Conservatism, Complacency, and Contentment
Or
Anxiety, Alienation, and Social Unrest??

Introduction:

You will participate in a web quest to explore the culture and trends of the 1950s. The various websites will present you with information on everything from Levittown to the trial of Alger Hiss (alleged Soviet spy). Take your time going through the sites and remember to record your answers on your worksheet.

You are about to investigate a world that may seem very different from that which you live in today. It is often recalled as a simpler time, before video games, cell phones, or even computers. You will probably be surprised at how well you can relate to, understand, and even learn from the teenagers in the 1950’s. On the surface the issues between adults and teenagers may seem wholly different, but at their core - they are exactly the same. After all, this is the decade the word "teenager" was first used!

You will explore everything 1950’s including:

* **Pop Culture**: consumerism, gender roles, teen behavior, advertising, music, fashion, hairstyles, cars, social activities, hangouts, slang, Baby Boomers, G.I. Bill, Dr. Spock, suburbia, TV, movies, credit cards, the workplace, books, religion, Kinsey and teen idols

* **Politics**: McCarthyism, HUAC, Venona Project, the Rosenbergs, the Kitchen Debate, and Alger Hiss

The Task:

What was it like living in the 1950’s?

Your task(to be completed at home) is to gain knowledge of 1950’s culture in order to better understand and connect with the adults and teenagers of the time period.

Using the websites provided on the process page, you will be asked to explore all aspects of the 50’s. This process will take some time, as you will be asked to do some investigative work. You will be finding specific facts and details about important people, items, and activities of the decade.

Once you have completed your investigation, you will create a poster based on your 1950’s character that meets specific requirements.

The Process:

To accomplish the task, you will analyze the decade which I have organized into several different topics:

1. **Suburban Living, Teen Live and Gender Roles (and gender roles)**
   - Consumerism
   - Workplace
   - Culture of the car
2. **Politics**
   - HUAC, McArthyism, Alger Hiss, Hollywood Ten, Ethel and Julius Rosenberg
1. Write down the “tips” given to housewives from the Home Economics textbook. Why do you think that there was such a post-War effort to keep women at home? (What had a lot of women been doing the War?)

2. What should be expected of the housewife? the husband/father? What does Life Magazine say?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male Role</th>
<th>Female Role</th>
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3. Levittown was the first suburb in the US. Unfortunately, you find out that Mr. Levitt, who is Jewish and claims not to be racist, will not sell to black people. Why not? What happened when one black family purchased a house in Levittown?
4. What car did you pick out? How do the new car options differ from the choices of homes in Levittown?

5. Why do you think drive-in restaurants and theaters were so popular?

6. Looking at this episode in particular, why do you think that *I Love Lucy* was so popular? What might she represent to her audience?

7. Did this advertisement make cigarettes look appealing? How did the ad portray the “everyday American housewife”?

8. Why would a variety show like *Ed Sullivan* appeal to Americans? In what ways was Elvis censored?
9. Why did sports become more popular in the 1950s than they ever had before?

10. What was a “beatnik”? In other words, what did they reject?
    What did they embrace?

    List the books/poems written by Ken Kesey, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac.

    What is the origin of the word “Beat?”

    What effect did the Beats have on the 60s culture?

11. What are Baby Boomers?

    How did many returning soldiers benefit from the GI Bill?
How would you describe the 1950s (and today?) suburbs? *Be sure to include how Gertrude Stein described them.*

What is meant when historians describe the 1950s as an “age of discontentment” for women? *(ask for help if needed)*

12. How did Dr. Spock change how many children were raised during the 1950s? In other words, what did he advocate that was so different from the status quo?

13. Congratulations - you have fraternal twins. Pick a male and female name.

14. Your older son is now a teenager. Is he a greaser or soc? Describe his appearance.
15. Describe your appearance, your spouse, and your teenage son. Describe in words and sketch head to toe what your character would have been wearing in the following situations:
   - school (son)
   - date/dance (son)
   - day to day activities (all 3 of you)
   - dinner party (you and your spouse)

16. Name, describe in words, and sketch the hairstyle that you might have worn daily.

17. List 2 teen idols that your son might have looked up to.
18. List 5 slang terms with the definition that your character uses.

19. Name 1 dance that was popular in the 1950’s and describe it.

20. Wow....your son is now starting to be interested in girls! He wants to do things like ask a girl out, have a party. It is time for "the talk." Your boy is growing up fast, but you don’t want him to grow up too fast and forget the family. To make things more stressful, your niece is also looking to you for advice on how to behave, and how to prepare for her future. Use the YouTube videos (1-4) attached below to learn what to explain to them.

| Son | Niece (female) |
21. Unfortunately your teenage son is starting to get a little too "independent." He is not following societal norms. He is getting rebellious. Use the following websites to find out why. You also searched his room while he was at school and found all sorts of rebellious music, TV, movies, and books. Use the links below to find out more about them, and for TV shows you would like him to watch.

Why is he rebellious?

What 4 rebellious movies do you find in his room? (make pretend people owned movies in the 50s)

You find Catcher in the Rye in his room, and unlike most parents you actually read it!!!! What is it about and why was it controversial.

List 3-4 wholesome family TV shows you would like him to watch. What is each about?

22. At a recent dinner party, a "free thinking" twentysomething called you an Organization Man (or your husband, if you’re the wife). What did he mean?

23. Just like your son, you want to be accepted (and admired) by your peers. One requirement for the admiration of your peers was a "Diners Club Card." It was a status symbol. Briefly explain the significance of the card, and why it was a status symbol?
24. You’ve been asked by the local newspaper to write a short expository essay on the car culture and its effect on the country. Watch the video and write 175 words.
25. You are getting bored in Levittown. Everything is the same. You didn't even notice until you heard the song "Little Boxes" by Melvina Reynolds. But you think that Pete Seeger's version is much better. Watch You Tube video # 6 to check it out. The song is about the development of suburbia and the associated conformity. It refers to suburban housing as "little boxes" of different colors. After watching the video, briefly explain why Melvina Reynolds (the original songwriter) and Pete Seeger think you're unhappy?

26. Deep down inside you are unhappy (and you think the same is true about your spouse). Check out You Tube Video #7 to see how the government and economy claim you can be happy and express yourself.

27. Wow........the Russians got the bomb (1949)!!!! How in the world did they get the bomb that quickly. Your neighbors think it must have been Soviet spies in the United States. Your interest in politics and possible espionage is peaked. You research this topic very thoroughly. The resources for this question are links and resources 8-11 on the bottom of the webquest page.

   a. McCarthyism (Wikipedia link)
      i. What is McCarthyism?

      ii. The McCarthy Era brought the Second Red Scare to fever pitch. When was this era? What was the Second Red Scare?
iii. (second paragraph) Describe the hysteria of McCarthy and the 2nd Red Scare.

iv. (Origins section) Was the Communist Party a legitimate political party in the early 20th century?

v. (Origins section) For what 2 reasons did Communist Party membership increase though the 1930s?

vi. (Origins section) Why was the US government not anti-communist during WWII?

vii. (Origins section) What 5 events re-ignited the US governments fear of Communism? (in addition to the blossoming Cold War).

viii. (Origins section) How did conservative Republicans also contribute to the origins of the anti-communist McCarthy Era?

b. Fall of McCarthy (Resource #10)

i. How had McCarthy’s accusations change from his Wheeling speech to his speech in Salt Lake City the next day?

ii. Give an example of a dishonest tactic McCarthy used when reading the dossier’s contents to Congress?

iii. What effect did McCarthyism have on libraries?
iv. Who did McCarthy begin to investigate in 1954?

v. What was he investigating, and what was the reaction? Explain.

vi. Describe the actions of the liberal democrats in the government.
   1. Hubert Humphrey
   2. Lyndon Johnson

vii. Why do you think Howard Zinn describes the actions of the liberal democrats?

viii. What was the Internal Security Act?

c. Modern Times (HUAC) link
   i. Look back on the McCarthy Wikipedia link and scroll down to the HUAC section. What was HUAC?

   ii. What did HUAC consider its primary purposes (4) to be?

   iii. What were “friendly witnesses?” How were they treated by HUAC? List some examples.
iv. What were “unfriendly witnesses”? How were they treated?

v. What is the “Hollywood Ten?” (I don’t want names – describe the group).

vi. What were they asked?

vii. What were their three options and why were each option rejected or accepted by the witnesses.

viii. What would most lawyers argue about their chosen option? What happened to the Hollywood 10 after they plead the 5th (chose silence).

ix. What did Hollywood studio executives do immediately following this hearing?

d. Hollywood Blacklist (Wikipedia link)

i. Define the term “Hollywood Blacklist.” Be long winded.
e. **Spartacus Schoolnet Hiss link**
   i. What was Hiss’s involvement in the government?
   ii. 1948 – what was Hiss accused of? By whom?

f. **Resource #10 – Further knowledge of Alger Hiss**
   i. What did the Alger Hiss court case lead to?
   
   ii. How long after the case did McCarthy begin his anti-communist crusade?
   iii. What 2 events (which happened in 1948 and 1949) led to Hiss being brought up on charges?
   iv. Why were the charges perjury, and not for espionage?
   v. Why did it take 2 trials to find Hiss guilty? (What happened to the first trial?)
   vi. What was the sentence?
   vii. How many years did Hiss serve?
   viii. At what age did he die? When?
   ix. Hiss spent his life after prison devoted to proving his innocence. What 2 things were given back to him? When?
   x. Did Hiss successfully have his guilty conviction overturned in 1978?
   xi. What 2 honors has Whittaker posthumously (after death) received?
   xii. Indicate how each supports Hiss assertion that he is innocent.
      1. Dmitry A. Volkogonov analysis of USSR documents de-classified after USSR fell in 1991 –
      2. Historian Bruce Craig analysis of Venona Documents –
   xiii. When did HUAC end?

g. **Resource # 8 – Ethel and Julius Rosenberg**
   i. What were the Rosenberg accused of doing? By whom?
   ii. Who was David Greenglass?
   iii. What factors make the testimony of David Greenglass and Harry Gold questionable? (factors about them as witnesses and events during the trial?
   iv. What questionable actions happened on the part of:
      1. Judge Kaufman
2. Chief Justice Fred Vinson

v. There was a worldwide campaign of protest because of the way the trial was run. Provide 4 names of well known figures who protested the trial.

vi. Justice Douglas did grant a stay of execution. What happened to change it?

vii. What was the purpose of the Rosenbergs final letter to their children, written minutes before their execution?

h. Resource # 9 – Description of the Venona Project (assume you invented a time machine – these documents weren’t released until the mid 1990s). Read the intro and the internal memos located at Resource #9.

**Directions:** Use the excerpts from the Venona documents to answer the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is Venona?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the main limitations on Venona as a source of information about Soviet espionage? (6 of them) (ASK IF YOU NEED HELP)</td>
<td>1. If government attempted to get Venona admitted into evidence, and it was turned town, any hope of prosecution would end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Defense attorneys would probably use “hearsey” objection (claim that neither the person who sent the message (Soviet official) nor the person who received it (Soviet official) was available to testify and thus the contents of the message were purely hearsay as it related to the defendants…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. The incomplete nature of the translations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. The assumptions made by the cryptographers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Questionable translations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Use of cover names</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3-6 MAKES THE VENONA PROJECT EASILY OBJECTIONABLE BY THE DEFENSE, AND DIFFICULT TO CLAIM IT IS 100% ACCURATE</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Defense attorneys would be entitled to a copy of the intercepted messages</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MAY FIND SOMETHING WHICH PROVES NON-GUILT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What legal problems might be involved is using Venona information as trial evidence?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>How does the author think the Soviets would react if the Venona Project became public?</td>
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Evaluation:

This assignment, while lengthy, is worth a complete test grade (100 points doubled). As such, it is an effort grade. If you have any questions along the way, please ask.