

Chapter Summary



Postwar America, 1945–1960

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How does prosperity change the way people live?

This chapter discusses the rise of the postwar United States, the population boom, the creation of the suburbs, new forms of music and mass media, and the realization of increased poverty and juvenile delinquency.

Truman and Eisenhower

- The GI Bill provided loans to millions of war veterans.
- Consumer spending increased rapidly.
- Workers organized strikes for higher wages.
- Truman proposed increases for Social Security, the minimum wage, public housing, and public works.
- Truman declared his Fair Deal.
- Congress did not pass civil rights legislation.
- Eisenhower became president and he cut federal spending, supported business, and funded the interstate highway system.
- Poor people in cities and rural areas had limited access to health care.
- New forms of music, radio, cinema, and literature emerged.
- In 1947 the transistor was developed, making it possible to miniaturize radios.
- Television became the most popular form of entertainment.
- African Americans and minorities were not depicted on television.
- Many television programs promoted gender stereotypes.

The Affluent Society

- The U.S. population experienced a “baby boom.”
- Millions of Americans moved out of cities and into suburbs.
- More Americans owned homes than ever before.
- Improvements in communication, transportation, and electronics allowed Americans to work more efficiently.
- Jonas Salk developed a vaccine that prevented polio.
- Medical breakthroughs included the polio vaccine, antibiotics, and treatments for tuberculosis, cancer, and heart disease.

The Other Side of American Life

- Poverty increased in the inner city, and the poor faced ongoing social problems.
- The government began urban renewal programs to eliminate poverty.
- *A Raisin in the Sun* by Lorraine Hansberry, an African American, opened on Broadway.
- African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans were hit hardest by poverty.
- With the mechanization of coal mining, unemployment soared in rural Appalachia.
- Juvenile crime rates increased dramatically.
- Parents focused on education as a possible solution to juvenile delinquency.