

US History

Social & Economic History of the 1950s

Learning Target:

I can examine the emergence of a new culture from 1950s affluence, the teenage culture and identify how it changed America.

8. Teenage Culture

Teenage Spending Power –

- Modern Teenager – Invented by advertising agencies of the 1950s
- Teenager in the 1950s were powerful consumers that were coveted by companies

- Pre 1950s teenager –
 - Money earned went to help the family
- 1950s teenager –
 - Money earned was discretionary income
- 1956 –
 - Teenage earnings represented \$7 billion in purchasing power

Popular Culture –

- More free time and money led to a need for new leisure time activities
- New activities glamorized rebellion against suburban conformity

Movies –

- Characters portrayed often rebelled against society

Marlon Brando –

-The Wild One

- Head of an outlaw motorcycle gang
- Juvenile delinquent image
- Teenagers of the suburbs loved this character

James Dean –

-Rebel Without A Cause

- Brief but spectacular career
- Died wrecking his Porsche in California
- Sudden death made him a cult hero
- Symbolized the confused by idealistic younger generation

Rock n Roll –

- Combined R&B, Doo-Wop, and Country music
- Went across racial lines

Alan Freed –

- Began playing R&B music to white kids
- Used term Rock & Roll instead of R&B
- Sound swept the nation

Bill Haley –

- Ex country singer who combined country and R&B music
- First hit was “Rock Around The Clock”
- One of the first white rock superstars

Elvis Presley –

- Learned music from black gospel and R&B musicians
- Moved to Memphis, Tennessee and became a hit
- Criticized by parents due to sexuality and racial issues