

Printable Teaching Guide

A Day in the Life – A Young Person’s Life in the 1950s

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about a young person’s life in the 1950s.
- Discuss how life in the 1950s was similar to and different from life today.
- Choose one fad or trend from the 1950s. Write a paragraph comparing it to a similar fad or trend today.

Brief Description of Internet Site

The *FiftiesWeb* website provides information about life in America during the 1950s.

Build Background

- Explain to students that life changed in Missouri after World War II. Factories that had been used during the war to make airplanes and tanks started to make cars, televisions, and home appliances. The 1950s began a time of “fads,” trends or activities that were popular for a short period of time. Ask: *What fads became popular during the 1950s?* (Pogo stick, drive-in restaurant, hula-hoop, 3-D movies, popular culture clothing, suburbs)
- Tell students the hula-hoop became part of an enormously popular pastime for young people in the 1950s. Two toymakers from California met with huge success when they developed millions of these toys. Ask: *How does a hula-hoop work?* (A person tries to keep the hoop moving around his or her waist by moving his or her hips.)
- Tell students that popular culture began to change in the 1950s, and clothing for both boys and girls reflected these changes. An important trend was blue jeans. Ask: *How did boys and girls dress in the 1950s?* (Boys had short hair and wore skinny ties, patterned shirts, and long cardigan sweaters. Girls wore cotton dresses or full skirts with a blouse or cardigan sweater. Saddle shoes and penny loafers, worn with bobby socks, were common for girls.)
- Tell students that new highways helped America’s cities spread into residential communities called suburbs. Ask: *What were suburbs in the 1950s like?* (New homes sprang up in record numbers for the families of soldiers who had returned from the war. Standardization led to uniformity of towns across the country. Many cities were now surrounded by neighborhoods of houses that all looked similar.)

Teach

What to do:

- Connect to: <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/hula-hoops.htm>
- Read about hula hoops during the 1950s. Ask: *Where did the name hula hoop come from?* (The name “hula hoop” came from the Hawaiian dance hula hoop users seemed to imitate.)
- Select Coonskin Caps and read about this popular fad of the 1950s. Ask: *What historical figure pioneered the Coonskin Cap trend?* (Davy Crockett)
- Select 3-D Movies. Read about 3-D movies during the 1950s and look at the pictures. Ask: *What movie started the 3-D fad of the 1950s?* (Bwana Devil)

Close

- Have students discuss what they learned about a young person's life in the 1950s.
- Have students choose one fad or trend from the 1950s. Then have them write a paragraph comparing it to a similar fad or trend today. Have them find photographs of both fads to paste alongside their paragraphs.