The Postwar Years at Home
1945-1960

By 1945, most Americans were eager to acquire everything the __________ and before that the _____________ had denied them. The marriage rate increased dramatically, and the ____________ boomed. __________ sprang up to answer a housing shortage.

Suburban families enjoyed incomes that were considerably higher than those in __________ communities. They spent large amounts of money on __________. By the end of the 1950s, about 75 percent of families owned a car, and even more owned a television set.

During the postwar years, __________ (the value of all goods and services produced in an economy in a year) more than doubled. __________ income nearly doubled as well.

Industrialists converted their businesses to ______________ production and benefited from __________ advances made during the war. ______________ funded by the ____________ created a variety of new products, such as __________ and the __________ that could be used in the civilian economy.

In the 1950s, a few large firms dominated many industries. Examples include:
- Automobile Industry: General Motors, Ford, Chrysler
- Electrical Industry: General Electric, Westinghouse
Many corporations, known as conglomerates, chose to diversify its business to better survive economic downturns.

At the same time, another kind of expansion took place. Ray Kroc, impressed with the potential in assembly-line food production, purchased a restaurant known as McDonald’s. He built it into a national chain by selling entrepreneurs the right to open a franchise.

Ray Kroc
Born in 1902, originally sold mixing machines. He was astonished by the number of machines being ordered by the McDonald brothers for their restaurant in San Bernardino, California, so he visited. He was impressed by their efficient operation: simple menus did not require skilled cooks, no dining area to require cleaning, etc.

The Appeal of Franchises
- For the Customer – Familiarity with the goods or services being offered at all locations, even far from home
- For the Businessman/Franchisee – Immediate access to successful system and supplies; high business name recognition
- For the Corporation – Rapid expansion without paying full cost of construction and organization (local franchisees do that)

1950s Franchises
Impact of Television
• Television became enormously popular in the 1950s; in 1955, the average American family watched for four to five hours per day (that number has remained fairly steady ever since, but is still much higher than other countries)
• Three large networks (NBC, CBS, ABC) controlled television programming, and all raised operating money by running commercials

Howdy Doody
• Popular children’s program on NBC from 1947 to 1960

The Mickey Mouse Club
• Originally aired from 1955-1959 and featured young cast members performing in a variety of formats. It also contained short moral lessons for children.

Later MMC Reincarnations
• The MMC was reincarnated in 1977 and again from 1989-1995
• The late 1990s cast included future stars Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, and Ryan Gosling

American Bandstand
• Premiered in Philadelphia in 1952 and went national on ABC in 1957; it showcased music and dancing teenagers and made host Dick Clark an icon; its last broadcast was in 1989.

I Love Lucy
• Aired on CBS from 1951 to 1957, starring real-life spouses Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz; it was the most popular television program in four of its six seasons
• Much of the humor of I Love Lucy would have resonated with the young couples adjusting to new situations: wives working outside the home, starting a family, and so forth. I Love Lucy reruns still appear on television.

Father Knows Best
• This program originated as a NBC radio show (1945-1954) and transitioned to CBS television (1954-1960)
• Depicted the Anderson family living in an idealized Midwestern environment where thoughtful advice from the family patriarch, and reasonable advice from the loving family matriarch, helped the children through life’s troubles

Leave It to Beaver
• Appeared on CBS from 1957 to 1963
• Depicted the Cleaver family in a stereotypically middle-class, suburban, American life
• Clarence “Beaver” Cleaver and his brother, Wally, frequently got into dilemmas that would be solved with the loving wisdom of his parents, June and Ward
Contrast 1950s Television Families with Modern Television Families

• Do Hollywood depictions of family life tell us anything about how American culture has changed?
• Have those depictions helped cause the change?

Impact of Nuclear Power

• In 1954, the Navy produced the first nuclear powered submarine (the USS Nautilus)
• In 1956, Disney produced a book and cartoon film promoting atomic energy
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ByZ1AyDfIE
• In 1957, the first nuclear power plant opened in Shippingport, PA

High Hopes for Atomic Energy

• People predicted electricity would soon become so plentiful and inexpensive that it would be “too cheap to meter”
• The US government explored plans to develop nuclear airplanes, especially after a false report that the Soviets produced one in 1958, until 1961. The only airplane ever made to carry a nuclear reactor was the Convair NB-36H, which was decommissioned in 1958.

Impact of Computers

• Businesses began to embrace the use of computers in the 1950s
• Grace Hopper at Harvard University pioneered the creation of software
• Bell Telephone scientists invented the transistor in 1947, which was a huge improvement over the previously used vacuum tube. It allowed for the miniaturization of many electronics.
• The government tabulated the 1950 Census results on a computer.

Vacuum Tube vs. Transistor

• The transistor was both smaller and more powerful than the vacuum tube.

Impact of Medicine

• By 1944, advances in antibiotics such as penicillin were saving countless lives; other antibiotics were developed to treat penicillin-resistant bacteria in the 1950s
• 1954 – Dr. Jonas Salk and Dr. Thomas Francis tested the first polio vaccine
• Surgical techniques, especially heart surgery, improved greatly in the 1950s
Dr. Jonas Salk

- Salk (1914-1995) was a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh when he developed his polio vaccine with funding from the March of Dimes. Polio has disappeared in most countries, but with more people declining to have their children vaccinated, a return seems probable.

Countries with Polio Cases (2013)

- Red – Endemic
- Green – Imported
- Blue – Vaccine-derived only

- The process of automation in which machines assumed many of the jobs performed by people, transformed the work force.

1940s

- Many former servicemen used the GI Bill to earn college degrees.

Future

- Percent of Americans Aged 25 Years and Over Who Have Completed Four Years of College Or More (1940-2008)
By 1956, a majority of workers had white-collar jobs, managing offices, working in sales, and performing professional and clerical duties with little manual labor.

By 1955, nearly 33 percent of the labor force was unionized. That same year, the AFL and the CIO, the two largest unions, merged. It remains a powerful organization today.

With many people living better than ever, the baby boom that started in the 1940s continued. The birth rate peaked in 1957.

Social Consequences of Large Families
- Whereas most of the commentary from the 1960s onward focused on the potential problems of worldwide population growth, people recently have begun to focus on the negatives of population restraint. Children raised in smaller families typically have less social capital and declining populations make many government programs unsustainable at acceptable levels of taxation.

Seeking more room, growing families retreated from aging cities to the suburbs. Veterans using the GI Bill became eligible for low-interest mortgages to purchase new homes, which helped to expand the modern middle class lifestyle that developed in the 1950s.

Developers like William J. Levitt pioneered the use of mass production techniques in home building. Homes could be finished in weeks instead of months, and average Americans could afford to buy a home.

Union Membership Percent of All U.S. Workers 1948 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent of All U.S. Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>10%</td>
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</tbody>
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William Levitt, born in New York in 1907, became one of the most influential real estate developers in America. He developed properties all over the United States, especially in the suburbs. His influence on neighborhoods and on the housing market remains controversial, with some saying he helped to increase suburban sprawl and environmental issues (for suburban sprawl). He died in 1994.
Many Americans, living beyond the reach of public transportation, depended more and more on automobiles. During the 1950s, American automakers produced up to 8 million new cars each year.

The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act, more frequently called the Interstate Highway Act, provided $25 billion to build a system more than 40,000 miles long. These roads theoretically allowed for the evacuation of major cities in the event of nuclear attack. The original plan was completed in 35 years, with some portions cancelled and others added. Construction continues, and as of 2012 it included nearly 48,000 miles of highway. A popular urban legend maintains that the highways were built to double as emergency airstrips, but there is no evidence of that intent in any of the legislation establishing the system.

The car culture inspired the development of many new businesses including gas stations, repair shops, and parts stores. Americans, especially teenagers, flocked to drive-in movies and restaurants.

Families headed off for vacations at national parks, seaside resorts, or amusement parks.
• Gasoline companies began offering credit cards to loyal customers. Lending agencies picked up the idea, and the __credit___ card appeared in 1950. Within a decade the Diner’s Club and American Express cards also appeared. Consumer credit rose from more than $8 billion in 1946 to $56 billion in 1960.

• Most Americans were comfortable during the 1950s. They valued security over adventure reflecting the mood of a nation still recovering from economic depression and war. Americans applauded the harmony that conformity seemed to encourage.

• The strong economy of the 1950s allowed more young people to stay in __school__. With more leisure time, some young people appeared to devote all their energies to pursuing __entertainment__ and __fun__.

• Businesses seized the opportunity to sell to the youth market. Advertisements and __movies__ helped to build an image of what it meant to be a __teenager__.

• Teenage girls collected items such as silver ___ and linens__ in anticipation of marriage, which was often just after __high school__. By 1954, close to __half__ of all brides were in their teens, typically marrying grooms just __slightly__ older.

• Tootle the Engine: Brainwashing?
  • This story, one of the best-selling children’s books of all time, tells the story of Tootle the Engine. Tootle wants to grow up to be a successful engine and is told he needs to “stay on the tracks.” One day, while racing a horse, he discovers how much fun it is to race through the countryside. His friends work together to convince him that the most important thing for a train is to stay on the tracks. This is interpreted as a tale of conformity.

• To stay on the tracks—and ____—helped to build an image of what it meant to be a __teenager__.
In the 1950s, Americans flocked back to their churches and synagogues. This was partly a response to the struggle against godless communism; some looked to religion for hope in the face of the threat of nuclear war.

In 1954, Congress added the words “under God” to the Pledge of Allegiance, and in the next year required the words “In God We Trust” to appear on US currency. By the end of the 1950s, about 95% of all Americans said they felt connected to some formal religious group.

Men were expected to go to college, get a good job, get married, and support his wife and children. Men were also expected to make all of the important political, economic, and social decisions for his family.

The Role of Men

The Role of Men

The Role of Men
The Role of Women

• Women were expected to support their husbands by managing the household, cooking meals, and raising their children.

• Women were also expected to volunteer their time for charitable causes and community organizations.

• Not all Americans fit the model of middle-class life, of course. Many women were reluctant to give up good jobs, even after getting married. By 1960, 31 percent of married women had jobs. Most of them worked as secretaries, teachers, nurses, or sales clerks.

In 1963, Betty Friedan published a critique of the 1950s ideal of womanhood. In *The Feminine Mystique*, she lashed out at the culture that limited women’s opportunities. Friedan was hardly the typical 1950s woman. She earned a Marxist in her youth, had a college degree in psychology, and worked as a journalist prior to marriage. She projected her own dissatisfaction with traditional roles for women onto all women.

• Some young people rejected the values of their parents and felt misunderstood and alone. A few films, such as *Rebel Without a Cause*, captured those feelings. The movie’s star, James Dean, became a teen idol.

J. D. Salinger’s *Catcher in the Rye* portrayed a character who struggled to preserve his own integrity in spite of pressure to conform.

Singer served in WWII and enjoyed early success as a writer, but the fame it brought led him increasingly reclusive. His writing tapered off and he gave his last interview in 1980, thirty years before his death. *Catcher in the Rye*, his best known work, remains highly controversial (which probably helps to explain its continued popularity). CD students are required to read it in English.

Some Sounds of the 1950’s

- At the Hop – Danny & the Juniors, 1957
- Book of Love – The Monotones, 1957
- Rock Around the Clock – Bill Haley and His Comets, 1954
- Chantilly Lace – The Big Bopper, 1958
- Come Go With Me – The Del-Vikings, 1956
- Do You Want to Dance – Bobby Freeman, 1958
- Spanish Splish – Bobby Darin, 1958
- Everyday – Buddy Holly, 1957
- Johnny B. Goode – Chuck Berry, 1958
- Wake Up Little Suzie – The Everly Brothers, 1957

“The Day the Music Died”

• Many of you are familiar with the song “American Pie” by Don McLean. The song was inspired by a plane crash that killed Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, and J. P. “The Big Bopper” Richardson on February 2, 1959.
The King of Rock and Roll
Elvis Aaron Presley (1935–1977) was born in Mississippi and moved to Memphis, Tennessee when he was 13. His music career began in 1954. He had his first hit (Heartbreak Hotel) in 1956 and became an instant but controversial sensation. In fact, broadcasters would only show his dancing above the waist on television. He also starred in several popular movies. His career was barely interrupted when he was drafted into the army in 1958, but by the late 60’s the musical scene was starting to pass him by. He became a fixture of the Las Vegas entertainment scene before dying of drug overdose. He remains the single biggest solo artist of all time.

A Sampling of Elvis Songs
• Heartbreak Hotel, 1956
• Don’t Be Cruel, 1956
• Hound Dog, 1956
• Jailhouse Rock, 1957
• All Shook Up, 1957

Members of the Beat Generation, called beatniks, promoted spontaneity, or acting at a moment’s notice without planning. They stressed spirituality and the need for release from the world of money and property.

Jack Kerouac and his friend Allen Ginsberg were leaders of the generation. Kerouac (1922-1969) became famous in the 1950s for various writing projects. He was a drug user and sexual libertarian and promoter of Buddhism, all shocking for that decade. His most famous work, On the Road, was an autobiographical story about a road trip he’d taken, typed on a continuous sheet of paper nearly 120 feet long. He died of a hemorrhage caused by alcohol damage to his liver.

Allen Ginsberg
• Ginsberg (1926-1997) was a prominent leader of the Beat generation of the 1950s and counterculture of the 1960s. A Buddhist convert from Judaism, a drug user and a homosexual, he defied convention in a decade of conformity.

• The 1950s were conservative years, politically as well as culturally. The government felt public pressure to maintain the nation’s newly won prosperity.

• Harry Truman wanted to follow in FDR’s footsteps, but he often appeared ill-prepared for the presidency.

• His first priority was the social and economic reconversion from wartime to peacetime. He managed to get most soldiers home by 1946.
When war-time price controls ended and prices soared, workers demanded wage increases. In 1946, nearly 4.6 million workers went on strike – more than ever before. Truman thought that their demands were inflationary and might destroy the health of the economy.

When a railroad strike caused a major disruption in 1946, Truman asked Congress for the power to draft the workers. This proved unnecessary, however.

Truman also secured a $3.5 million fine against the United Mine Workers union when it defied a court order not to strike. Congress then passed the Taft-Hartley Act to further limit union strikes.

TR offered us the Square Deal
FDR offered us a New Deal
Are you ready for the… Fair Deal?

Fair Deal Proposals
1. Promote full employment
2. Increase the minimum wage
3. Offer greater unemployment compensation
4. Provide more housing assistance
5. Create national health insurance
6. Legislate to control atomic energy

Outcome of the Fair Deal
A coalition of conservative Democrats and Republicans rejected most of his initiatives.
Although many of his ideas were not realized during his tenure in office, later Democrats would continue to return to those same ideas.
– Example: National Health Insurance

The results of the 1946 elections reflected the belief that Truman was not an effective leader. Republicans won majorities in both houses of Congress.
– People liked to joke that “to err is Truman.”
– Republicans gained 53 seats in the House of Representatives, for a majority of 246 out of 435.
– Republicans gained 12 seats in the Senate, for a majority of 51 out of 100.
– People joked after the election that “we shouldn’t be asking ourselves what FDR would do if he were still alive, we ought to ask what Truman would do if he were still alive.”

Republic Senator Robert A. Taft then led the opposition to many of Truman’s liberal goals.

The son of President William Howard Taft, Robert Taft (1889-1953) served three terms in the US Senate. He was noted for his isolationism and opposition to both the New Deal and communism. He tried three times to win the Republican presidential nomination, but always failed.
Truman’s Unfulfilled Civil Rights Proposals
- Passage of a federal anti-lynching law
- Abolition of the poll tax
  - A poll tax is a payment required at the time of voting; it theoretically paid the cost of managing the election but actually discouraged poor people (disproportionately minorities) from voting
- Creation of a permanent board to prevent hiring discrimination

Truman’s Civil Rights Accomplishments
- 1946 - Appointed a biracial committee on civil rights to look into race relations
- 1948 - Banned racial discrimination in the hiring of federal employees
- 1948 – Ordered an end to racial segregation and discrimination in the armed forces

1948 Democratic Presidential Nominee
- Nominee: Harry Truman
  - Background: WWII Veteran, County Judge, US Senator from Missouri, Vice President in 1945, President after FDR died
  - Issues: He campaigned vigorously against the “Do Nothing Congress” and hammered Republicans for removing farm price supports

1948 Republican Presidential Nominee
- Nominee: Thomas E. Dewey
  - Background: Moderate/Liberal Republican Governor of NY and 1944 Presidential Nominee
  - Issues: Dewey tried to rely on Truman’s low approval ratings and the three-way split in the Democratic party to assure his victory. He campaigned cautiously, trying to avoid saying anything that would offend anyone. Critics claimed he didn’t give voters a reason to actually vote for him

Editorial Comments on Dewey
- The Louisville Courier-Journal opined that, “No presidential candidate in the future will be so inept that four of his major speeches can be boiled down to these historic four sentences: Agriculture is important. Our rivers are full of fish. You cannot have freedom without liberty. Our future lies ahead.”

1948 Progressive Presidential Nominee
- Nominee: Henry Wallace
  - Background: Secretary of Agriculture (1933-1940) Vice President (1941-1945) and Secretary of Commerce (1945-1946)
  - Issues: Wallace represented the liberal wing of the Democratic Party and was endorsed by the Communist Party in 1948. His biggest contribution to the campaign was to blunt Republican attacks on Truman, who looked more conservative by comparison.

1948 “Dixiecrat” Presidential Nominee
- Nominee: J. Strom Thurmond
  - Background: Governor of South Carolina
  - Issues: Represented the southern Democratic Party upset over their party’s stand on civil rights; promoted less federal control of states (“states’ rights”)
• Longtime Democrat control of the White House and FDR’s unprecedented four terms in office inspired Congress to pass the 22nd Amendment. Ratified in 1951, the amendment limits presidents to two terms in office.

• Since then, some have wondered if the limit makes a second-term president less effective than one allowed to seek reelection.

• Truman chose not to run again in 1952, so the Democrats nominated Adlai Stevenson. An exception to the 22nd Amendment would have allowed Truman to run for a third term, but he was unpopular and hoped to find another candidate. Although he did allow his name to be mentioned in the New Hampshire Democratic Primary, he lost badly. Eighteen days later, he announced that he would definitely not seek a third term.

• Republicans nominated Dwight Eisenhower, a hero from WWII, who won easily. Republicans also won control of Congress.

• Republicans did face some controversy in the election over the Vice Presidential nominee, Richard Nixon. He was accused of wrongfully benefiting from campaign funds. Nixon had established a legal but secret fund of about $18,000 to help cover campaign expenses. Several newspapers accused him of using the fund for personal expenses. Eisenhower had promised a scandal-free administration, and several prominent Republicans urged Nixon to step down.

• In domestic matters, Eisenhower was determined to slow the growth of the federal government. He also wanted to limit the president’s power while increasing that of Congress and the courts. His priorities included cutting spending, reducing taxes, and balancing the budget.

• He defended himself on national television in what is known as the “Checkers” Speech.” After the speech aired, thousands of people contacted the Republican National Committee to support Nixon.

- Watch the video on the next slide. Listen to what Nixon had to say in his own defense.
- Do you think it was an effective speech?
- How did Nixon portray his accusers?
- What was “Checkers”? Did it matter?
Eisenhower called his approach to government “Dynamic Conservatism” or “Modern Republicanism.” Like traditional Republicans, he favored big business. Unlike traditional Republicans, he was more comfortable with federal aid to individuals and involvement in foreign affairs. Contrast the Republican principles of President Eisenhower with those of President Coolidge or President Hoover and you will understand the difference. Eisenhower knew he could not undo the influence FDR had on the country.

Eisenhower was reelected in 1956, though Democrats maintained their control over Congress. The 1956 Election was a rematch from 1952, with Democrats once again nominating Adlai Stevenson from Illinois. There had been some speculation that Eisenhower would not seek reelection due to age and health concerns.

His attempts to balance the budget backfired, and economic growth slowed. Still, he helped to maintain a mood of stability. He extended Social Security to millions of Americans and raised the minimum wage.

When the Soviets launched Sputnik (the first man-made satellite) in 1957, many Americans felt the US had lost its competitive edge.

That same year, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act to improve science and math instruction in schools. The Act also provided aid to college students and state schools for building science and foreign language facilities.

In 1958, the US responded by creating the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.