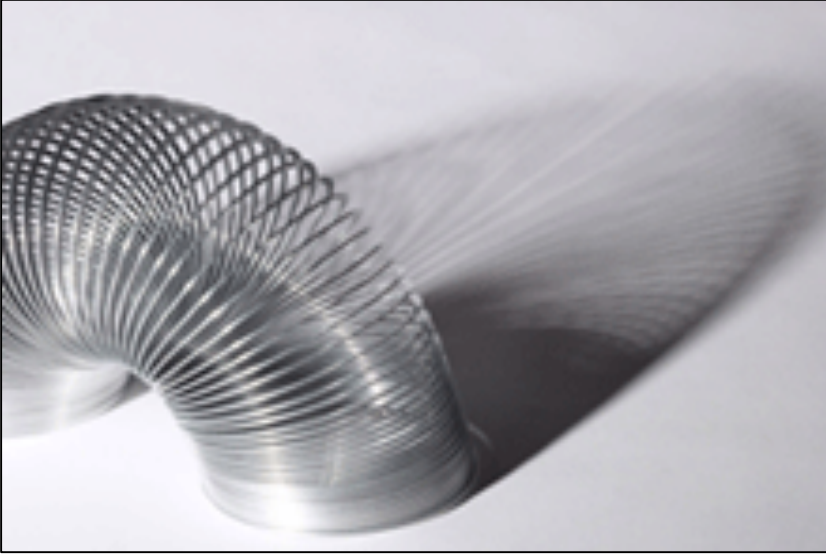
Question 10 of 10

Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* argued that:

- A. people should disobey unjust laws.
- B. peaceful protests had no effect in the fight for civil rights.
- C. segregation could not be changed in America.
- D. prison reform was necessary for civil rights.

## WEEK 4

### 8.3 – Post-WWII Popular Culture



*The Slinky debuted in 1945. By the 1950s, it was an international hit. Millions are still sold worldwide.*

In this lesson, you will see how popular culture and daily life in the United States changed in the years after World War II.

You will examine the effects of postwar prosperity and look at the rapid growth of the suburbs as well as the economic recovery of the South and Southwest.

#### **Objectives**

- Describe how economic growth after World War II changed life for many Americans.
- Identify changes in the culture of the American middle class during the mid-1900s.
- Explain the factors that contributed to economic recovery in the South and Southwest.
- Analyze the causes and impact of the internal migrations that took place in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s.



**7.4.1**

**Study: Culture of Prosperity**

**Answer the following questions as you move through the material.**

1. Write the correct key term in the blank preceding each definition.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ : A period of time when the birthrate is high. In the United States, this term usually refers to the period between 1946 and 1964, when there was a huge increase in the number of children born.
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ : A group of writers and artists who developed a cultural philosophy, or way of thinking, in the 1950s. In general, this philosophy supported behavior that was against popular American values.
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ : A law passed in 1944 to provide federal financial aid to military veterans for obtaining health care, buying homes, or going to college or some other kind of training program.
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ : A household made up of a mother, father, and their children.

2. Why did Congress pass the G.I. Bill? What did the G.I. Bill do?

3. What were some of the effects of the baby boom following World War II?

4. During the economic boom after World War II, what did advertisers do to get consumers to buy new products?



## Culture of Prosperity - Getting over the Tough Times

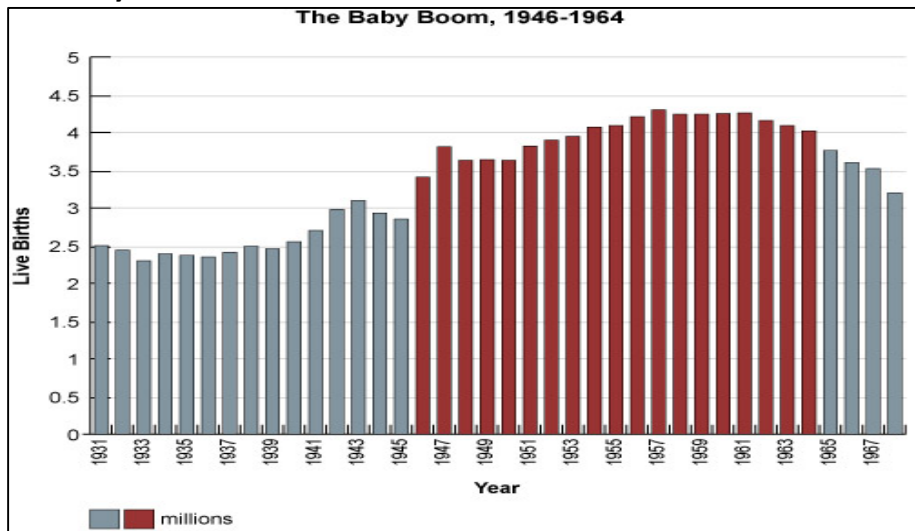
The years from 1929 to 1945 had been difficult ones for the nation. Americans had lived through tough times:

The Dust Bowl made life even harder for many farmers in the 1930s.

- The stock market crash of 1929 meant the loss of many fortunes.
- The Great Depression forced millions of Americans out of work.
- The Dust Bowl, falling farm prices, and debt problems led to the loss of about 100,000 farms.
- World War II took a toll on many families. More than 400,000 soldiers died during the war, and nearly 700,000 were injured.

After World War II, Americans hoped to put the tough times behind them. They looked forward to a postwar economic boom. When that boom happened, it gave many the chance to live the "American dream."

## The Baby Boom



One change in the postwar world was the baby boom. Returning veterans and their spouses had so many children that their families changed the country.

During the Great Depression, the number of babies born in the U.S. fell to about 2.3 million a year. In 1946, the first year after World War II, 3.4 million babies were born — a new record. The birthrate continued to grow, until it hit 4 million in 1953. For the next 11 years, it never fell below that level.

The baby boom had a major impact on American society. Millions of women who had worked during the war became stay-at-home mothers. Growing families led to growing demand for houses in the suburbs, and that meant buying more land and building more houses.

Population growth also helped the economy. Growing families were good customers for American businesses. The rising population of children also created new challenges for government. Towns and cities needed to build new schools and provide more public services such as water, electricity, and garbage collection.

### **Helping Veterans**

In the mid 1940s, the United States was flooded with veterans returning from World War II. Government officials worried that huge numbers of veterans without homes or jobs would be a strain on the economy. In 1944, Congress passed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly known as the G.I. Bill.

*G.I.* was a common term for the American soldiers who fought in World War II. The name came from "government issue," the term for the uniforms and equipment the soldiers were given.

The G.I. Bill gave veterans money for college and help buying homes.

Hundreds of thousands of people now had the chance to go to college and get better-paying jobs than they would have had before. It also created jobs at colleges for teachers, support staff, and construction workers. The G.I. Bill also made home ownership more common. In the past, banks had required a large down payment to buy a home, and the mortgage had to be paid off in 10 years. The G.I. Bill helped create 30-year mortgages that did not require down payments, both of which made it much easier for people to buy houses.

The G.I. Bill went into effect just before the baby boom hit. The benefits given to veterans contributed to this rise in the birthrate. Together, the G.I. Bill and the baby boom led to massive economic growth in the United States.

### **A Society of Conformity?**

Thanks to the G.I. Bill, thousands of veterans were able to get college educations and better paying jobs. It also allowed the returning soldiers to afford the new families that were created as they married and started having children.

In 1956, there were more white-collar workers than factory workers for the first time in America's history. Both groups of workers did well and enjoyed middle-class lives. The economic boom meant good pay for factory workers as well as for the growing white-collar class.

It was a time of fitting in. Companies used dress and behavior codes. If you broke the rules, your career could be ended. Stability was prized over individuality.

### **New Lives**

After World War II, Americans wanted to put the Great Depression and the war behind them. The postwar years were a time when people looked forward to the chance for a better life.

### **American Industry Grows**

In the late 1940s, the United States produced half of all the output of products *in the world*. Europe, Japan, and the Soviet Union were still recovering from the destruction of the war. In time, these nations would catch up, but from 1945 to the 1960s, American industry dominated global markets — the United States was the world's largest exporter.

American businesses also benefited from increased demand by American consumers. Appliances and gadgets of all kinds flew out of stores: washing machines, refrigerators, dryers, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers. Many of these new appliances were invented to save people time so they could enjoy more free time.

The television became a feature of many homes. It quickly became the most important source of news and entertainment.

The auto industry also took off. The government built highways that crossed states and cars were suddenly everywhere.

Greater demand for cars also led to growth for the companies that supplied gas, parts, auto repair, and car insurance.

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### The American Family

Many of the popular TV shows and advertisements of the postwar period showed the lives of "normal" people: the suburban, middle-class nuclear family. These shows both reflected and reinforced people's *ideas* about family. But how much did they reflect what American families were actually *like*?

Families in TV and Ads	Families in Reality
Children lived in families with fathers and mothers.	One in ten families was headed by a single woman or a single man.  The number of divorces was rising: twice as many men and women were divorced in 1960 as had been in 1940.  One in eight women in 1960 was a widow.
Married women were housewives, taking care of their husband, their children, and their home.	More than one in four married women worked outside the home.
The father worked in a white-collar job.	Thirty percent of workers had manufacturing jobs in 1960.
The father earned enough to give his family a comfortable life.	In 1959, the first year the government calculated the statistic, 22 percent of the population lived in poverty.

### The Ad Game - Shaping America's Image of Itself

The consumer demand that fed the postwar economic boom was helped along by the advertising industry. Many of these ad agencies were clustered along Madison Avenue in New York City, so "Madison Avenue" became synonymous with advertising. The job of these advertisers was to sell products new and old — and to get people to buy more and more of everything.

The "Mad Men" — for most executives *were* men — tried to promote products and services in many ways. Ads at this time were centered on the white middle-class. They often painted an ideal picture of a perfect family and a happy home. Advertisers wanted people to believe that the American dream could only be reached if people bought the latest products.

### Consumers Let Loose

During the postwar years, the middle class was growing — nearly three out of five American families had middle-class incomes. This led to a huge increase in consumer spending. People in the middle-class — especially veterans — could now buy their own homes. By 1960, three out of every five American families owned the home they lived in. Personal debt also went up. Some of that was because people were more willing to buy what they wanted on credit. Part of the rise in debt also came from more people taking loans to buy homes. Not everyone enjoyed the same level of wealth, of course. African Americans earned only around 55 percent of the income of white families. Families headed by a single female earned even less.

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### **The Best Kitchen!**

In the Cold War world, political leaders could make everything about the struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union. Even a kitchen.

In 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had told Western diplomats: “Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.”

Three years later, the Soviet leader met Vice President Richard Nixon at an exhibit of American businesses in Moscow. Standing outside the kitchen of what was supposedly a typical American home, the two Cold War politicians had a debate about the good and bad points of capitalism and Communism.

**Nixon:** I want to show you this kitchen. It is like those of our houses in California. . . . This house can be bought for \$14,000, and most American [veterans] can buy a home in the bracket of \$10,000 to \$15,000. . . . Any steelworker could buy this house. They earn \$3 an hour. This house costs about \$100 a month to buy on a contract running 25 to 30 years.

**Khrushchev:** We have steelworkers and peasants who can afford to spend \$14,000 for a house. Your American houses are built to last only 20 years so builders could sell new houses at the end. We build firmly. We build for our children and grandchildren.

**Nixon:** American houses last for more than 20 years, but even so, after 20 years, many Americans want a new house or a new kitchen. Their kitchen is obsolete by that time. . . . The American system is designed to take advantage of new inventions and new techniques.

**Khrushchev:** This theory does not hold water. Some things never get out of date — houses, for instance, and furniture; furnishings, perhaps, but not houses.

### **Boom Times**

The postwar years saw a baby boom and an economic boom that led to more home ownership and greater consumer spending. Americans' dreams for a new, better life seemed to be coming true.

### **Speaking Out Against Conformity**

Not everybody liked what 1950s American culture had to offer. Some of the people who spoke out against American culture were part of a group that called itself the Beat Generation, labeled as "beatniks" by their critics. Many Beats were young poets, artists, and writers who expressed a different view on life.

Beats believed that mainstream American culture was materialistic and empty. They were opposed to consumerism and conformity. They said they wanted to experience life, not follow someone else's path. The Beats were a small movement, but their art and writings gave voice to another point of view on life.

## The Rise of the Teenager



*Elvis Presley was one of many new teen idols who influenced American culture in the 1950s.*

For the first time, teens had the resources to pursue their dreams. They went shopping for the latest teen fashions and they bought what was becoming the new favorite: blue jeans. They went to drive-in food stands and hung out together.

Teens read comic books and bought records and radios. They spent a lot of time at drive-in theaters, where they cheered for new heroes like Marlon Brando and James Dean.

Teens' spending power made them a major target group for businesses. Companies provided for the tastes of these teens — and cashed in on the spending done by this new group of consumers.

## Rock and Roll

Teens also spent a lot of their money on a new type of music: rock and roll.

Rock and roll mixed the blues and gospel traditions of African Americans and the country music of rural whites. Early rock stars like Chuck Berry and Little Richard were black. While they were popular with some white audiences, their reach was limited. In the 1950s, white radio stations would not play their music. When whites started playing the music, rock and roll really took off.

No one had a greater impact than Elvis Presley, rock and roll's first great star. His records sold fast and his performances were almost riots as girls screamed and fainted. Millions watched him on TV.

To many adults, young people's love for rock and roll was a disturbing sign. The music was loud and had a strong beat that can be traced back to African musical forms.

Some preachers and parents tried to get rid of rock and roll records from record stores and radio stations. The market won, though. Teens bought enough rock and roll records to nearly triple sales between 1954 and 1960.

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**Quiz: Culture of Prosperity**

Question 1 of 10

What did the G.I. Bill help ex-soldiers to do?

- A. Learn about politics
- B. Look for work
- C. Join the Army again
- D. Find a husband or wife

Question 2 of 10

Which was *not* a result of the baby boom that followed World War II?

- A. Men began to have increased health problems.
- B. Working women decided to become stay-at-home moms.
- C. Businesses grew by selling things to teenagers.
- D. Suburbs grew as demand for housing increased.

Question 3 of 10

In the "kitchen debate," Richard Nixon argued:

- A. that American houses were meant to last only 20 years.
- B. that the American system was designed to take advantage of new technology.
- C. that the Soviet system offered more choice but less quality.
- D. that the Soviet Union did not provide enough housing for their citizens.

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Question 4 of 10

How did the baby boom affect the U.S. economy?

- A. Government cut back on public services.
- B. Growing families increased the demand for products.
- C. Government jobs provided full employment.
- D. Growing families cut back on luxury items.

Question 5 of 10

By the late 1940s, the United States produced \_\_\_\_\_ of all the economic output in the world.

- A. one eighth
- B. one quarter
- C. one half
- D. one sixth

Question 6 of 10

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev claimed:

- A. capitalism produced better quality homes.
- B. Communism provided less for families.
- C. Soviets offered a more luxurious lifestyle.
- D. history was on his side.

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Question 7 of 10

Starting in the economic boom after World War II, advertising:

- A.        appealed to reason instead of emotion.
- B.        showed a lifestyle that consumers tried to copy.
- C.        showed life as experienced by a variety of people.
- D.        reminded consumers there was a negative side to debt.

Question 8 of 10

Why did home ownership increase after World War II?

- A.        Mortgages paid over longer time periods were available.
- B.        Down payments became less important when buying a home.
- C.        People were prepared to take on debt to get the things they wanted.
- D.        All of the above

Question 9 of 10

What was a difference between teenagers in the postwar period and in earlier times?

- A.        Postwar teens had to contribute to the family income.
- B.        Postwar teens were part of a baby boom.
- C.        Postwar teens were a major target group of businesses.
- D.        Postwar teens lacked a distinct culture.



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Question 10 of 10

Which helped the automobile industry grow after World War II?

- A. There was extra material left over after the war to build cars.
- B. The government built highways that crossed through all states.
- C. Veterans came home from the war with a lot of money to spend.
- D. Working women added money for their family to spend.