

# The Age of Affluence

1945–1960

## Teaching Resources

### Chapter Instructional Objectives

After you have taught this chapter, your students should be able to answer the following questions:

1. What factors explain the rise of American prosperity during the two decades following World War II?
2. What were the changing roles of cities and suburbs in American society?
3. In what ways were the “fifties” the historical norm of American life?
4. Who were the members of the “other America,” and why did they occupy this status?

### Chapter Annotated Outline

#### I. Economic Powerhouse

##### A. Engines of Economic Growth

1. By the end of 1945, war-induced prosperity had made the United States the richest country in the world, a preeminence that would continue unchallenged for twenty years.
2. American economic leadership abroad translated into affluence at home; domestic prosperity benefited a wider segment of society than anyone had thought possible in the dark days of the Great Depression.
3. A meeting in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, established the U.S. dollar as the capitalist world’s principal reserve currency and resulted in the creation of two global institutions—the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
4. The World Bank provided private loans for the reconstruction of war-torn Europe

as well as for the development of Third World countries, and the IMF was designed to stabilize the value of currencies, thereby helping to guide the world economy after the war.

5. A second linchpin of postwar prosperity was defense spending. The military-industrial complex that President Eisenhower identified in his 1961 Farewell Address had its roots in the business-government partnerships of the world wars. But unlike after 1918, the massive commitment of government dollars for defense continued after 1945.
6. As permanent mobilization took hold, science, industry, and the federal government became increasingly intertwined. According to the National Science Foundation, federal money underwrote 90 percent of the cost of research on aviation and space, 65 percent of that on electricity and electronics, 42 percent of that on scientific instruments, and 24 percent of that on automobiles.
7. The growth of this military-industrial establishment had a dramatic impact on national priorities. Between 1900 and 1930, excepting World War I, the country spent less than 1 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) on the military. By the early 1960s the figure had risen close to 10 percent.
8. America’s annual GDP jumped from \$213 billion in 1945 to more than \$500 billion in 1960; by 1970, it approached \$1 trillion. To working Americans, this sustained economic growth meant a 25 percent rise in real income between 1946 and 1959. Postwar prosperity also featured low inflation.
9. Even so, the picture was not entirely rosy. The distribution of income remained

stubbornly skewed, with the top 10 percent of Americans earning more than the bottom 50 percent. Moreover, the economy was plagued by periodic recessions, damaging especially to the most disadvantaged Americans.

#### B. The Corporate Order

1. For more than half a century, American enterprise had favored the consolidation of economic power into big corporate firms. That tendency continued as domestic and world markets increasingly overlapped after 1945.
2. The classic, vertically integrated corporation of the early twentieth century had produced a single line of goods that served a national market. This strategy worked even better in the 1950s, when sophisticated advertising and the modern media enabled large corporations to break into hitherto resistant markets.
3. National firms now added a new strategy of diversification. CBS, for example, hired the Hungarian inventor Peter Goldmark, who perfected color television during the 1940s, long-playing records in the 1950s, and a video recording system in the 1960s.
4. More revolutionary was the sudden rise of the conglomerates, giant enterprises comprised of firms in unrelated industries. Conglomerate-building resulted in the nation's third great merger wave (the first two had taken place in the 1890s and the 1920s). Because of their diverse holdings, conglomerates shielded themselves from instability in any single market and seemed better able to compete globally.
5. Expansion into foreign markets also spurred corporate growth. At a time when "made in Japan" still meant shoddy workmanship, U.S. products were considered the best in the world.
6. In their effort to direct such giant enterprises, managers placed more emphasis on planning. Companies recruited top executives who had business-school training, the ability to manage information, and skills in corporate planning, marketing, and investment.
7. To man their bureaucracies, the postwar corporate giants required a huge supply of white-collar foot soldiers. They turned to the universities, which, fueled partly by the GI Bill, grew explosively after 1945.

8. Climbing the corporate ladder rewarded men without hard edges—the "well adjusted." In *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) the sociologist David Riesman contrasted the independent businessmen and professionals of earlier years with the managerial class of the postwar world. He concluded that the new corporate men were "other-directed," more attuned to their associates than driven by their own goals.

#### C. Labor-Management Accord

1. For blue-collar workers, collective bargaining after World War II became for the first time the normal means for determining how their labor would be rewarded.
2. General Motors implacably resisted this "opening wedge" into the rights of management. The company took a 113-day strike, rebuffed the government's intervention, and soundly defeated the United Auto Workers (UAW) union. Having made its point, General Motors laid out the terms for a durable relationship. It would accept the UAW as its bargaining partner and guarantee GM workers an ever higher living standard.
3. The price was that the UAW abandon its assault on the company's "right to manage." On signing the five-year GM contract of 1950—the Treaty of Detroit, it was called—Walter Reuther, the leader of the UAW, accepted the company's terms.
4. In postwar Europe, America's allies were constructing welfare states. That was the preference of American unions as well. But having lost the bruising battle in Washington for national health care, they turned to the bargaining table. By the end of the 1950s, union contracts commonly provided defined-benefit pension plans (supplementing Social Security), company-paid health insurance, and for two million workers, mainly in steel and auto, a guaranteed annual wage (via supplementary unemployment benefits).
5. The sum of these union gains was a new sociological phenomenon, the "affluent" worker—as evidenced by relocation to the suburbs (half of all workers by 1965), by homeownership, by cars and other durable goods, and, infallible sign of rising expectations, by installment buying. For union workers, the contract became, as Reuther boasted, the passport into the middle class.

6. The labor-management accord that generated labor's good life seemed in the 1950s absolutely secure. The union rivalries of the 1930s had abated. In 1955, the industrial-union and craft-union wings joined together in the AFL-CIO, representing 90 percent of the nation's 17.5 million union members.
  7. Though impressive, the labor-management accord was never as durable as it seemed. Vulnerabilities lurked, even in the accord's heyday. For one thing, the sheltered markets—the essential condition—were in fact quite fragile.
  8. The postwar labor-management accord, it turns out, was a transitory event, not a permanent condition of American economic life. And, in a larger sense, that was true of the postwar boom. It was a transitory event, not a permanent condition.
- II. The Affluent Society
- A. The Suburban Explosion
1. Americans began to leave older cities in the North and Midwest for newer ones in the South and West; there was also a major shift from city to the suburbs.
  2. Both processes were stimulated by the dramatic growth of a car culture and the federal government's support of housing and highway initiatives.
  3. By 1960, more Americans lived in suburbs than in cities; because few new dwellings had been built during the depression or war years, the country faced a housing shortage.
  4. Arthur Levitt applied mass-production techniques to home construction; other developers followed suit in subdivisions all over the country, hastening the exodus from farms and cities.
  5. Many homes were financed with mortgages from the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Veterans Administration at rates dramatically lower than those offered by private lenders, demonstrating the way the federal government was entering and influencing daily life.
  6. New suburban homes, as well as their funding, were reserved mostly for whites; some homeowners had to sign a **restrictive covenant** prohibiting occupation in the development by blacks, Asians, or Jews.
  7. Although *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) ruled that restrictive covenants were illegal, the practice continued until the civil rights laws of the 1960s banned private discrimination.
- B. The Search for Security
8. New growth patterns were most striking in the South and West, where inexpensive land, unorganized labor, low taxes, and warm climates beckoned; California grew the most rapidly.
  9. Automobiles were essential to the growth of suburbs and to the development of the "Sun Belt"; the 1950s gas guzzlers became symbols of status and success.
  10. Highways were funded by federal government programs such as the National Interstate and Defense Highway Act of 1956; air pollution and traffic jams soon became problems in cities.
  11. As Americans began to drive to suburban shopping malls and supermarkets, downtown retail economy dried up, helping to precipitate the decay of the central cities.
1. There was a reason for Congress calling the 1956 legislation creating America's modern freeway system the National Interstate and *Defense* Highways Act. The four-lane freeways, used every day by commuters, might some day, in a nuclear war, evacuate them to safety. That captured as well as anything the underside of postwar life, when suburban living abided side by side with the shadow of annihilation.
  2. The Cold War, reaching as it did across the globe, was omnipresent at home as well, permeating domestic politics, intruding on the debate over racial injustice, and creating an atmosphere that stifled dissent.
  3. Most alarming was the nuclear stand-off with the Soviet Union. Bomb shelters and civil defense drills provided a daily reminder of mushroom clouds. In the late 1950s, a small but growing number of citizens raised questions about radioactive fallout from above-ground bomb tests.
  4. By the late 1950s, public concern over nuclear testing had become a high-profile issue, and new antinuclear groups such as SANE (the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy) and Physicians for Social Responsibility called for an international test ban.
  5. In an age of anxiety, Americans yearned for a reaffirmation of faith. Church membership jumped from 49 percent of the population in 1940 to 70 percent in 1960.

People flocked especially into the evangelical Protestant denominations, which benefited from a remarkable new crop of preachers. Most notable was the young Reverend Billy Graham, who made brilliant use of television, radio, and advertising to spread the Gospel.

6. The resurgence of religion, despite its evangelical bent, had a distinctly moderate tone. An ecumenical movement bringing Catholics, Protestants, and Jews together flourished, and so did a concern for the here and now.

#### C. Consumer Culture

1. In some respects, postwar consumerism seemed like a return to the 1920s—an abundance of new gadgets and appliances, more leisure time, the craze for automobiles, and new types of mass media. Yet there was a significant difference. In the 1950s, consumption became associated with citizenship. Buying things, once a sign of personal indulgence, now meant fully participating in American society and, moreover, fulfilling a social responsibility.
2. As in the past, product makers sought to stimulate consumer demand through aggressive advertising. More money was spent in 1951 on advertising (\$6.5 billion) than on primary and secondary education (\$5 billion).
3. Advertising heavily promoted the appliances that began to fill the suburban kitchen, many of them unavailable during the war, others new to the postwar market. In 1946 automatic washing machines replaced the old machines with hand-cranked wringers, and clothes dryers also came on the market.
4. TV's leap to cultural prominence was swift and overpowering. There were only 7,000 sets in American homes in 1947, yet a year later the CBS and NBC radio networks began offering regular programming, and by 1950 Americans owned 7.3 million TV sets. Ten years later, 87 percent of American homes had at least one television set.
5. What Americans saw on television, besides the omnipresent commercials, was an overwhelmingly white, Anglo-Saxon world of nuclear families, suburban homes, and middle-class life.

#### D. The Baby Boom

1. The baby boom era increased the size of American families. Two things were note-

worthy about American families after World War II. First, marriages were remarkably stable. Not until the mid-1960s did the divorce rate begin to rise sharply. Second, married couples were intent on having babies. After a century and a half of decline, the birth rate shot up: more babies were born between 1948 and 1953 than were born in the previous thirty years.

2. To keep all those baby-boom children healthy and happy, middle-class parents increasingly relied on the advice of experts. Dr. Benjamin Spock's best-selling *Baby and Child Care* sold a million copies a year after its publication in 1946. Spock urged mothers to abandon the rigid feeding and baby care schedules of an earlier generation.
3. The baby boom had a vast impact on American society. All those babies fueled the economy as families bought food, diapers, toys, and clothing for their expanding broods. The nation's educational system also got a boost. The new middle class, America's first college-educated generation, placed a high value on education. Suburban parents approved 90 percent of proposed school bond issues during the 1950s.

#### E. Contradictions in Women's Lives

1. Parents of baby boomers were expected to adhere to rigid gender roles as a way of maintaining the family and undergirding the social order.
2. Men were expected to conform to an ideal that emphasized their role as responsible breadwinners, while women were advised that their proper place was in the home.
3. Endorsing what Betty Friedan called the "feminine mystique"—the ideal that "the highest value and the only commitment for women is the fulfillment of their own femininity"—psychologists pronounced motherhood the only "normal" female sex role and berated mothers who worked outside the home.
4. Many working-class women embraced their new roles as housewives, while at the height of the postwar period more than a third of women held jobs outside the home and coincided with a dramatic rise in the number of older, married, middle-class women who took jobs.
5. Women justified their jobs as an extension of their family responsibilities, enabling

their families to enjoy more of the fruits of the consumer culture.

6. Working women still bore full responsibility for child care and household management, allowing families and society to avoid facing the social implications of women's new roles, departing significantly from the cultural stereotypes.

#### F. Youth Culture

1. The emergence of a mass youth culture had its roots in the democratization of education and the increasing purchasing power of teenagers.
2. America's youth were eager to escape suburban conformity, and they became a distinct new market that advertisers eagerly exploited.
3. What really defined this generation's youth culture was its music; the rock-and-roll that teens were attracted to in the 1950s was seen by white adults as an invitation to race-mixing, sexual promiscuity, and juvenile delinquency.

#### G. Cultural Dissenters

1. Postwar artists, musicians, and writers expressed their alienation from mainstream society through intensely personal, introspective art forms.
2. Jackson Pollock and other painters rejected the social realism of the 1930s for an unconventional style that became known as abstract expressionism, which captured the chaotic atmosphere of the nuclear age.
3. A similar trend developed in jazz, as black musicians originated a hard-driving improvisational style known as "bebop."
4. The Beats were a group of writers and poets who were both literary innovators and outspoken social critics of middle-class conformity, corporate capitalism, and suburban materialism; they inspired a new generation of rebels in the 1960s.

### III. The Other America

#### A. Immigrants and Migrants

1. With jobs and financial resources flowing to the suburbs, urban newcomers inherited a declining economy and a decaying environment—the "Other America."
2. The War Brides Act, the Displaced Persons Act, the McCarran-Walter Act, and the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act all helped to create an influx of immigrants into American cities.

3. The federal government welcomed Mexican labor under its *bracero* program but deported those who stayed illegally; 4 million Mexicans were deported during "Operation Wetback."
4. Residents of Puerto Rico had been American citizens since 1917, so they were not subject to immigration laws; they became America's first group to immigrate by air.
5. Cuban refugees were the third largest group of Spanish-speaking immigrants; the Cuban refugee community turned Miami into a cosmopolitan, bilingual city almost overnight.
6. Internal migration from rural areas brought large numbers of people to the cities, especially African Americans, after the introduction of innovations like the mechanical cotton-picker, which reduced southern demand for labor.
7. By 1960, about half of the nation's black population was living outside the South, compared with only 23 percent before World War II.
8. After the 1953 "Termination" programs, many Indians settled together in poor urban neighborhoods alongside other nonwhite groups; many found it difficult to adjust to an urban environment and culture.

#### B. The Urban Crisis

1. Between 1950 and 1960, the nation's twelve largest cities lost 3.6 million whites and gained 4.5 million nonwhites.
2. As affluent whites left the cities, urban tax revenues shrank, leading to the decay of services and infrastructure; growing racial fears accelerated "white flight" to the suburbs in the 1960s.
3. In the inner cities, housing continued to be a crucial problem; urban renewal produced grim high-rise housing projects that destroyed community bonds and created anonymous open areas that were vulnerable to crime.
4. Postwar urban areas increasingly became places of last resort for America's poor; once there, they faced unemployment, racial hostilities, and institutional barriers to mobility.
5. Two separate Americas emerged: a largely white society in suburbs and an inner city populated by blacks, Latinos, and other disadvantaged groups.

6. In the turbulent decade to come, the contrast between suburban affluence and the “other America” would spawn growing demands for social change that the nation’s leaders in the 1960s could not ignore.
- C. The Emerging Civil Rights Struggle
1. In the South, segregation prevailed after World War II. In most southern states, blacks could not eat in restaurants patronized by whites or use the same waiting rooms and toilets at bus stations. All forms of public transportation were rigidly segregated by custom or by law. Even drinking fountains were labeled “White” and “Colored.”
  2. The battle against racial injustice, as it took shape after World War II, proceeded on two tracks—on the ground, where blacks began to stand up for their rights, and in the courts and corridors of power, where words sometimes mattered more than action.
  3. During World War II, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) redoubled its efforts to combat discrimination in housing, transportation, and other areas. Black demands for justice continued into the postwar years, spurred by symbolic victories, as when Jackie Robinson broke through the color barrier in major league baseball by joining the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947.
  4. African American leaders also had hopes for President Truman. Although capable of racist language, Truman supported civil rights on moral grounds. He understood, moreover, the growing importance of the black vote in key northern states, a fact driven home by his surprise 1948 victory. Truman also worried about America’s image abroad. It didn’t help that the Soviet Union often compared the South’s treatment of blacks with the Nazis’ treatment of the Jews.
  5. Lacking support in Congress, Truman turned to executive action. In 1946 he appointed a National Civil Rights Commission, whose 1947 report called for robust federal action on behalf of civil rights. In 1948, under pressure from A. Phillip Randolph’s Committee against Jim Crow in Military Service, Truman signed an executive order desegregating the armed forces.
  6. With Dwight Eisenhower as president, civil rights no longer had a champion in the White House. In the meantime, however, NAACP lawyers Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie had been preparing the legal ground in a series of test cases challenging racial discrimination, and in 1954 they hit pay dirt.
  7. A landmark civil rights case, the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision involved Linda Brown, a black pupil in Topeka, Kansas, who had been forced to attend a distant segregated school rather than the nearby white elementary school. The NAACP’s chief counsel, Thurgood Marshall, argued that such segregation, mandated by the Topeka Board of Education, was unconstitutional because it denied Linda Brown the “equal protection of the laws” guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.
  8. In a unanimous decision on May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court agreed, overturning the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson*.
  9. In the South, however, the call went out for “massive resistance.” A Southern Manifesto signed in 1956 by 101 members of Congress denounced the *Brown* decision as “a clear abuse of judicial power” and encouraged their constituents to defy it. That year 500,000 southerners joined White Citizens’ Councils dedicated to blocking school integration. Some whites revived the old tactics of violence and intimidation, swelling the ranks of the Ku Klux Klan to levels not seen since the 1920s.
  10. President Eisenhower accepted the *Brown* decision as the law of the land, but he thought it was a mistake and was not happy about committing federal power to enforce it.
  11. A crisis in Little Rock, Arkansas, finally forced his hand. In September 1957, nine black students attempted to enroll at the all-white Central High School. Governor Orval Faubus called out the National Guard to bar them. Then the mob took over. Every day the nine students had to run a gauntlet of angry whites chanting “Go back to the jungle.” As the vicious scenes played out on television night after night, Eisenhower acted. He sent 1,000 federal troops to Little Rock and nationalized the Arkansas National Guard, ordering them to protect the black students.

Eisenhower thus became the first president since Reconstruction to use federal troops to enforce the rights of blacks.

12. The *Brown* decision validated the NAACP's legal strategy, but white resistance also revealed that winning in court was not enough. Prompted by one small act of defiance, southern black leaders embraced nonviolent protest.
13. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks, a seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama, refused to give up her seat on a city bus to a white man. She was arrested and charged with violating a local segregation ordinance.
14. Once the die was cast, the black community turned for leadership to the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., the recently appointed pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Street Baptist Church. The son of a prominent black minister in Atlanta, King embraced the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, whose campaigns of passive resistance had led to India's independence from Britain in 1947. After Rosa Parks's arrest, King endorsed a plan by a local black women's organization to boycott Montgomery's bus system until it was integrated.
15. The Montgomery bus boycott catapulted King to national prominence. In 1957, along with the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, he founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), based in Atlanta. The black church, long the center of African American social and cultural life, now lent its moral and organizational strength to the civil rights movement.
16. The battle for civil rights entered a new phase in Greensboro, North Carolina, on February 1, 1960, when four black college students took seats at the "whites-only" lunch counter at the local Woolworth's. They were determined to "sit in" until they were served. Although they were arrested, the sit-in tactic worked—the Woolworth lunch counter was desegregated—and sit-ins quickly spread to other southern cities.
17. The victories so far had been limited, but the groundwork was laid for a civil rights offensive that would transform the nation's race relations.

of properties to classes of the population considered "undesirable," such as African Americans, Jews, or Asians. Such clauses were declared unenforceable by the Supreme Court decision in *Shelley v. Kraemer* (1948) but continued to be instituted informally despite the ruling. (838)

### Lecture Strategies

1. Compose a lecture focusing on the shift in the economy from producing goods to providing services and what that change meant for the labor force and for organized labor in particular. What factors went into creating this shift? Note that women and ethnic minorities occupy the lowest rungs of the service economy. Describe the way in which high-wage blue-collar work was replaced by low-wage white-collar and service jobs, and explain why it drove more women into the workplace.
2. Create a lecture analyzing the impact of suburbanization on American cities. Students should see the ways in which federal financing of home mortgages and highway construction spurred the growth of suburbs at the expense of inner-city renewal, often at a high cost to minorities. The example of the Levittown developments can help to illustrate this process.
3. Write a lecture focusing on aspects of contemporary urban life and the federal policies of the 1945 to 1965 period that helped to create cities that were increasingly inhabited by the poor. The process of urban renewal and patterns of racial discrimination tended to force African Americans and other nonwhite ethnic minorities into dense and racially isolated sections of older cities.
4. Changes in U.S. immigration laws and shifts in patterns of external and internal migration began to change the demographic profile of the American population. Write a lecture examining the process by which an increasing number of Spanish-speaking groups came to reside in certain urban areas at the same time that the cities were experiencing a decline in services and infrastructure. Students should see how the loss of entry-level unskilled employment in the inner cities affected the prospects of the urban poor.
5. Students need to have a clear picture of the depth and breadth of racial segregation in the South before the civil rights movement. Write a lecture focusing on the impact of racial segregation on black self-esteem, as well as its economic, political, and social effects. Daily annoyances involving terms of address, treatment in commercial establishments

### Key Term

**restrictive covenant** Limiting clauses in real estate transactions intended to prevent the sale or rental

and at lunch counters, and the lack of “colored” toilet facilities should be pointed out. The implications of school segregation should be explored.

6. The role of television in the 1950s should be explored so that students can see its importance in fostering the consumer culture and forming images of the “typical” American family. Write a lecture analyzing the impact of TV and the elements of American life that were not visible on the screen, as well as the ones that were. The implications of mass media as commercial enterprises need to be discussed. What did it mean when TV programming was described as “a vast wasteland”?
7. Much has been made of the baby boom that occurred in the period after World War II. Write a lecture that answers the following questions: What factors contributed to this development? How did this phenomenon change the childrearing practices of the period? What new or expanding occupations relied on this development? What were the implications of this demographic shift for the lives of women and adolescents?

### Reviewing the Text

These questions are from the textbook and follow each main section of the narrative. They are provided in the Computerized Test Bank with suggested responses, for your convenience.

#### *Economic Powerhouse (pp. 832–837)*

1. In what ways is the prosperity of the 1950s explained by the Cold War?
  - Tensions of the Cold War were fed by an increase in military spending to increase the size of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. An increase in military spending put more people to work at higher paying jobs, fueling prosperity of the 1950s.
2. Why is “the man in the gray flannel suit” the representative businessman of the 1950s?
  - University educated, he emphasized conformity, professionalism, loyalty, sacrifice, a heightened sense of the importance of organization, and continual absence from home to serve business needs.
3. What do we mean by the “labor-management accord”?
  - Labor-management accord refers to the new relationship between labor and capital formed

during the 1930s that led to a rise in power by unions during the post-war period.

- A general acceptance of collective bargaining on the part of management was achieved without the stop of strikes and other labor activities. The result for workers was a rise in income, an increase in the social safety net, and an increase in leisure.

#### *The Affluent Society (pp. 837–849)*

1. In what ways does the growth of the Sun Belt reflect key themes of the suburban explosion?
  - The widespread and abundant land of the Sun Belt facilitated suburban growth, as did the surging population of the Sun Belt from World War II defense industry growth.
  - Increasing demands for energy and water by suburban growth created environmental and health problems. So did the increase of car congestion that fed pollution.
2. What was the relationship between consumer culture and the emphasis on family life in the postwar era?
  - Buying more things put more people to work, including the head of the family. Buying more things also offered more leisure time for families to enjoy. An emphasis on social conformity by parents was also fed by an increase in consumer culture during the 1950s.
3. Is it correct to say that the 1950s was exclusively a time of cultural conformity?
  - Dissenters did arise during the decade, including the rebellion of youth personified by the Beat generation and the rise of rock and roll through Elvis Presley. Artists, writers, and musicians expressed alienation from the conformity theme of American society in their work.

#### *The Other America (pp. 849–858)*

1. What were the most significant migration trends in this era?
  - Important migrations included Latinos from Mexico, Cuba and Puerto Rico; Native Americans moving from rural reservations to urban areas; and blacks continued migration to urban southern regions as part of the Great Migration that began before World War II.
2. What were the key components of the urban crisis?

- Contraction of manufacturing sector in favor of service industry, increase of population, increase of poverty, increase of urban renewal, increase of anti-black and racist sentiment towards incoming urban immigrants, white flight to the suburbs, and a general decay of urban infrastructure.
3. What is the significance of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision?
    - This law overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1894 that legalized “separate but equal” and struck down legal segregation in public education. *Brown* essentially made integration a federal mission.

### Chapter Writing Assignments

These questions appear at the end of Chapter 27 in the textbook. They are provided in the Computerized Test Bank with suggested responses, for your convenience.

1. How do you account for the economic prosperity of the postwar era?
  - Victory by the United States during World War II made the United States the most powerful nation in 1945, the absence of devastation at home compared to Europe saved Americans from a lengthy postwar recovery, the increase in population fed by the end of the war provided more workers for American industry, and the rise of the military-industrial complex increased manufacturing efficiency and the rise of cheaper consumer goods.
2. Why did the suburb achieve paramount significance for Americans in the 1950s?
  - With the surge in U.S. population figures during the “baby boom” era, suburbs grew in number and size. The suburbs absorbed the new population and emphasized cultural conformity through material consumption and competition between families for displays of status. The suburb became the primary experience through which the white middle class interpreted a new American identity, one based on material conformity and competition.
3. Who were the people who occupied “the Other America”? Why were they there rather than in mainstream America?
  - The other America included immigrants from Latin America, internally colonized ethnic minorities, working-class whites, and dissenters in music, art, and literature who felt that the white middle-class suburban ideal of conspicuous consumption and conformity did not meet the needs or realities of poor nonwhites and cultural critics. They inherited a declining economy and a decaying environment in urban America. Their nonwhite, non–middle-class, and non-conformist values placed them outside of mainstream America.

### Class Discussion Starters

#### 1. What were some signs of the new affluence in American society after World War II?

*Possible answers*

- a. The GNP more than doubled between 1945 and 1960.
- b. The wages and benefits of blue-collar workers rose.
- c. Many people were able to build new homes in the suburbs.
- d. There was a rapid increase in consumer spending.
- e. More young people were able to attend college.
- f. Automobile ownership became a status symbol in popular culture.

#### 2. How did automobile ownership affect American culture after World War II?

*Possible answers*

- a. Automobiles were essential to suburban growth.
- b. Automobiles became symbols of status and wealth.
- c. Construction of highways expanded rapidly, notably the interstate highway system.
- d. The development of the Sun Belt states proceeded at a rapid pace as automobiles made travel accessible and the transportation of goods and services easier.

#### 3. What important changes in the world of work began to appear in the 1950s?

*Possible answers*

- a. The labor force began to shift from blue-collar to white-collar employment.
- b. The economy began to shift from industrial to service oriented.

- c. The increasing availability of higher education led to the emergence of a new managerial class.
  - d. Women and minorities were drawn into low-paying, dead-end service occupations.
  - e. The rising productivity of agribusiness led to a decline in the number of agricultural workers.
4. **What factors contributed to the demographic changes that took place during the postwar years?**

*Possible answers*

- a. The shift in the industrial economy from the Northeast and Midwest to the Sun Belt led to a similar shift in the population.
  - b. Federal support for low-cost mortgages and highway construction led to the expansion of the suburbs.
  - c. New patterns of external and internal migration increased the concentration of the poor in declining inner cities.
  - d. Urban renewal in the older cities led to the isolation of nonwhite minorities.
  - e. The rising birthrate and declining death rate caused a baby boom in the early 1950s.
5. **What was the relationship between the advent of television and the rise of consumer culture?**

*Possible answers*

- a. By 1960, the majority of American families had television sets, so advertising on television helped to create a common mass-consumer market.
  - b. The depictions of ideal family settings in television programming enticed viewers to purchase similar items and to behave in similar ways, so as to be like the characters on the screen.
  - c. Glimpses of exotic domestic and foreign locations on the screen helped to alter the vacation patterns of the population, leading to increased spending on leisure.
6. **What impact did the baby boom have on the lives of women?**

*Possible answers*

- a. The existence of a “feminine mystique” led many educated women to forsake careers in order to focus on motherhood.

- b. To afford the family lifestyle called for by the consumer culture, more middle-class women entered the labor force.
- c. Because more married women with children were employed, many of them found themselves with two full-time jobs: one in the workplace and one at home.
- d. Many poor and minority-group women found their lives further constricted by the demands of trying to maintain an adequate standard of living for their larger families.

7. **Why, during this time of unprecedented affluence, did so many Americans remain impoverished?**

*Possible answers*

- a. Many agricultural workers of all races were displaced by the rise of agribusiness and often ended up in urban ghettos.
- b. The decline of blue-collar employment in the Northeast and Midwest left many workers unemployed.
- c. Long-existing pockets of rural poverty in Appalachia and the South were untouched by the affluence of the period.
- d. The movement of employment opportunities from the cities to the suburbs led to an increase in joblessness and poverty within cities.
- e. African Americans and other nonwhite minority groups continued to experience racial discrimination in housing and employment, which made it difficult to overcome poverty.
- f. Many people employed in the growing low-wage service sector of the economy were unable to earn enough to escape from poverty.

### Classroom Activity

1. Create the conditions for an in-class debate about the issues of conformity and nonconformity during the 1950s. Students’ interests could be used as a focal point—such as music—to discuss the “Other America” and its views of mainstream culture of the 1950s. The goal is for students to more deeply understand the conflicting values of the era and why so many young people of the 1950s became the hippies of the late 1960s.

## Oral History Exercise

- Ask students to find someone who lived during the 1950s, preferably a baby boomer, to interview regarding their early life. After assisting students develop a list of questions, focus the interviews around the basic issue of values and events experienced during the era. Be sure to steer them toward discovering how these individuals responded to conformity at the cultural and personal level during the 1960s as well.

## Working with Documents

### COMPARING AMERICAN VOICES

#### Challenging White Supremacy (p. 856)

1. McCain took a stand on segregated lunch counters. McFerren took a stand on the right to vote. Why did they choose different targets? Does it matter that they did?
  - They chose different targets because the civil rights movement was complex, and McCain was an urban student interested in social equality, whereas McFerren was an older and rural property owner who wanted equality in the political process and business world.
  - Their choices represent the various strategies undertaken by different interest groups during the civil rights movement.
2. McCain speaks of the sense of “manhood” he felt as he sat at that Woolworth’s counter. Would that feeling have been enough to satisfy McFerren?
  - McFerren wants more than just to feel like a man in terms of social equality. He realized that only with equality at the voting booth and in business affairs could violence and social discrimination decrease toward African Americans.
3. Almost certainly, McCain and McFerren never met. Suppose they had. What would they have had in common? Would what they had in common have been more important than what separated them?
  - They would share more in common than they had differences, including the general battle to win the civil rights movement, an understanding of black culture and racism, the desire for social equality, access to the ballot box, economic equality, and the willingness to put their lives on the line to achieve freedom and equality in the present day.

4. McCain speaks knowingly of the figures and ideas that influenced him. Why do you suppose McFerren is silent about such matters? If he had spoken up, do you suppose he would have—or should have—mentioned Booker T. Washington (see Chapter 20)?
  - McFerren is from an older and more rural generation of blacks, influenced by the depression and World War II, during which most minorities were fearful of resisting discrimination for fear of KKK reprisal.
  - Booker T. Washington, the black leader who emphasized economic and political equality before achieving social equality, would be a natural inspiration to this man.

### VOICES FROM ABROAD

#### Hanoch Bartov:

#### Everyone Has a Car (p. 840)

1. From Bartov’s observations, what are the pluses and minuses of America’s car culture? In what ways was the automobile changing American society?
  - Minuses include no incentive to develop public transportation, the growth of suburbia, a stretched-out city that requires long-distance travel and more commuting, and more cars on the road.
  - Pluses include freedom and independence to travel great distances and visit places.
2. Why did Bartov find owning a car was necessary, especially in southern California?
  - Great distances to public institutions required a car, as public transportation was minimal and unpredictable.
3. Everyone, of course, didn’t have a car. Who, according to Bartov, used public transportation?
  - The city’s poorest and neediest residents, including the elderly. People who essentially were too poor or no longer able to own a car owing to health or age reasons.

### Reading American Pictures

#### *The Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement (p. 854)*

1. How has the artist’s drawing for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* depicted Little Rock segregationists? Are they the kind of people that the car-

toonist thinks should be representing America before the world?

- The artist depicted segregationists as playing into the hands of Communist propagandists, who were arguing that the U.S. system of democracy was hollow owing to exploitation of African American people.
  - Segregationists are not the kind of people whom the artist wanted to advertise American values to the world.
2. Why do you suppose the *Oakland Tribune's* artist omitted African Americans and depicted the crisis as a battle between two groups of whites? Why is "The Whole Wide World" paying such close attention?
- The artist left out blacks because the Little Rock battle was really between moderate and conservative whites in the decision to allow blacks to attend Little Rock High School.
  - The whole world was watching owing to the contradictions of segregation in American democratic society, television footage showcasing the event to foreign audiences, and the fact that the esteemed U.S. Supreme Court had desegregated public schools in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.
3. Do both cartoons convey the same message, or do they suggest different perspectives on the issue?
- The cartoons reflect a similar perspective: The tensions surrounding the Little Rock integration divided the southern white community and provided negative publicity for the United States.
4. As historical evidence, how useful do you think these cartoons are at explaining why Americans began to take the civil rights struggle seriously in the 1950s?
- The cartoons are quite useful though limited in some respects. They do demonstrate that whites were becoming increasingly interested in a black movement for social equality. They also show how the issue had clearly begun to divide the white community, owing in part to communism and world opinion.

## Electronic Media

### Web Sites

- *Civil Rights Oral History Interviews: Spokane, Washington*  
<http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/holland/masc/xcivilrights.html>  
This site is a civil rights oral history project organized around the memories of men and women from Spokane, Washington.
- *The African American Odyssey: A Quest for Full Citizenship*  
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohhtml/exhibit/aointro.html>  
This Library of Congress exhibit explores black America's quest for political, social, and economic equality from slavery through the mid-twentieth century.
- *Central High Crisis: Little Rock, 1957*  
<http://www.ardemgaz.com/prev/central>  
A collection of newspaper articles and photographs from two Arkansas newspapers covering the crisis in Little Rock.

### Films

- *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Movement 1954–1985* Parts 1–6 (1987, PBS Television Series, 8 hours)  
Directed by Henry Hampton, this miniseries documentary is perhaps the best general overview of the civil rights movement.
- *Rebel without a Cause* (1955, Warner Bros. Pictures, 120 min)  
Starring James Dean, this classic film examines the issue of conformity and nonconformity within the youth culture of the 1950s.
- *On the Waterfront* (1954, Columbia Pictures, 120 min)  
Starring Marlon Brando, this film sheds light on the issue of dissent against the government that captivated American public attention during the era of the "Great Fear" over Communism.

### Literature

- John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998)  
The classic text on the growth of prosperity among postwar Americans.

## Additional Bedford/St. Martin's Resources for Chapter 27

### FOR INSTRUCTORS

#### Transparencies

The following maps and images from Chapter 27 are available as full-color acetates:

- Life in the Suburbs
- Map 27.1 Shifting Population Patterns, 1950–1980
- Map 27.2 Connecting the Nation: The Interstate Highway System, 1930 and 1970
- “Careful, the Walls Have Ears”
- “Right into Their Hands”

#### Instructor's Resource CD-ROM

The following maps, figures, and images from Chapter 27, as well as a chapter outline, are available on disc in both PowerPoint and jpeg formats:

- Map 27.1 Shifting Population Patterns, 1950–1980
- Map 27.2 Connecting the Nation: The Interstate Highway System, 1930 and 1970
- Figure 27.1 Gross Domestic Product, 1930–1972
- Figure 27.2 Labor Union Strength, 1900–1997
- Figure 27.3 The American Birthrate, 1860–1980
- Figure 27.4 Legal Immigration to the United States by Region, 1931–1984
- Life in the Suburbs
- “Careful, the Walls Have Ears”
- “Right into Their Hands”

#### Using the Bedford Series with *America's History*, Sixth Edition

Available online at [bedfordstmartins.com/usingseries](http://bedfordstmartins.com/usingseries), this guide offers practical suggestions for incorporating volumes from the Bedford Series in History and Culture into the U.S. History Survey. Relevant titles for Chapter 27 include

- *The Movements of the New Left, 1950–1975: A Brief History with Documents*, by Van Gosse, Franklin and Marshall College
- *American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Vance Packard's THE STATUS SEEKERS*, Edited with an Introduction by Daniel Horowitz, Smith College
- *Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and the Civil Rights Struggle of the 1950s and 1960s: A Brief History with Documents*, by David Howard-Pitney, De Anza College

- *TO SECURE THESE RIGHTS: The Report of Harry S. Truman's Committee on Civil Rights*, Edited with an Introduction by Steven F. Lawson, Rutgers University
- *BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION: A Brief History with Documents*, by Waldo E. Martin Jr., University of California, Berkeley
- *U.S. Environmentalism since 1945: A Brief History with Documents*, by Steven Stoll, Yale University
- *The Rise of Conservatism in America, 1945–2000: A Brief History with Documents*, by Ronald Story, University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and Bruce Laurie, University of Massachusetts-Amherst
- *Women's Magazines, 1940–1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press*, Edited with an Introduction by Nancy A. Walker, Vanderbilt University

### FOR STUDENTS

#### Documents to Accompany *America's History*

The following documents and illustrations are available in Chapter 27 of the companion reader by Kevin J. Fernlund, *University of Missouri–St. Louis*:

1. George M. Humphrey, The Interstate Highway System (1955)
2. Herbert Block, “Let’s See, Now—Where Can We Raise More Taxes?” (1953)
3. Help Wanted—Women (1957)
4. Green Acres (1950)
5. Neil Morgan, The Footloose Migration (1961)
6. Carey McWilliams, *North from Mexico* (1949)
7. Herbert Gans, Boston’s West Enders (1962)
8. What Does Chicago’s Renewal Program Mean? (1963)
9. Michael Harrington, *The Other America* (1962)

#### Online Study Guide at [bedfordstmartins.com/henretta](http://bedfordstmartins.com/henretta)

The Online Study Guide helps students synthesize the material from the text as well as practice the skills historians use to make sense of the past. The following visual and documents activities are available for Chapter 27:

#### Visual Activity

- Reading American Pictures: *The Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement*

#### Reading Historical Documents Activities

- Comparing American Voices: *Challenging White Supremacy*
- Voices from Abroad: Hanoach Bartov: *Everyone Has a Car*

### **Critical Thinking Modules at [bedfordstmartins.com/historymodules](http://bedfordstmartins.com/historymodules)**

These online modules invite students to interpret maps and audio, visual, and textual sources centered on events covered in the U.S. History Survey. The relevant module for Chapter 27 is

- The Rise of the Republican Party in the Sunbelt and the South, 1960–1980