

Standard 5-5: The student will demonstrate an understanding of the social, economic, and political events that influenced the United States during the Cold War era.

5.5.1 Summarize the impact of cultural developments in the United States following World War II, including the significance of pop culture and mass media and the population shifts to the suburbs. (G, H)

Taxonomy Level: B 2 Understand/Conceptual Knowledge

Previous/future knowledge:

All concepts associated with the cultural developments following World War II are new for 5th grade students.

In United States history, students will summarize the impact of World War II and war mobilization on the home front (USHC-8.3). Students will explain the causes and effects of social and cultural changes in postwar America, including educational programs, expanding suburbanization, the emergence of the consumer culture, the secularization of society and the reemergence of religious conservatism, and the roles of women in American society (USHC 9.1).

It is essential for students to know:

The impact of cultural developments in the United States following World War II was the result of returning prosperity and returning soldiers. This indicator and 5-5.2 requires that students understand the effects of the postwar economic prosperity.

When the war ended, many women returned home from the work they had been doing for the war effort and became homemakers and consumers. American factories were able to switch their production back to consumer goods. War time workers had money to spend and products that had not been available during the war, such as automobiles, were in high demand. The resulting post-war prosperity allowed many people to spend money on new American products. Soldiers returning from the war married and started families and wanted to buy new homes. A trend in home building, the **development of the suburbs**, was made possible by the even greater availability of the automobile and is most often associated with the 1950s. [The trend of moving to outlying city neighborhoods had begun in the late 19th century with the availability of trolleys and continued in the 1920s with the automobile.] Large tracts of land, located on the outskirts of town, were bought by developers. The land was then divided into hundreds of plots on which new houses were built. Americans began to leave the cities in which they worked to buy new homes in these new suburban developments and commute to work. A new highway system to link major metropolitan cities increased suburbanization.

Mass media, the widespread availability of radios, movies and the new medium of television, helped to spread popular culture, or **pop culture**, to urban, suburban and rural communities throughout the United States. Radio spread the new Rock and Roll music. Increasingly, television became the center of American family entertainment. Advertisers used the new medium to spread their message and soon everyone wanted the same goods, including, slinkies, cap guns, coonskin hats, Barbie dolls and hoola hoops.

It is not essential for students to know:

This indicator does not require that students be able to identify specific examples of pop culture or mass media, but rather understand their general impact on the culture of everyday American lives. Students do not need to be able to name some of the famous housing developments such as Levittown.

Assessment guidelines:

Appropriate assessments require students to **summarize** the cultural impact of World War II on the United States. Students should be able to **explain** the significance of pop culture, the mass media, and the effects of the population shift to the suburbs. Appropriate assessments should also require students to **identify examples** of the pop culture of the post-war period.

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