CHAPTER 28

America in the 1950s

1953–1960

Why It Matters

The election of Dwight Eisenhower to the presidency ushered in one of the most prosperous periods in American history. Economic growth resulted in increased employment and higher wages throughout the 1950s.

The Impact Today

The prosperity of the 1950s raised questions that remain important in American society today. Can a period of economic growth bring benefits to all Americans—or are some groups likely to be excluded? Can the nation's economic growth be guided by cultural and social values—or does growth occur at the expense of those values? Americans still debate these issues today.

The American Journey Video The chapter 28 video, "The Fifties Dream," explores popular culture and ideals during the 1950s.

1953
• Results of polio vaccine tests published

1956
• Federal Highway Act passed

1950s
• Baby boom increases U.S. population by over 20 percent

1955
• Eisenhower meets with Khrushchev at Geneva summit

United States PRESIDENTS

Eisenhower 1953–1961

1952   1954   1956

World

1950s
• Abstract expressionism grows in popularity

1953
• Watson, Crick, and Franklin discover DNA structure

1955
• Warsaw pact signed

1956
• Egypt takes control of Suez Canal
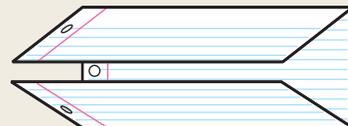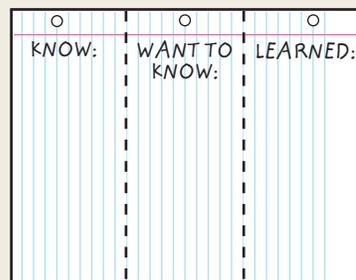• Uprising in Hungary is defeated by Soviet troops

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Red Spy Hunt by **Thomas Maitland Cleland** The 1950s transformed our culture and shaped the way we live today.

1957
• Kerouac's *On the Road* published
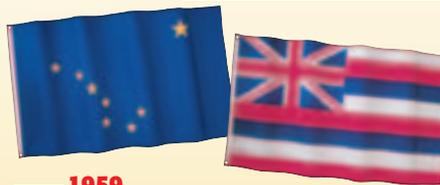
1958
• The United States launches *Explorer*

1959
• Alaska and Hawaii become states

1958   1960

1957
• Soviet Union launches *Sputnik*

1959
• Mary and Louis Leakey uncover hominid fossils

HISTORY
Online

Chapter Overview
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Eisenhower in the White House

Republican ad, 1952

AN American Story

"He merely has to smile at you, and you trust him at once." These words were used to describe Dwight D. Eisenhower, Republican presidential candidate in 1952. Eisenhower had an appeal that went far beyond his party label. His performance in World War II had made him an unquestioned hero in the eyes of almost every American. Above all, his personality and political style made many people feel safe, comfortable, and confident.

Republican Revival

By 1952 Harry S Truman faced widespread dissatisfaction with his presidency. Many Americans were frustrated over the stalemated war in Korea and worried about reports of communist subversion in government. To the Democrats' relief, Truman decided not to run for reelection. The Democrats nominated the respected governor of Illinois, **Adlai E. Stevenson,** for president and Senator John J. Sparkman of Alabama as his running mate.

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To head their presidential ticket, the Republicans chose General **Dwight D. Eisenhower,** the popular World War II hero. For vice president, the Republicans selected **Richard M. Nixon,** a young senator from California who had won fame as a tough opponent of communism.

The Campaign

Born in Texas and raised in rural Kansas, Dwight D. Eisenhower graduated from the United States Military Academy at West Point. He rose steadily through the army to become supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II. People called him Ike—and they trusted him. His warmth and sincerity attracted many voters.

Eisenhower's steadiness made Americans feel secure. He won wide support with his pledge to bring the Korean War to an "early and honorable end." "If that job requires a personal trip to Korea," he declared, "I shall make that trip."

The Republicans faced a brief crisis during the presidential campaign when the story broke that Richard Nixon had accepted political gifts from supporters. Nixon went on television to defend himself in what came to be known as the "Checkers" speech. He proclaimed that he had done nothing wrong and had kept only one gift—his family dog, Checkers. The speech won broad support for Nixon, persuading Eisenhower to keep him on the ticket.

Landslide Republican Victory

In November 1952, Americans elected Eisenhower to the presidency in a landslide victory—the first Republican to win the White House since 1928. Far more people voted in 1952 than in any previous presidential election. Eisenhower collected over six million popular votes more than Stevenson and carried the electoral college 442 to 89. The Republicans also won control of Congress. The election seemed to usher in a new era in national politics.

✓ **Reading Check** **Identifying** Who was the candidate for vice president on Eisenhower's ticket?

Domestic Policy

Although Eisenhower had little political experience, he proved to be an effective politician. During his two terms in office, Eisenhower followed a **moderate,** or middle-of-the-road, approach to domestic policy. He described himself as "conservative when it comes to money and liberal when it comes to human beings."

Eisenhower helped steer the country on a steady course. He avoided ambitious new government programs, but resisted the pressure to abolish popular older ones, and sometimes he even expanded them. As he once told reporters:

❝I feel pretty good when I'm attacked from both sides. It makes me more certain I'm on the right track.❞

President Eisenhower wanted to make the federal government "smaller rather than bigger." He supported economic policies aimed at limiting government spending and encouraging private enterprise. With the support of Republicans and conservative Democrats in Congress, the president removed the wage and price controls that the Truman administration had established during the Korean War. He also managed to transfer some authority in financial matters to the states and to make some cuts in government spending. When he left office in 1961, the federal budget had a **surplus,** or excess, of $300 million.

The nation's 34th president, Dwight Eisenhower, served in the military for more than 30 years.

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The Nation Expands

The greatest domestic program of the Eisenhower presidency involved building a network of interstate highways. In June 1956 Congress passed the **Federal Highway Act.** The law funded the construction of more than 40,000 miles (64,000 km) of highways that tied the nation together. The highway program—the largest public works program in the nation's history—also spurred growth in many areas of the nation's economy, including the automobile and oil industries, while improving military mobility in case of an attack.

The nation itself also grew during Eisenhower's presidency. In 1959 **Alaska** and **Hawaii** entered the Union, bringing the number of states to 50. Alaska and Hawaii became the only states not bordering on the other states.

Social Programs

Eisenhower believed that government should protect the basic welfare of Americans. He refused to tamper with Social Security and other New Deal social programs. During his presidency, Eisenhower agreed to extend Social Security benefits to 10 million more people and to provide unemployment insurance to 4 million more. He also approved greater funding for public housing and, in 1955, agreed to an increase in the minimum wage from 75 cents an hour to $1.00.

The creation of the **Department of Health, Education, and Welfare** (HEW) in 1953 confirmed the government's role in helping Americans meet their basic social needs. Eisenhower named **Oveta Culp Hobby** as the first secretary of the new department. Hobby, only the second woman in American history to hold a cabinet post, had organized the Women's Army Corps (WACs) in World War II.

Eisenhower's moderation and leadership won the approval of a majority of Americans. In the 1956 presidential election, he ran against Democrat Adlai Stevenson again. This time Eisenhower won by an even bigger margin, receiving more than 57 percent of the popular vote.

✓ **Reading Check** **Describing** How did the highway program affect the economy?

Eisenhower and the Cold War

On October 4, 1957, millions of Americans heard the startling news: the Soviets had sent into space the world's first artificial satellite, called *Sputnik.* Within a month, the Soviets successfully launched a second satellite. Americans were both horrified and in awe. They feared that the nation was lagging behind the Soviets. They also feared that the Soviets could launch atomic weapons from space.

Worry turned to embarrassment in December 1957, when the United States tried to launch its own space satellite—*Vanguard.* Hundreds of reporters and spectators watched the rocket rise a few feet off the launching pad—and then explode. The foreign press made fun of the launch, calling it "Flopnik" and "Stayputnik." America's status declined.

United States–Soviet Rivalry

During the 1950s the United States–Soviet rivalry kept the Cold War at the center of American foreign policy. The Eisenhower administration continued to oppose the spread of communism. At the same time, the president looked for ways to keep American–Soviet tensions from erupting into open conflict.

Secretary of State **John Foster Dulles** became Eisenhower's most important foreign policy adviser. Dulles condemned the containment policy of the Truman administration. Eisenhower and Dulles proposed a new, bolder policy. If the Soviet Union attacked any nation, the United States would launch a **massive retaliation**—an instant attack using nuclear weapons. Vice President Nixon explained:

Fact · Fiction · Folklore

America's Flags

Stars and Stripes Today Statehood for Alaska and Hawaii brought the number of stars to 50 (its current number) in the flag of 1960.

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> ❝Rather than let the Communists nibble us to death all over the world in little wars, we will rely in the future on massive mobile retaliatory [attacking] powers.❞

Dulles believed that the United States had to use threats to push the Soviets to the brink of war before they would agree to anything. Critics called this tough stance "brinkmanship."

By relying more on nuclear weapons, the Eisenhower administration could reduce the size of the army and the arsenal of **conventional,** or non-nuclear, weapons. These reductions would allow Eisenhower to cut the military budget. As Secretary of Defense Charles Wilson explained, nuclear weapons gave the United States "more bang for the buck."

The Arms Race

Despite Eisenhower's intentions, defense spending increased again. The policy of massive retaliation—and Soviet efforts to counter it—produced a nuclear **arms race.** Both nations built more and more weapons.

The superpowers built immensely destructive hydrogen bombs—nuclear weapons that were much more powerful than atomic bombs. They developed a variety of guided missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads. The **intermediate-range ballistic missile** (IRBM) could reach targets up to 1,500 miles (2,414 km) away. The **intercontinental ballistic missile** (ICBM) had a range of many thousands of miles. Soon both sides had massive nuclear arsenals capable of destroying the other side many times over.

As the arms race continued, Americans began preparing for a nuclear attack. The **Civil Defense Administration** educated the public with pamphlets and radio and television messages. Some families built air-raid shelters in their basements or backyards. Schools held air-raid drills. One student described his school's drill: "Students lie on the floor and stick their heads under the lockers." He recalled that he believed this would make him safe during a nuclear attack. 📖 *(See page 976 for an article* LIFE *magazine published on what to do during a nuclear attack.)*

Linking Past & Present

The Space Race

The launch of *Sputnik* shifted the space race into high gear. Nearly 12 years later, a spacecraft from *Apollo 11* landed on a level plain in the Sea of Tranquility on the moon. The long-lived dream of landing on the moon had come true.

At the end of the Cold War, the United States and Russia agreed to build a space station and cooperate on other projects in space. A rivalry that began in fear has become a partnership.

Astronaut on the moon

Competing in Space

The Soviet launch of *Sputnik* and the *Vanguard* failure led America to develop its own space program. Federal money poured into the **National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA),** the new government agency in charge of the space program. When the United States succeeded in launching the *Explorer* satellite in January 1958, the Associated Press reported:

> ❝The missile took off in a beautiful launching. It rose slowly at first in a huge splash of flame with a roar that could be heard for miles. . . .❞

The **space race** had begun, and the United States soon began pulling ahead. **Project Mercury** was the nation's first program to put an astronaut in space. Along with its commitment

to space exploration and scientific research, the government also encouraged science education by providing more funds for the teaching of science and technology in the nation's schools.

✓ **Reading Check** **Explaining** What is massive retaliation?

Foreign Policy Challenges

With the stakes in the nuclear arms race so high, the United States and the Soviet Union had to act carefully. A minor crisis, badly managed, could lead to all-out war.

Crisis in the Middle East

Trouble arose first in the Middle East. Arab states had attacked Israel soon after its founding in 1948, and tensions there had remained high ever since. Because the United States backed Israel, while the Soviet Union maintained ties with the Arab states, a Middle East conflict threatened to involve the superpowers as well as their allies.

Fighting did break out in the Middle East in 1956, when Egyptian president **Gamal Abdel Nasser** nationalized, or brought under government control, the **Suez Canal** from British control. Great Britain and France feared that Nasser might close the canal and cut off oil shipments to Europe. In October, the two European powers attacked Egypt. Great Britain and France hoped to overthrow Nasser and seize the canal. Israel, angered by repeated Arab attacks along its borders, agreed to help by invading Egypt.

The United States sponsored a United Nations resolution calling for an immediate truce. The Soviets threatened rocket attacks on British and French cities. In the face of this pressure, the three nations pulled out of Egypt.

Uprising in Hungary

Another crisis erupted in Europe. In October 1956, students and workers demonstrated in **Budapest,** the capital of **Hungary,** for changes in the government. Strikes and riots soon spread. A new government came to power and demanded withdrawal of Soviet troops. In early November, Soviet tanks and troops poured into Hungary and crushed the revolt. Hungarian rebels appealed to the United States for help. President Eisenhower condemned the Soviet crackdown but did not intervene.

War in Southeast Asia

Yet another trouble spot appeared in Southeast Asia, in France's former colony of **Vietnam.** In the early 1950s, the United States gave France billions of dollars in military aid to help it fight the **Vietminh,** nationalist rebels led by Communist leader **Ho Chi Minh.**

In spite of American aid, the French soon faced defeat. In March 1954, Vietminh forces trapped 13,000 French troops at the French base of **Dien Bien Phu.** The French pleaded with the United States to send forces, but Eisenhower refused. The Korean War was still fresh in his memory. "I can conceive of no greater tragedy," he said, "than for the United States to become engaged in all-out war in Indochina."

Analyzing *Political Cartoons*

Many cartoons used a bear to stand for the Soviet Union and an eagle to represent the United States. **What do you think the cartoonist was saying by showing the subjects on the edge of a cliff?**

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The Language of the Cold War

These terms were first used during the Cold War era.

Fallout shelter Underground building designed to hold up against fallout from a nuclear attack

Hot line Direct phone line between U.S. and Soviet leaders established after the Cuban missile crisis

Hydrogen bomb Nuclear weapon hundreds of times more powerful than the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; first tested in 1952

Iron Curtain Term used to describe the separation between communist and democratic nations in Europe

Massive retaliation Policy that promised U.S. attacks in answer to Soviet expansion

Missile Gap Claim that the U.S. had fallen behind the Soviets in producing nuclear missiles

Space Race Rivalry for supremacy in outer space

Sputnik First artificial earth satellite, launched by USSR in 1957 (pictured above)

U-2 Spy plane with ability to take pictures from as high as 80,000 feet (24,400 m)

Intercontinental ballistic missile

Without American troops, the French were forced to surrender in May. Soon after, French and Vietminh representatives in **Geneva, Switzerland,** negotiated a cease-fire agreement. The agreement, known as the **Geneva Accords,** temporarily divided Vietnam. The Vietminh controlled the north, while other Vietnamese—more friendly to the French—held the south. The accords also arranged for the withdrawal of all French troops and called for free elections in a reunited Vietnam in 1956.

Eisenhower believed that if one nation in Asia fell to the Communists, others would also fall, one after the other. He described the danger in what came to be called the **domino theory:**

> ❝You have a row of dominoes set up. You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is that it will go over very quickly.❞

To keep South Vietnam from becoming the first domino, the United States aided its anti-Communist government. In another step to defend against Communist aggression, the United States helped to create the **Southeast Asia Treaty Organization** (SEATO) in 1954. The United States, Great Britain, France, New Zealand, Australia, the Philippines, Pakistan, and Thailand made up the alliance. The nations pledged joint action against any aggressor.

Troubles in Latin America

The Eisenhower administration also faced communist challenges in Latin America. In 1954 the **Central Intelligence Agency** (CIA) helped overthrow the government of **Guatemala,** which some American leaders feared was leaning toward communism. Latin Americans resented the intervention in Guatemala.

Anti-American feeling became a part of the growing revolutionary movement in **Cuba.** Following the overthrow of dictator Fulgencio Batista (buh•TEES•tuh), rebel leader **Fidel Castro** formed a new government in January 1959. The United States supported Castro at first and welcomed his promise of democratic reforms. But Castro angered Americans when he seized foreign-owned property. His government became a dictatorship and formed close ties

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with the Soviet Union. During the last days of his presidency in 1961, Eisenhower cut diplomatic ties with Cuba. Relations between the two nations have remained strained ever since.

Cold War "Thaws"

After Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin died in 1953, **Nikita Khrushchev** (krush•CHAWF) emerged as the dominant leader. By the mid-1950s, both American and Soviet leaders were interested in easing Cold War tensions.

In July 1955, Eisenhower, NATO leaders, and Soviet officials met at a summit conference in Geneva, Switzerland. A summit is a meeting of heads of government. The leaders discussed disarmament and German reunification. The friendly atmosphere, promptly called the "Spirit of Geneva," renewed hopes for peace.

After the Geneva summit, a policy of peaceful coexistence began to emerge. This meant that the two superpowers would compete with one another but would avoid war. Khrushchev proposed to Eisenhower that the two leaders visit each other's country and attend another summit in **Paris** in 1960. Eisenhower agreed.

Khrushchev's 10-day trip to the United States in 1959 captured world headlines. As the leaders made plans for their next meeting in Paris, Eisenhower hoped to reach agreements on arms control and nuclear test bans.

The U-2 Incident

Hopes of peace fell to earth with an American plane. For years American pilots had flown high-altitude spy planes—**U-2s**—over Soviet territory to photograph Soviet nuclear sites and military bases.

When the Soviets shot down a U-2 plane on May 1, 1960, and captured its pilot, Francis Gary Powers, Khrushchev denounced the United States for invading Soviet airspace. Although the Paris summit began as scheduled on May 16, the mood had changed. The summit broke up the next day. The brief "thaw" in the Cold War had ended.

Eisenhower's Warning

In his January 1961 Farewell Address to the nation, President Eisenhower issued a warning about the influence of the military. The military budget had grown dramatically, he said, and military leaders had allied with business to seek bigger and more expensive weapons. Eisenhower feared that this alliance—a **"military-industrial complex"**—heated the arms race and could "endanger our liberties or democratic processes." In a twist of history, this former army general warned the nation of the close involvement of government and industry in preparing for war.

✓ **Reading Check** **Describing** How did relations between the superpowers change after the Geneva summit?

SECTION 1 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Key Terms** Use the following terms to write an article about life during the Cold War: arms race, domino theory, peaceful coexistence.
2. **Reviewing Facts** What two states were added to the Union during Eisenhower's presidency?

Reviewing Themes

3. **Science and Technology** How did the Soviet launch of *Sputnik* affect science and technology in the United States?

Critical Thinking

4. **Identifying Central Issues** Why was President Eisenhower willing to send aid to Vietnam?
5. **Comparing** Re-create the diagram below and describe how Eisenhower's view on foreign policy differed from Truman's view.

Foreign policy	
Eisenhower	Truman

Analyzing Visuals

6. **Analyzing Political Cartoons** Study the cartoon on page 818. Who do the figures in the cartoon represent? What idea do you think the cartoonist is presenting?

Interdisciplinary Activity

Science Make a two-level time line with the heading "United States" and "Soviet Union." Track the achievements of these two countries in space from 1957 to 1967.

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1950s Prosperity

## Guide to Reading

Main Idea
Economic growth changed the social and cultural life of Americans.

Key Terms
productivity, standard of living, affluence, baby boom

Reading Strategy
Organizing Information As you read Section 2, re-create the diagram below and describe three changes that occurred in American life as a result of the strong economy or the growth of technology.

Changes in American life
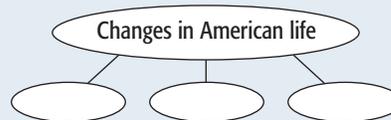
Read to Learn
• what factors helped the economy grow during the 1950s.
• how the era's prosperity affected American society and culture.

Section Theme
Continuity and Change The economic growth of the 1950s brought great changes to the nation.

Preview of Events

♦1945	♦1950	♦1955	♦1960

1947
William Levitt starts first suburban development

1955
Polio vaccine given to school children

1956
Elvis Presley gains national popularity

New homes in the suburbs

AN American Story

During the prosperous 1950s, many Americans left the cities to settle in the suburbs, hoping for a better life for themselves and their children. "Suburbia"—with its great distances between home, school, shopping areas, and downtown—gradually became not only a place but also a lifestyle. One suburban resident observed: "Before we came here, we used to live pretty much to ourselves. . . . Now we stop around and visit people or they visit us. I really think [suburban living] has broadened us."

A Booming Economy

After World War II, many experts predicted America's economy would level off or decline as production of war goods decreased. Instead, after a few years of adjustment, the economy began to grow rapidly and steadily. Between 1945 and 1960, the total value of goods and services produced in the United States increased about 250 percent.

Some of this amazing growth resulted from the burst of military spending during the Korean War. Government spending on housing, schools, welfare, highways, and veteran benefits also spurred the rapid economic expansion. Technological advances contributed to economic growth as well. Business, industry, and agriculture adopted new technology and new production methods,

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resulting in greater productivity—the ability to produce more goods with the same amount of labor. The demand for new technology led to greater investment in research and in the education and training of scientists, engineers, and technicians.

The **computer** was one of the 1950s' technological advances. Unlike today's small personal computers, early computers were immense, weighing tons and filling whole rooms. Although first used only by the military and the government, computers soon appeared in large corporations. By 1955 International Business Machines (IBM) was the leader in the field, with orders for 129 of its big computers.

Higher Incomes

The economic boom of the 1950s raised the standard of living—a measure of people's overall wealth and quality of life—of millions of Americans. Between 1945 and 1960, **personal income**—the average income, earned or unearned, of every individual in the nation—increased from $1,223 to $2,219. By the end of the 1950s, Americans had the highest standard of living in the world.

Prosperity and steady economic growth also led to new optimism. Economists began to think it was possible to maintain prosperity and

growth permanently. Americans felt confident that the government could, when necessary, take steps to avoid serious **recessions,** or downturns in the economy.

✓ Reading Check **Comparing** How did the computers of the 1950s differ from modern computers?

A Changing Nation

Economic growth and prosperity brought many changes to America. These included a growth in population, increased affluence, or wealth, suburban expansion, and a greater demand for consumer goods.

The Baby Boom

Like the economy, the family enjoyed great growth during the postwar years. During the 1950s the nation's population rose from 150 million to 179 million, an increase of nearly 20 percent. People called the nation's soaring birthrate a baby boom.

Several factors encouraged the baby boom. Husbands and wives who had postponed having children during the Depression and World War II started having families. With higher incomes, couples felt they could afford to have more children. In addition, better health

Where Americans Lived, 1901–1960

Legend: Rural dwellers, Central city dwellers, Suburban dwellers

Year: 1901–10, 1911–20, 1921–30, 1931–40, 1941–50, 1951–60

Percentage of population (0–70)

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Graph Skills

Many Americans moved to the suburbs during the 1950s.

Comparing How did the percentage of suburban dwellers change from 1920 to 1960?

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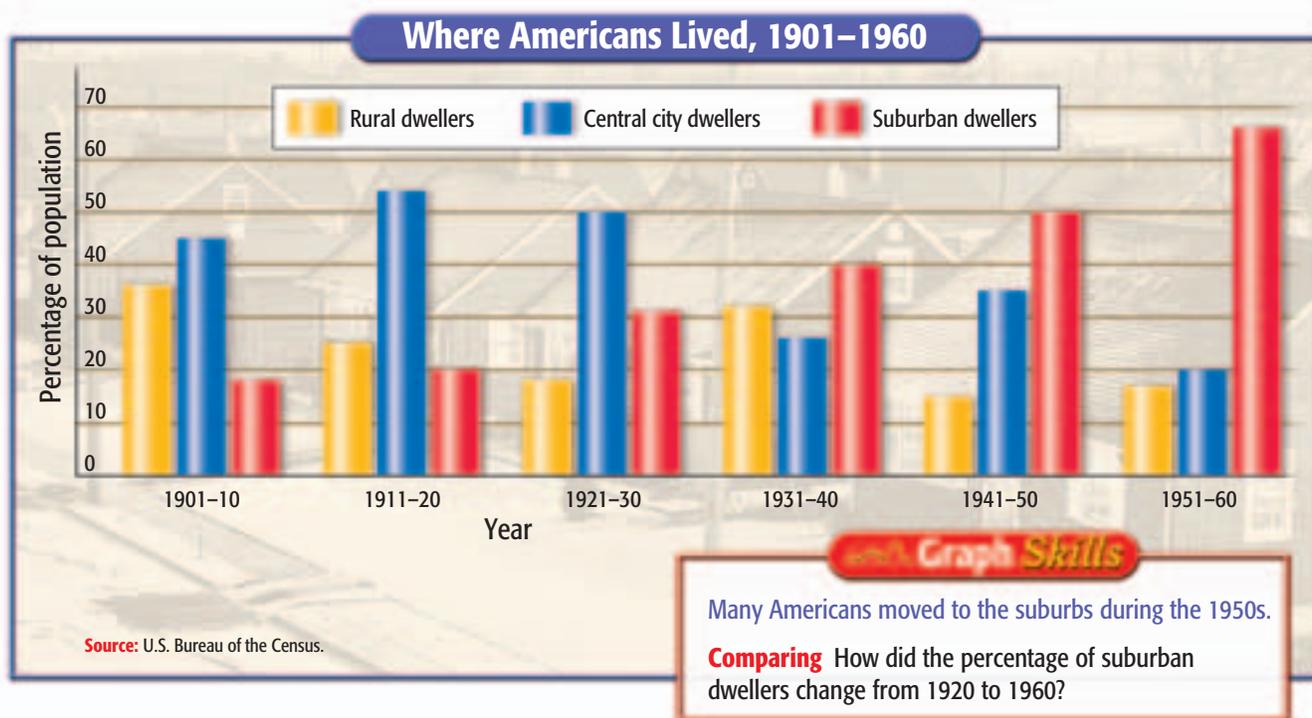
People In History

Jonas Salk 1914–1995
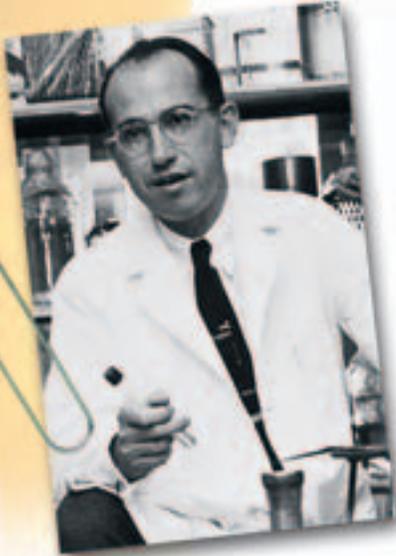
By the early 1950s, medical science had made great strides in combating childhood diseases. Antibiotics and vaccines helped control diseases such as diphtheria, influenza, and typhoid fever. A vaccine for polio, however, continued to escape the medical profession. Polio became the era's most dreaded disease because the disease left many of its victims paralyzed for life.

After many years of research, scientist Dr. Jonas Salk developed the first safe and effective vaccine against polio. After it was tested, the Salk vaccine was administered to schoolchildren beginning in 1955. The threat of polio has been almost completely eliminated. Salk was hailed as a hero not only for developing the vaccine, but also for refusing to patent the vaccine. The medical pioneer's last years were spent searching for a vaccine against AIDS.

care, improved nutrition, and medical breakthroughs against disease helped reduce the infant death rate.

The baby boom had a powerful impact on society. Many women left the workforce to stay home and raise their children. The demand for baby products and services grew, stimulating the economy. School enrollment soared as the "baby boomers" reached school age, putting a great strain on the educational system.

Expanding Suburbs

During the 1950s, 75 percent of new home construction took place in the **suburbs.** The new suburbs were usually located on the fringes of major cities.

William Levitt introduced mass-produced housing based on experience he had gained building houses for the navy. He started his first suburban development, called **Levittown,** on Long Island, New York, in 1947. Levittown included more than 17,000 identical houses, built from materials precut and preassembled at a factory and then erected quickly on designated lots. Other builders adopted Levitt's methods or used their own techniques for rapid construction, creating a massive house-building boom.

Suburban housing developments appealed to many Americans. In addition to affordable homes, they offered privacy, isolation from urban problems, space for cars, and a sense of belonging to a community formed by people similar in age, social background, and race.

Though affordable, the suburbs did not offer opportunities for home ownership to everyone. Many American cities had growing populations of middle-class minorities, particularly African American and Hispanic American, who longed to escape the noise and the crime of the cities. However, the developers of the nation's postwar suburbs often refused to sell homes to minorities.

A Nation on Wheels

The car made suburban escape possible. People needed cars to get to work, to go shopping, and to run errands. For suburban families, cars were not a luxury but a necessity.

The construction of thousands of miles of new highways in the 1950s encouraged the spread of suburbs. Suburban America became a "car culture" in which life centered on the automobile. Southern California came to symbolize suburban life and this car culture. In California, the

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drive-in capital of the nation, a person could go to the movies, eat fast food, do banking, and even attend religious services without leaving the car. One suburban California woman spoke for many other Americans when she explained her need for a car:

> 66I live in Garden Grove, work in Irvine, shop in Santa Ana . . . my husband works in Long Beach, and I used to be the president of the League of Women Voters in Fullerton.99

Air Travel

Americans were also finding it easier to travel by air. The jet engine was perfected in the 1950s, and the first jet-powered commercial aircraft began operation. By the early 1950s, the airliner was on the way to replacing the railroad train and the ocean liner as the preferred transportation for long-distance travel.

A Consumer Society

Americans of the 1950s went on a buying spree. Affluence, the growing variety and quantity of products available, and expanded advertising all played a role in the increased demand for consumer goods. Buying goods became easier, too. Many Americans used credit cards, charge accounts, and easy-payment plans to purchase goods.

Consumers eagerly sought the latest products—dishwashers, washing machines, television sets, stereos, and clothes made from synthetic fabrics. The growing market for bigger and better cars prompted automakers to outdo

TECHNOLOGY & History

Jet Travel

The first commercial jet transport, the Boeing 707, made aviation history with its maiden flight December 20, 1957. It could carry more passengers for longer distances than any previous aircraft. *In what ways do you think jet aircraft affected the American economy?*

Jet control panel

On October 26, 1958, Pan American World Airways started the first 707 jet service between New York and Paris.

1 **Fuel tanks** held up to 21,000 gallons, allowing the 707 to fly for almost 6,000 miles before stopping to refuel.

2 The Boeing 707 could carry up to 181 people in **passenger seating.**

Rudder

Flight deck

Flaps

3 The 4 turbofan **jet engines** powered a cruising speed of 600 mph. (Earlier transports had carried 21 passengers at a speed of 170 mph.)
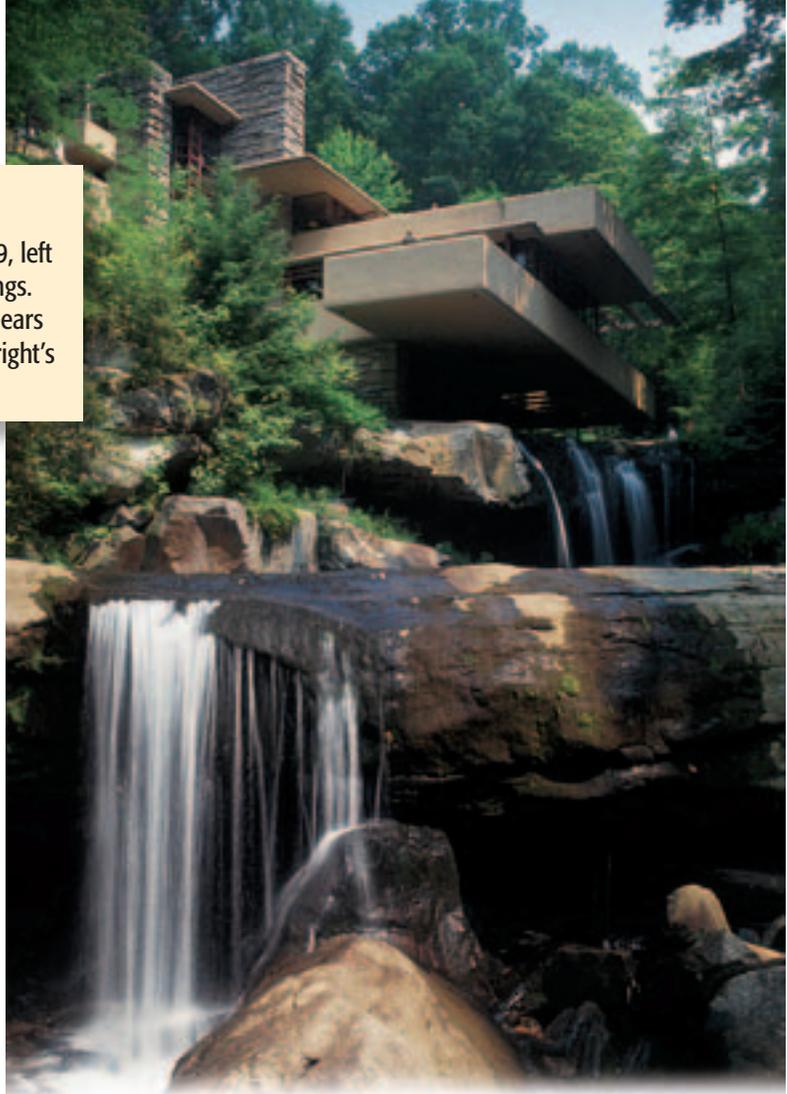
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one another by manufacturing bigger, faster, and flashier cars. They came out with new models every year, adding stylish features such as chrome-plated bumpers and soaring tail fins.

The advertising and marketing of products on television, on radio, and in magazines created consumer fads and crazes that swept the nation. In the late 1950s, Americans bought millions of hula hoops—large plastic rings they twirled around their waists. Other popular fads included crew cuts for boys, poodle skirts for girls, and a new snack—pizza.

An American Culture

By 1949 over 900,000 American households had television sets. These large wooden cabinets had small screens that displayed grainy black-and-white images. During the 1950s an average of 6.5 million sets were produced annually. By the end of the decade, most American families had television.

Television profoundly changed American life. It became the main form of entertainment for many people as well as an important source of news and information. Religious leaders helped spread religious commitment with the aid of modern communications. They had their own radio and television programs, best-selling books, and newspaper columns. **Billy Graham,** a popular Protestant minister and preacher, attracted thousands of people throughout the nation and in other parts of the world. **Fulton J. Sheen,** a Roman Catholic bishop, became a television personality through his weekly program. Protestant minister **Norman Vincent Peale** attracted many thousands of followers with his message of "positive thinking." Another popular religious leader, Jewish rabbi **Joshua Loth Liebman** expressed tolerance for religious differences:

> ❝Tolerance is the positive and cordial effort to understand another's beliefs, practices, and habits without necessarily sharing or accepting them.❞

Billboards and television commercials proclaimed: "Bring the whole family to church" and "The family that prays together stays together." Messages like these clearly indicated that postwar society was focused on the family.

Millions of Americans watched the same programs. Families gathered to watch quiz shows such as *The $64,000 Question.* Children tuned in to programs such as *The Mickey Mouse Club* and *Howdy Doody.* Teens kept up with the latest hit songs on *American Bandstand.* Families followed weekly episodes of *I Love Lucy, Leave It to Beaver,* and *Father Knows Best.* The images shown in

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One of the most popular cars of 1957, the Chevrolet Bel Air sold for about $2,500.

many programs—of happy middle-class families in neat middle-class homes—helped shape Americans' expectations for their own lives.

Finally, television had an important effect on the consumer culture. Television advertising helped create a vast national market for new products and fashions. Some shows—such as the *Philco Television Playhouse*—adopted the names of their sponsors, which brought the sponsors prestige.

A new form of music—rock 'n' roll—achieved great popularity in the 1950s. Many teens rejected the mellow popular music favored by their parents. They preferred the heavily accented beats and simple lyrics of rock 'n' roll.

Rock 'n' roll grew from the rhythm and blues music that African American musicians had created years before. It often had some elements of country music. In rock 'n' roll, the tempo was quicker, and electrically amplified instruments—mostly guitars—were used.

One of the first rock hits, reaching number one in 1955, was Bill Haley and the Comets' *Rock Around the Clock.* Adapting the style of African American performers such as Chuck Berry and Little Richard, **Elvis Presley** burst on the national scene in 1956. Presley quickly became known as the king of rock 'n' roll and was an idol to millions of young Americans. Many young men copied his ducktail haircut and swaggering mannerisms.

For teenagers, the shared experience of listening to the music helped forge a common identity and bond. The differing attitudes of the older and younger generations toward music, as well as other forms of popular culture, later came to be known as the **generation gap.**

✓**Reading Check** **Analyzing** Why did suburban life appeal to many Americans?

SECTION 2 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Key Terms** Use each of these terms in a sentence that will help explain its meaning: **productivity, standard of living, affluence, baby boom.**
2. **Reviewing Facts** How did Americans' per capita income change during the 1950s?

Reviewing Themes

3. **Continuity and Change** Describe the link between television and consumer spending in the 1950s.

Critical Thinking

4. **Compare and Contrast** Think about the ways television and the automobile changed the way Americans lived during the 1950s. How would your life be different without them?
5. **Analyzing Information** Re-create the diagram below and identify factors that stimulated economic growth in the 1950s.

Economic growth
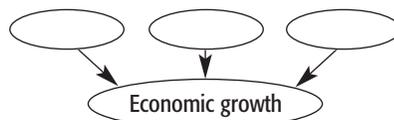
Analyzing Visuals

6. **Graph Skills** Examine the graph on page 822. How did the percentage of rural dwellers change from 1920 to 1960?

Interdisciplinary Activity

Music Paste photographs or drawings on poster board of the musicians that you think represent the best of modern music. Write captions that include your explanation of why music is an important part of American culture.

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Critical Thinking
SKILLBUILDER

Analyzing Information

Why Learn This Skill

Have you ever heard someone say, "Don't believe everything you read"? To be an informed citizen, you have to analyze information carefully as you read to make sure you understand the meaning and the intent of the writer.

Learning the Skill

1 Identify the subject or topic of the information.

2 How is the information organized? What are the main points?

3 Think about how reliable the source of the information is.

4 Summarize the information in your own words. Does the information agree with or contradict something you already know?

Practicing the Skill

In this chapter you read about new trends in music and the influence of Elvis Presley. The information that follows is from a biography of Presley. Analyze the paragraph and answer the questions that follow.

Elvis Presley may be the single most important figure in American twentieth-century popular music. Not necessarily the best, and certainly not the most consistent. But no one could argue that he was not the musician most responsible for popularizing rock and roll. His 1950s recordings established the basic language of rock and roll; his explosive stage presence set standards for the music's visual image; his vocals were incredibly powerful and versatile.

1 Was the information easy to understand? Explain.

2 Consider the source of the information. Does that make it seem more valid or less valid? Why?

Elvis Presley in a 1956 performance

3 Summarize the paragraph in a sentence of your own.

4 Do you think the writer admired or did not admire Presley? Why?

Applying the Skill

Analyzing Information Choose an article from a newsmagazine. Read it and analyze the information. Answer questions one, two, and three, as they apply to the article.

Glencoe's **Skillbuilder Interactive Workbook CD-ROM, Level 1,** provides instruction and practice in key social studies skills.

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Problems in a Time of Plenty

Guide to Reading

Main Idea
Many Americans did not share in the prosperity of the 1950s.

Key Terms
ghetto, automation, materialism

Reading Strategy
Classifying Information As you read the section, re-create the diagram below and describe the economic problems these groups faced.

	Economic problems
Small farmers	
Migrant farmworkers	
Factory workers	

Read to Learn
• which groups did not share in the prosperity of the 1950s.
• why some people criticized American values of the period.

Section Theme
Continuity and Change The prosperity that many Americans enjoyed in the 1950s was not shared by the rural and urban poor.

Preview of Events

♦1950 — ♦1955 — ♦1960

1950s
More than 20 percent of Americans live in poverty

1950s
"Beat" writers influence nonconformists

1950s
Women and African Americans question their roles in society

Children in Washington, D.C.

AN American Story

Picture postcards of Washington, D.C. in the 1950s showed the Capitol and other government buildings. Hidden behind the tall buildings was a very different United States, however. It was a nation of crumbling streets and rat-infested tenements, hungry and, sometimes, homeless people. The "invisible poor" lived in a nation not of affluence and plenty, but of desperate need.

Poverty

In the 1950s more than 20 percent of Americans lived in poverty. Millions more struggled to survive on incomes only slightly above the poverty level. Such poverty marred the landscape of the affluent society.

Many farmers did not share in the prosperity of the 1950s. Huge crop surpluses during those years caused the prices of farm products—and thus farm income—to decline dramatically. Large business enterprises bought vast areas of available farmland. They used large sums of money to transform agriculture into a thriving business. New machines and chemicals helped

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produce an abundance of food for American and foreign consumers. While some farmers benefited from these changes, others suffered. Because small farms could not compete with large farms, many small-farm families sold their land and migrated to urban areas. Thousands of small farmers who remained in agriculture struggled to stay out of poverty.

Farmworkers suffered as well. In the South, African American sharecroppers and tenant farmers had always struggled to survive. Their problems increased when mechanized cotton pickers replaced workers. The popularity of synthetic fibers reduced the demand for cotton. Southern farmworkers lost their jobs, cotton production fell, and thousands of farmers lost their land.
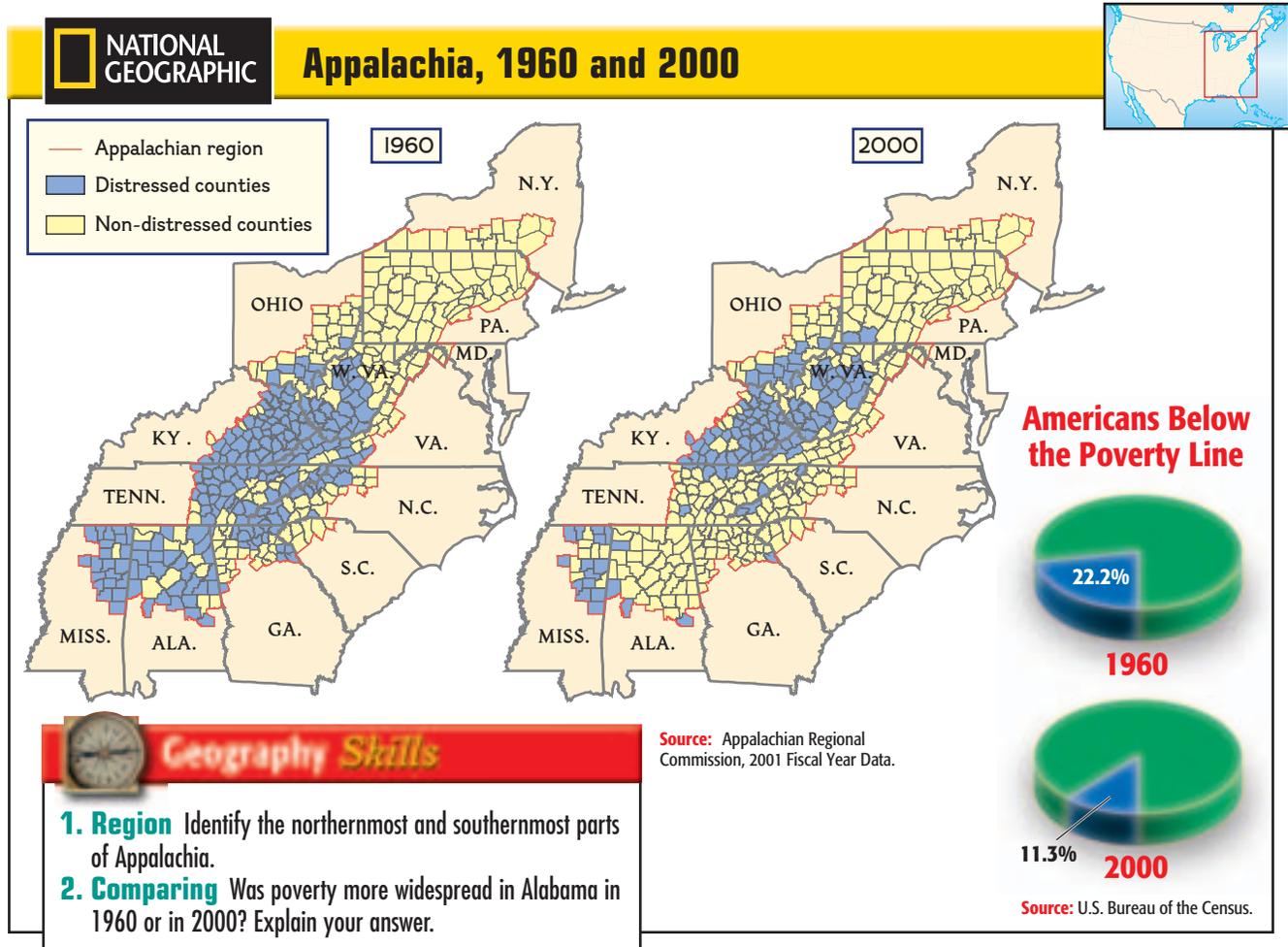
Migrant farmworkers in the West and the Southwest—mostly Mexican Americans and Asian Americans—also suffered. They toiled long hours for very low wages and lived in substandard housing.

Rural poverty did not always come from agricultural problems. In **Appalachia,** a region stretching along the Appalachian Mountains through several states, the decline of the coal industry plunged thousands of rural mountain people into desperate poverty.

Urban Poverty

As increasing numbers of middle-class Americans moved to the suburbs in the 1950s, they left the poor behind. The inner cities became islands of poverty. To these islands people still came looking for work. Continuing their migration from rural areas of the South, more than three million African Americans moved to cities in the North and the Midwest between 1940 and 1960. Many poor Hispanics—Puerto Ricans in the East and Mexicans in the Southwest and the West—also moved to American cities.

The migration of poor African Americans and Hispanics to Northern cities hastened the departure of whites to the suburbs. This "white flight"

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

Appalachia, 1960 and 2000

Legend:
— Appalachian region
Distressed counties
Non-distressed counties

1960

2000

Source: Appalachian Regional Commission, 2001 Fiscal Year Data.

Americans Below the Poverty Line

22.2%
1960

11.3%
2000

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census.

Geography Skills

1. **Region** Identify the northernmost and southernmost parts of Appalachia.
2. **Comparing** Was poverty more widespread in Alabama in 1960 or in 2000? Explain your answer.

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Picturing History

A crowd of similarly dressed suburban residents returns home from working in the city. **What criticisms did writers such as Jack Kerouac make about American middle-class society of the 1950s?**

turned some areas of cities into **ghettos**—neighborhoods that were inhabited mainly by poor minority groups.

Urban Unemployment

Few good job opportunities existed for the growing numbers of urban poor. As whites fled cities, factories and businesses also relocated into suburban areas. With a declining population, cities faced growing financial problems. Taxes could no longer keep up with the demand for such services as public transportation and police protection. Moreover, **automation**—producing goods using mechanical and electronic devices—reduced jobs in the industries that remained. It became more and more difficult for the urban poor to rise from poverty and improve their lives.

The urban poor struggled not only with poverty but also with racial discrimination in employment, housing, and education. Crime and violence often grew out of inner-city poverty, especially among young people who saw no hope for escape from life in the ghetto.

✓ **Reading Check** **Explaining** What effect did automation have on factory jobs?

Voices of Dissent

Changes in American society in the 1950s caused some people to question the values that were emerging. Some critics charged that the sameness of suburban and corporate life had a cost—the loss of individuality. Others condemned American **materialism**—a focus on accumulating money and possessions rather than an interest in spiritual matters.

Social Critics

During the 1950s, leading social critics examined the complexity of modern society. Many wrote about its effects on individual behavior. **William H. Whyte, Jr.,** studied American business life in *The Organization Man.* He concluded that young executives who abandoned their own views to "get along" were the most likely to succeed. He drew a somber picture of "organization men" who "have left home spiritually as well as physically."

In his book *The Affluent Society*, economist **John Kenneth Galbraith** wrote of the prosperous American society of the 1950s. However, not all Americans shared in this prosperity. Galbraith described a suburban family, comfortably installed in an "air-conditioned, power-steered and power-braked automobile," driving "through cities that are badly paved, made hideous by litter, blighted buildings, billboards." Prosperous Americans, he claimed, often ignored the problems and hardships faced by other Americans.

The Beat Generation

A group of writers called the Beats had even sharper criticism of American society. The term "Beat," said novelist **Jack Kerouac,** meant

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"weariness with all forms of the modern industrial state." Kerouac, poet **Allen Ginsberg,** and other Beats rebelled against American culture.

Kerouac's novel *On the Road,* the most influential book of the Beats, described the wild adventures of friends who drove aimlessly around the country. Its main character was

> ❝mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time.❞

The novel made Kerouac an instant celebrity.

Millions of young Americans read the works of Beat writers. Some adopted Beat attitudes of rebellion and isolation from society.

Questioning Roles

With society changing, women and African Americans began questioning their roles. In the 1950s both groups strived to gain greater freedom and equality.

"The suburban housewife was the dream image of the young American woman," wrote **Betty Friedan,** herself a suburban wife and mother. "She was healthy, beautiful, educated, [and] concerned only about her husband, her children, and her home." Television, advertising, and magazines reinforced this image of women as perfect wives and mothers and presented the idea of suburban life as the path to a full and happy life.

As Friedan discovered, however, many suburban housewives were dissatisfied with this role and longed to express their individuality. Her book, *The Feminine Mystique,* described the frustration and unhappiness of these women.

African Americans also questioned their place in society in the 1950s. After years of struggling for their rights, African Americans became increasingly impatient for change and less willing to accept their status as second-class citizens. They launched a new campaign for full civil rights.

Three events in the 1950s proved especially important for African Americans. First, the Court decision in *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) declared racial segregation in public schools to be unconstitutional. Second, African Americans staged a successful boycott of segregated buses in Montgomery, Alabama. Third, President Eisenhower sent troops to Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce a court order to integrate a high school. These three events, which you will learn more about in Chapter 29, paved the way for the successes of the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

✓**Reading Check** **Describing** What criticisms were made about suburban and corporate life?

SECTION 3 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

1. **Key Terms** Write a short paragraph in which you use the following terms: **ghetto, automation, materialism.**
2. **Reviewing Facts** Problems in what industry led to unemployment and economic woes in Appalachia?

Reviewing Themes

3. **Continuity and Change** How were American inner cities changing during the 1950s?

Critical Thinking

4. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think some women were dissatisfied with their roles during the 1950s?
5. **Determining Cause and Effect** Re-create the diagram below and explain how automation affected each of the following groups.

Effects of Automation		
Factory owner	Small farmer	Industrial worker

Analyzing Visuals

6. **Picturing History** Examine the photographs in this section. Write a caption for each of the photographs in which you describe what the subjects are doing.

Interdisciplinary Activity

Descriptive Writing Write a poem at least 12 lines long that might have been written by a social critic of the 1950s.

What were people's lives like in the past?

What—and whom—were people talking about? What did they eat? What did they do for fun? These two pages will give you some clues to everyday life in the U.S. as you step back in time with TIME Notebook.

Profile

*On July 20, 1969, **NEIL ARMSTRONG** became the first human to walk on the moon. There he spoke the famous words "That's one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind." Later, Armstrong reflected on his voyage and the "spaceship" we call Earth.*

"FROM OUR POSITION HERE ON THE EARTH, IT IS DIFFICULT to observe where the Earth is, and where it's going, or what its future course might be. Hopefully by getting a little farther away, both in the real sense and the figurative sense, we'll be able to make some people step back and reconsider their mission in the universe, to think of themselves as a group of people who constitute the crew of a spaceship going through the universe. If you're going to run a spaceship you've got to be pretty cautious about how you use your resources, how you use your crew, and how you treat your spacecraft."

—from the book First on the Moon

Culver Pictures

Bettmann/Corbis

Neil Armstrong

"Riddle: What's college? That's where girls who are above cooking and sewing go to meet a man they spend their lives cooking and sewing for."

> *Ad for Gimbel's Department Store campus clothes in 1952*

"I was looking… to the left, and I heard these terrible noises…. So I turned to the right, and all I remember is seeing my husband, he had this sort of quizzical look on his face, and his hand was up."

> **FIRST LADY JACQUELINE KENNEDY,** *on the day her husband, President John F. Kennedy, was assassinated in 1963*

George Silk

"I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character."

> **REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.** *August 28, 1963*

WHAT'S IN & WHAT'S OUT

TV GUIDE
Weekly magazine has circulation of about 6.5 million by 1959.

KERMIT
It's easy being green – when you're a hot Muppet on the hit show *Sesame Street* that first aired in 1969.

MINI SKIRTS
Skirts in 1964 reach new heights.

COLLIER'S
The respected magazine loses readership, publishing its final edition on Jan. 4, 1957.

TV'S BEAVER
After 234 episodes, *Leave It to Beaver* goes off the air in 1963.

POODLE SKIRTS
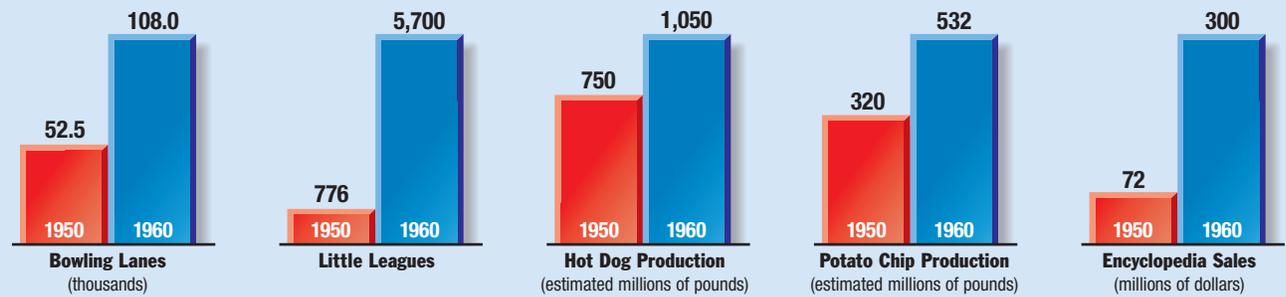1950s girls wear these long skirts with a puffy crinoline underneath.

Adam Scully/ Globe Photos

Kermit

Leave It to Beaver

Globe Photos

American Scene 1950–1960

Bowling Lanes (thousands)	Little Leagues	Hot Dog Production (estimated millions of pounds)	Potato Chip Production (estimated millions of pounds)	Encyclopedia Sales (millions of dollars)
1950: 52.5 / 1960: 108.0	1950: 776 / 1960: 5,700	1950: 750 / 1960: 1,050	1950: 320 / 1960: 532	1950: 72 / 1960: 300

Be Prepared

"Know the Bomb's True Dangers. Know the Steps You Can Take to Escape Them!—You Can Survive."
Government pamphlet, 1950

ARE YOU DIGGING YOUR OWN bomb shelter? Better go shopping. Below is a list of items included with the $3,000 Mark I Kidde Kokoon, designed to accommodate a family of five for a three- to five-day underground stay.

Bomb Shelter

BETTMANN/CORBIS

- 3-way portable radio
- air blower
- radiation detector
- protective apparel suit
- face respirator
- radiation charts (4)
- hand shovel combination (for digging out after the blast)
- gasoline-driven generator
- gasoline (10 gallons)
- chemical toilet
- toilet chemicals (2 gallons)
- bunks (5)
- mattresses and blankets (5)
- air pump (for blowing up mattresses)
- incandescent bulbs (2) 40 watts

- fuses (2) 5 amperes
- clock—non-electric
- first aid kit
- waterless hand cleaner
- sterno stove
- canned water (10 gallons)
- canned food (meat, powdered milk, cereal, sugar, etc.)
- paper products

NUMBERS 1957

3¢ First class postage stamp

19¢ Loaf of bread

25¢ Issue of *Sports Illustrated*

35¢ Movie ticket

50¢ Gallon of milk (delivered)

$2.05 Average hourly wage

$2,845 Average cost of a new car

$5,234 Median income for a family of four

POPPERFOTO/ARCHIVE PHOTO

WORD AND MUSIC
Translation, Please!

Match the jazz or bebop word to its meaning.

1. crazy   **a.** become enthusiastic
2. dig   **b.** wonderful, great
3. flip   **c.** understand, appreciate
4. hip   **d.** aware

answers: 1. b; 2. c; 3. a; 4. d

Chapter Summary

America in the Fifties

Eisenhower's Domestic Policy

- Attempts to limit government spending
- Federal Highway Act
- Extends social programs

The Cold War

- American leaders adopt policy of massive retaliation
- NASA is created
- Crisis in the Middle East
- Uprising in Hungary
- War in Southeast Asia
- Troubles in Latin America
- Geneva Summit encourages peaceful coexistence
- U-2 incident rekindles Cold War

Prosperity

- Productivity increased
- Per capita income and the standard of living increased
- The baby boom increases population
- Suburban housing developments boom
- Car culture grows
- Consumerism grows
- Television viewing increases

Problems and Issues

- Growing competition hurts small farmers
- Decline in coal industry increases poverty in rural areas
- Inner cities decay as businesses and residents relocate
- Social critics question conformity
- Women question their roles in society
- African Americans challenge segregation

Reviewing Key Terms

Examine the groups of words below. Then write a sentence explaining what each group has in common.

1. automation, productivity
2. affluence, standard of living
3. domino theory, arms race
4. summit, peaceful coexistence

Reviewing Key Facts

5. What states entered the Union in 1959?
6. Name three foreign policy challenges the Eisenhower administration faced.
7. What was the goal of Project Mercury?
8. How did the Geneva summit help to ease Cold War tensions?
9. Who formed a new government in Cuba in 1959?
10. Identify technological advances of the 1950s.
11. What are downturns in the economy called?
12. What medical breakthrough did Dr. Jonas Salk make?
13. Identify three religious leaders who influenced Americans in the 1950s.
14. How did the mass movement to the suburbs affect inner cities?

Critical Thinking

15. **Analyzing Information** What general economic policies did the Eisenhower administration support?
16. **Determining Cause and Effect** Why would the development of nuclear weapons have allowed Eisenhower to cut the military budget?
17. **Analyzing Themes: Continuity and Change** Why was there such a great demand for automobiles in the 1950s?
18. **Determining Cause and Effect** Re-create the diagram below and explain how these two factors created problems for farmers and farm workers.

Farm problems	
Crop surpluses	Synthetic fiber industry

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Practicing Skills

Analyzing Information Reread the "People in History" feature on page 823 and answer the questions that follow.

19. Who is the subject of the feature?

20. How did polio affect its victims?

21. What effect did the use of the polio vaccine have?

Geography and History Activity

Study the maps on page 829; then answer the questions that follow.

22. Region How many states are included in the Appalachia region?

23. Location In which states did poverty strike the hardest in 1960?

24. Comparing Maps Was poverty in the Appalachian region more widespread in 1960 or in 2000? How can you tell?

Citizenship Cooperative Activity

25. Analyzing Social Issues Throughout history social critics have tried to draw attention to the injustices of society. Working in groups of three, research to find three poems written by modern poets that deal with current social problems. Social problems might include, for example, poverty, prejudice, and the prevalence of violence. Mount each of your poems on an 8½" x 11" sheet of paper and use photographs or drawings to illustrate each. Your group might also want to include short descriptions or captions to identify your photographs or drawings. Combine your poems with those of other groups to create a poetry collection titled "A Decade of Dissent."

Economics Activity

26. Math Practice The Bureau of Labor Statistics issued these statistics on workers between the ages of 16 and 24 who were employed in July 1998. Use the statistics to create a bar graph showing the numbers of people working in the different economic sectors.

About 7 in 8 employed youth worked in private business this summer. The largest employers were retail trade (7.4 million) and services (5.8 million). There were also large numbers of youth employed in manufacturing (2.2 million) and construction (1.2 million). Government employed a total of 1.5 million young people in July. Nearly 3 in 5 of the young people with government jobs worked in local government.

HISTORY Online

Self-Check Quiz
Visit **taj.glencoe.com** and click on **Chapter 28—Self-Check Quizzes** to prepare for the chapter test.

Technology Activity

27. Using the Internet In the 1950s it would have been hard to imagine the role computers would play in our lives today. One by-product of the computer revolution is the hundreds of new computer-related words we have added to our language. Words such as *surfing* and *megabyte* describe computers and how we use them. Do an internet search and compile a list of words that probably did not exist before computers were invented in the 1950s. Share your findings with the class.

Alternative Assessment

28. Portfolio Writing Activity Talk to a friend or relative who is a baby boomer. How is life different for people of your generation? What do you think will be the effect on society when baby boomers retire? Write a report that focuses on these questions. Place it in your portfolio.

Standardized Test Practice

Directions: Choose the *best* answer for this multiple choice question.

The Cold War between the United States and the former Soviet Union was a rivalry between what two forms of government?

A communism and socialism
B communism and dictatorship
C communism and democracy
D democracy and monarchy

Test-Taking Tip

To answer this question, you need to remember various systems of government are defined. Did either the United States or the former Soviet Union live under a monarchy—rule by a king or queen? Since they did not, you know that answer **D** is incorrect.