

# The Good Old Days: a 1950s Issues Portfolio

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## Introduction

The number of social issues facing Americans today seems overwhelming. “Whatever happened to the good old days?” is an observation that has become cliché. What do people mean when they say, “the good old days?” When were they? Why were they good? Can we get them back? Do we really want them back? Were those days really so good? Seeking the answers to these questions is a challenging and interesting quest. Young people today have the impression that life in “the good old days” was so much more predictable and allowed for success far more often than it does today. As they are grappling with problems of growing up, they are also beginning to realize that politics, the justice system, the media, gender roles, human rights and personal privileges are issues that they must begin to make decisions about. Everyone wants to make the decisions that create “good old days” in the present. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to take a look at the issues of “the good old days” in order to make educated judgements about the issues facing Americans today.

While “the good old days” could refer to any number of eras, one certainly could make a good case for the 1950s. The 1950s is popularly thought of as a time of uniformity and conformity, also a time when life was good. The war was over; the economy was booming, and wonderful *Ozzie and Harriet* type families prevailed. But the fifties was much more complex than these observations suggest. Indeed, a lot of the romanticized, nostalgic impressions of that era are rooted in myth. While it was a time of unusual prosperity and the prevalence of the nuclear family with a stay-at-home mom, the story does not end there. There was also widespread poverty and many women were not happy about being limited to the role of housewife. This decade was also home to McCarthyism, fear of the atomic bomb, and the rise of the civil rights movement. Many Americans were not happy with traditional roles. Minorities were beginning to collectively and actively protest injustices. The cry for greater attention to human rights at home became louder, and the availability of television provided a new dimension for experiencing what was going on in the country and the world.

A look at the historical facts and issues of the fifties serves to debunk the myth that the fifties was a golden age for all. This is the decade that saw *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka Kansas* in 1954 and the brutal murder of 14 year old Emmett Till in 1955 and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Even the arrival of television did not produce the focus for warm family gatherings that we seem to associate with the fifties. The impact of television was multifaceted. According to Lynn Spigel’s book, *Make Room for TV*, “Television was supposed to bring the family together but still allow for social and sexual divisions in the home.” (37) However, what television delivered was not that cut and dry. It became a new conduit of truth, stereotypes and lies. Very few ethnic shows such as *The Goldbergs* appeared along with the traditional sitcoms like *Father Knows*

*Best, The Donna Reed Show and Leave It to Beaver.* Historian, Ella Taylor, said, “real life was not so white as it was on television. Television completely ignored cultural diversity.” (Coontz 30) There was *The Ed Sullivan Show* that showcased the controversial teen heart-throb, Elvis Presley and the quiz shows where fraud was uncovered. Controversy surrounded all aspects of television. Indeed, as Spigel points out, “the ideal of family togetherness that television came to signify was like all cultural fantasies, accompanied by repressed anxieties.” (45) However, as Horace Newcomb points out in *The Other Fifties*, “the psychic, idealogical, social and cultural landscapes of America were profoundly altered by the new medium in the fifties, but we are probably no worse and perhaps better off, for it.” (123)

The families of the fifties were not as perfect as we seem to give them credit for. According to Elaine Tyler May, families of the fifties looked to marriage, parenthood and traditional gender roles for security. The historical circumstances of the times lead to this trend. The cold war and anticommunist hysteria fueled by McCarthyism, which sought out enemies inside, not outside of American society, encouraged individuals to create a predictable world for themselves where they could be safe.

The fifties also produced the “original teenagers,” a source of rebellion that does not support the idea that the fifties were calm and harmonious on all levels. Even though teens had always been around, the fifties defined, analyzed and tried to make sense of this stage between childhood and adulthood. The time period right before and during the baby boom era reflects a marked rise in birth rate. Therefore, “in density alone, the massive teenage presence was something of a statistical anomaly,” Thomas Doherty states in *Teenagers and Teenpics: the Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. (45) Teenagers became targets for many markets: fashion, music, movies, food and literature to name a few. Juvenile delinquency was born and special laws were created. Psychologists, psychiatrists and counselors came up with a plethora of studies and advice to explain and cope with adolescents.

While teens were often rebellious, other rebels came on to the 1950s scene. These included the hipster and the beats. A Hipster, according to Norman Mailer in *Advertisements for Myself*, is an “American existentialist....It is a particular part of a generation that was attracted to what the Negro had to offer.... The bohemian and the juvenile delinquent came face-to-face with the Negro, and the hipster was a fact in American life.” (339, 340) Mailer went on to describe the hipster by saying, “So there was a new breed of adventurers, urban adventurers who drifted out at night looking for action with a black man’s code to fit their facts. The hipster had absorbed the existentialist synapses of the Negro, and for practical purposes could be considered a white Negro.” (341). The beats also sought to distance themselves from the mainstream. They were represented by poets such as Allen Ginsberg who used his writing to express his discontent. The beats frequented coffee houses to share their views and opposition to the establishment. They used outward symbols such as clothes, mannerisms, music and meeting places to voice their dislike of the system.

While the fifties was indeed a time of prosperity, poverty was still an issue. In *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, Michael Harrington says of the 1950s poor, “The millions who are poor in the United States tend to become increasingly invisible. Here is a great mass of people, yet it takes an effort of the intellect and will even to see them.” (2) His observations could certainly have been written about today’s society. Harrington further expounds his point when he says, “they exist within the most powerful and rich society the world has ever known. their misery has continued while the majority of the nation talked of itself as being ‘affluent’ and worried about neuroses in the suburbs.” (184)

Another issue is gender roles. Stephanie Coontz says in her book, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*, that “The happy, homogeneous families that we ‘remember’ from the 1950s were partially a result of the media’s denial of diversity” Coontz says that ‘women’s retreat to housewifery, for example, was in many cases not freely chosen.” (31) During the war many women held jobs, and they did not want to give them up when the war was over. “In 1952 there were two-million more wives at work than at the peak of wartime production. The jobs available to these women, however, lacked the pay and the challenges that had made wartime work so satisfying, encouraging women to define themselves in terms of home and family even when they were working,” (Coontz 31)

Certainly the idea of America at war is scary. The United States is constantly on the verge of entering conflicts somewhere. There are many disturbing issues surrounding the United States’ behavior during World War II. Did Americans really want to enter the war? If this fight was against an “unspeakable evil, Hitler’s Germany,” why were Americans not mindful of human rights here at home? As Howard Zinn asks in *A People’s History of the United States*, “would postwar America, in its policies at home and overseas, exemplify the values for which the war was supposed to have been fought?” (199)

Many lessons can be learned by studying the issues of the 1950s. Hindsight helps us make more accurate judgements about what happened in the past. This process is valuable in helping us to question popular beliefs about our own times. Analyzing issues of this particular decade is so effective in illustrating to students the power of knowledge because the facts so clearly contradict popular myths about the fifties. This unit encourages students to research the facts before buying into popular stereotypes and myths.

## **Objectives and Strategies**

Time: 6 weeks, 45-minute periods

### **Objectives**

By the end of this unit students will be able to effectively:

- locate appropriate resources using traditional and emerging library technology ( on-line card catalogue, *Encarta*, *Electronic Library*, Internet, data bases)
- articulate major characteristics of American culture of the 1950s
- explain popular views of many social issues of the 1950s
- analyze and synthesize research information and come to educated conclusions
- evaluate a web-site
- take notes
- use e-mail
- write citations
- write three types of summaries: a precis, a paraphrase, and an abstract
- create an appropriate survey and analyze the results
- write an annotated bibliography
- demonstrate understanding of the requirements of a research report
- demonstrate understanding of the elements of various literary genres
- demonstrate public speaking skills
- use *PowerPoint*

### **ACTIVITIES**

- Class discussions
- Collaborative groups
- Peer conferencing and evaluation
- Word-processing
- Brainstorming issues of the 1950s
- Writing a paraphrase, abstract and precis
- Library research: use of electronic resources as well as traditional resources
- Create, distribute and analyze surveys
- Write an annotated bibliography of sources about an issue
- Create a time-line of events important to the selected issue.
- Write a persuasive essay
- Write a fiction piece that reflects some aspect of the issue (short story, poem, play-one act, persona letter)
- Present a *PowerPoint* presentation
- Write a final reflection about what was learned during this unit
- Assemble all final assignments into an *Issues Portfolio*

### **MATERIAL**

- 1950s posters, pictures
- traditional and emerging library resources
- film clips of 1950s sitcoms and a documentary of the 1950s from the History Channel decades series
- reading packets of literature associated with the topics
- texts: *Writers Inc*, *Literature and Language*, *African American Literature*, in-class library compiled by students and teacher-a collection of books and magazines with information about the 1950s and the issues involved
- computer disks
- transparencies
- paper, pens, glue, art supplies

The purpose of this unit is to provide students with a variety of venues for exploring and articulating important issues. This unit seeks also to sharpen the student's reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking skills. To this end, students will compile a 1950s Issues Portfolio. This portfolio will contain the following anchor pieces: a "before" essay, three summaries (paraphrase, precis, abstract), a survey, a biographical report, a research essay, a fiction piece (poem, one act play, short story or persona piece) and a final reflection. This project may seem very broad in scope because of the number of assignments required to complete this portfolio. However, it is very broad only in terms of what the class, as a whole, will cover. The project is actually narrow in terms of what each student will investigate. The anchor pieces will focus on *one* issue of the fifties. Breadth of expression about this one issue is provided through the different approaches students must take in addressing their issue. The 1950s is an era rich in topics that provide students the opportunity to engage their critical thinking skills. As mentioned above, the fifties are often referred to as the good old days, a time when life was nice for nearly everyone, and the nation, was prosperous enough to provide good circumstances for all. Of course, this was not truly the case. Taking a look at the "real deal" of the fifties can be quite valuable. We have at our fingertips a host of resources and expert opinions of the major events and movements of that decade. With our hindsight we can make educated judgements about the truth behind the perceptions. Our analysis of that decade can then lay the ground-work for developing a method of examining and making critical judgements about other decades as well. This unit will focus on activities that require students to become proficient in skills that they must master to compete academically. The 1950s era will provide the content. The anchor pieces mentioned above require formats that these ninth graders will use often. So in addition to acquiring new information, students will also learn how to articulate it in a variety of useful ways.

We will begin this unit with an overview of the 1950s. First, students will brainstorm ideas about what they think they know about the fifties. They will use one class period for this. They should respond to prompts such as name a 1950s President. What fashions were in style? Was there a war going on? What were some of the major political issues? What was the economy like? What did the word "red" mean in the fifties? Students will be encouraged to lay a basis for comparing circumstances of the

past to those of the present. For instance, what was a typical fifties family like? What is a typical nineties family like?

Next students will go over a list of topics from an *Electronic Library* source titled *Stack of Decades* and choose a topic on which to present a brief *PowerPoint* report to the class. The *Stack of Decades* list contains many interesting and amusing details in the following categories: *What's in*, *Who's in*, *The Times/Events*, *Fashion and Beauty*, *Art*, *Bad Guys*, *Money*, *Music*, *Literature*, *Slang and Buzz Words*, *Science and Medicine*, *Entertainment and The Media*. This activity will create a picture of the popular view of the fifties and will become a springboard for delving under the surface to find out about the not-so-well-known facts and goings-on of the decade. These include: the United States' role in World War II; what really happened during the McCarthy hearings; many women worked outside of the home -they were not all housewives; adolescence was "discovered."

Students will have one day in the library to find information on their topic. They must write a citation for this information. They will then have two days to create several *PowerPoint* slides from which to share their research. This encourages students to make use of new and emerging technology. I expect that the presentations will include topics of interest to teens such as the twist, hula hoops, beatniks, teflon, frisbees and fast food chains. But I also expect presentations with information about Truman's policies, McCarthyism, the Cold War, the Salk vaccine, gender roles, the Korean War, wages and civil rights.

Students will learn other important background information via class lectures, discussions and viewing a documentary, *The Fifties*. The following is a list of possible lecture topics: The Cold War, McCarthyism, TV, Music, Gender Roles, Family Life, Poverty, Civil Rights and Adolescence. Students will sharpen their note-taking skills during this activity

After these introductory activities, students will generate a list of issues that permeated the society of the fifties. Such issues, as students will discover, continue to be important today. Students will be guided to include the following in their list of issues: women's roles, men's roles, the family, foreign policy, civil rights, human rights, popular music, health issues, the media, education, the justice system, right to privacy, and freedom of speech. We will then have discussions on each of these issues, and students must take notes. These discussions will spark their interest to learn more about the topic of their choice. Each student must choose a different topic so that we adequately cover the main issues of the era.

Next, students will write a "before" essay. They will explain how they feel about their issue *before* they complete any substantial research on it. This will help students to assess how knowledge affects one's decisions and outlooks. In this essay, students should take a stand on the issue. For instance, if the topic is *women's roles*, the student (let's call him Joe Fifties) must develop a thesis such as: "In the 1950s most women were content with their roles as housewives, an attitude which contributed to the strong nuclear

family of that era.” Joe’s research will then support or disprove the outlook he expressed in his essay.

Students will begin their research and summary-writing practice by writing an abstract, paraphrase and a precis. They must find three articles on their topic to complete this assignment. They will decide which article to apply each type of summary to. The class will develop folders that contain resource information for all the topics. As the teacher or students come across articles on their topic or another student’s topic, they should place copies or citations in appropriate resource folders. This will help to build an in-class resource library. Students must use proper MLA format to document these sources. This activity teaches students to recognize the most important points of the reading selections and then articulate this information in a concise, accurate manner.

Next, each student will research biographical information about a person who has a particular connection to his/her issue. For instance, Joe Fifties might read about actress Joan Crawford who wanted the public to see her as an ideal fifties mom. Joe will spend a day in the library compiling a working bibliography, a citation card for each source that might be of use to him. Joe will then spend two classes writing note cards from these sources. Next, he must prepare a persona presentation for the Fifties Club. This is an activity where each student pretends to be the person whose biography he/she researched. A student Masters of Ceremonies will ask each potential club member questions designed to elicit significant background information. Students must then vote to induct or not to induct the person into the Fifties Club. Criteria for induction is the person’s importance to the decade. This activity allows students to examine the biography genre, understand the text better, and hone their public speaking skills. They also broaden their knowledge of the decade.

Now that students have a research-based background of their issue, they should pursue an authentic assessment. Students will construct a survey to test a theory about their topic. For instance, Joe might test his theory that the family unit was stronger when it was the norm for women to stay at home rather than pursue their own careers. His survey may ask demographic questions first: gender, age, race, income range. Next he can ask a series of questions about family life with a stay-at-home mom and family life with a mother who works outside of the home. Students will follow the guidelines for survey questions listed in *Decisions About Question Wording* and *Decisions About Response Format* from Purdue University’s On-Line Writing Lab (OWL) Students will then analyze their results and report them to the class. Students will distinguish between two main types of surveys, interview and questionnaire. By conducting their own surveys, students gain insight into the validity of other surveys they encounter. This would be a good time to take a closer look at the McCarthy hearings. Students will view film of the hearings and discuss the questioning techniques and the results these questions produced.

Students have absorbed a lot of information on their issue by now. They should begin to compile a time-line of significant events involving their issue. For instance, Joe Fifties might start his time-line with 1945-49 women encouraged to work in factories,

1952 -Ozzie and Harriet depicts women as housewives and mothers, and so on. This activity helps students to identify and assess patterns and to question trends. Students will then compose a research report based on the time line. This research report must include appropriate citations. Students should create an annotated bibliography of the sources they found most helpful and include it with this report.

After working primarily with non-fiction material, students will now have the opportunity to work with fiction. Students will create a fiction piece built around their issue. These selections may include a persona piece (monologues, letters) a dialogue (a one act play), poetry (including song poetry), or a short story. For instance, Joe Fifties might write a piece where Bess Truman meets Mrs. Clinton. Students will discuss the characteristics of the various genres and read sample selections before deciding which to work with.

Students will create a multimedia presentation of this project and present it in the library to a selected audience. Students may use *PowerPoint* presentations if they wish.

Finally, students will write a final reflection that explains what they learned from completing this project.

**Lesson Plans/Strategies' Daily Objectives**(CO= communications standards; NS = New Standards. See Notes for an explanation)

**Lesson 1 -- What Do You Know About the Fifties?**

Time: 1 period

A. Objective

Students will create cluster maps that reflect their perceptions of the fifties

B. Procedures

1. Students will divide into groups of three. Each group will randomly select a card that has a brainstorming topic (politics, fashion, families, music, movie stars, etc)
2. Students will have 10 minutes to brainstorm ideas about their topic as it existed in the 1950s. They may get ideas from the posters, pictures and newspaper clippings on the classroom walls.
3. Using an overhead transparency, each group will create a cluster map of ideas on their topic.
4. Groups will share their maps with the class during the next 20 minutes. Students will be encouraged to offer additions to each map. Later research will validate/invalidate their responses.
5. Next a list of topics taken from an *Electronic Library* source titled *Stack of Decades: the 1950s* will be distributed. Each student must select a category and a topic from the list appearing under the category to research. All

categories should be selected. If more than one student chooses the same category, they must choose different topics to research. The categories include: *What's In*, *Who's In*, *The Times/Events*, *Fashion and Beauty*, *Art*, *Bad guys*, *Money*, *Music*, *Literature*, *Slang and Buzz Words*, *Science and Medicine*, *Entertainment and the Media*

C. Materials - posters, pictures, news clippings, overhead projector and transparencies, cards with 50s topics; *Stack of Decades* list of topics

D. Standards - CO-4,5,6,7,8 ; NS-*Informal Speaking and Listening* - 1

## **Lesson 2 - Library research**

Time: 1 period

### A. Objective

Students will find information in the library on the fifties topic they chose, take notes, and write a citation.

### B. Procedure

1. Students must work independently in the library to find information on their topics. They may use electronic or traditional resources.
2. Students should first write a citation for the source they are using, and then begin taking notes.

C. Materials - list of topics; guide to writing citations

D. Standards - CO 1,4,5; NS - *Writing Exhibit B-4*

## **Lesson 3 - Preparing *PowerPoint* presentations**

Time: 2 periods

### A. Objective

Students will create at least 5 slides on *PowerPoint* to assist them in sharing the information they found in the library.

### B. Procedure

1. Students will work independently at first in designing their *PowerPoint* presentations. They should already have outlined the material that will appear in the presentation.
2. Students will share their plan and finished slides with a partner to obtain peer feedback.
3. Students will then revise their slides and practice their presentations

C. Materials -- computer disks, peer feedback forms

D. Standards - CO 3, 4, 5, 6, 8; NS - *speaking and Listening Exhibit B-2*

#### **Lesson 4 --PowerPoint presentations**

Time: 2 periods

##### A. Objective

Students will use effective public speaking techniques including the use of PowerPoint to give oral presentations of their Fifties topics.

##### B. Procedure

1. Students will meet in the library computer lab where a projector is available. The order of the presentations should have been determined during the previous class via a student sign-up sheet.
2. Presenters will follow rules for effective public speaking (eye contact; voice volume, clarity and expression; content; creativeness, accuracy, appropriateness of the *PowerPoint* slides.
3. Students will take notes and complete an evaluation sheet for each presentation.

C. Materials - *PowerPoint* disks; computer projector; evaluation sheets.

D. Standards - CO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; NS - Speaking Accomplishment B-2

#### **Lesson 5 - The Political Climate of the Fifties - Viewing a Documentary**

Time: 2 period

##### A. Objective

Students will watch a documentary on The Fifties and take notes that reflect important facts and insights discussed.

##### B. Procedures

1. A study guide will be distributed. Students will then watch *The Fifties*, part of the History Channel's series on the decades of the 1900s. Students will take notes and answer the questions on the study guide. The study guide is an outline of information in the documentary. Students should also recognize details from their own research as they view the film.
2. Next, students will go over the answers to the study guide questions and begin generating a list of topics that are the basis for issues of that time. A student recorder will write this list of topics on an overhead transparency. Topics will include: the "Red Scare," McCarthyism, authority, community, conformity, women's roles, men's roles, civil rights, music, education, war, wages, foreign policy, privacy, the justice system, health issues, fashion, the media.
3. Students will begin a discussion on each topic, focusing on why each was a controversial issue.
4. Students may begin to select an issue from the list that they wish to investigate.

C. Materials - Documentary, study guides, overhead projector, transparency, markers, list of issues

D. Standards - CO -3, 4, 5, 6; NS - Viewing option - C-4

## **Lesson 6 --Select an Issue and Write About It**

Time: 3 periods

### **A. Objective**

Students will articulate their understanding and knowledge of the issue they will investigate.

### **B. Procedure**

1. Students will sign their name and issue on a sign-up sheet. Everyone must select a different issue.
2. Each student will have two minutes to express their opinions about the issue. The rest of the class will play “devil’s advocate” for one minute to encourage each other to look at all sides of the issue.
3. Following the rules for a multi-paragraph essay, students will begin writing an essay that expresses their views of the issue before they begin any significant research. We will call this assignment the “Before Essay.”
4. Students will share the first draft with a partner and receive feedback. Students will then revise the essay and share the final draft in the Reader’s Circle (Each student takes turns reading his/her essay aloud and eliciting reactions from the rest of the class.)
5. Students will review the scrapbook checklist and become familiar with the required anchor pieces.

### **C. Materials - sign-up sheet with topics, checklist**

### **D. Standards - CO - 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8; NS - Writing entry 6 -Persuasive Essay-Influencing the Opinions of Others - entry 3**

## **Lesson 7 --Writing Summaries**

Time - 3 periods

### **A. Objective**

Students will be able to define three types of summaries and differentiate among them. They will write an abstract, paraphrase and precis using three articles on their topic.

### **B. Procedure**

1. Allow students 10 minutes to write an explanation of the difference among a precis, paraphrase and abstract. They should refer to the definitions and examples in *Writers INC* to assist them. Students will share their responses.
2. Distribute copies of the article “The Culture of the 1950s.” Read the article aloud and ask students to list the main points in the article. A student volunteer should write these responses on the overhead.
3. Review definitions of the three types of summaries, and then ask students to use the article to write a precis, a paraphrase and an abstract. Students should share their responses and evaluate them.

4. Students will go to the library and locate three articles on their topic. They may use traditional and electronic sources. They should write citations for each source. Then they should write a precis for one article, a paraphrase of another article, and an abstract of the third article. Students will decide which summary to use for each article.
  5. In class, students will have 20 minutes to pass their summaries around for others to read. Students will then share any unusual or interesting information they came across as they read the summaries.
- C. Material - Writers Inc books, documentation guide, 1950s article overhead and transparency, markers
- D. Standards CO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; NS Reading - entries 1,2,3; Writing - entry 4; Speaking and Listening - entry 2

### **Lesson 8 -- Asking the Right Questions**

Time: 3 periods

#### A. Objective

Students will demonstrate critical and analytical thinking skills by developing a list of questions that they want their research to answer. They will also develop a survey questionnaire.

#### B. Procedure

1. Allow the students 10 minutes to develop a list of questions that their research project will answer. In discussion circles of five students, each student will present their topic and questions and ask the group for suggestions of other questions to add to their lists.
2. Students will use this list to create a survey questionnaire to get feedback that reflects current thinking of their contemporaries. Students will discuss how a survey should be structured and worded. They should refer to *Writing Survey Questions* from Purdue University's On-line Writing Lab (OWL). Students should distribute their surveys to the class first so that they can spot problems and make revisions.
3. Students will distribute the surveys to the desired group, collect them and then analyze the results.
4. Students will share the results of their surveys with the rest of the class.

C. Material - Paper to make copies of surveys, computer disks

D. Standards - CO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5; NS. – Reading - entry 4; Writing - entry 4; Speaking and Listening - entry 2

### **Lesson 9 -- Research Essay**

Time: 5 periods

#### A. Objective

Students will demonstrate their ability to use a variety of research resources effectively and to organize, analyze and synthesize this information in a comprehensive essay.

## B. Procedure

1. Students will complete a writing guide that asks what issue they are researching; what their stand is on the issue; what questions they expect to answer; what opposing questions they will address.
2. Students will review using citations properly and the requirements for the final copy (title page, outline, essay with MLA parenthetical citations, works cited)
3. Students will continue to develop a working bibliography and begin to take notes as they read through material. Students will spend three days (periods) in the library gathering information. They will then write the first draft of their essay. The final draft must be 3-5 typed pages, double spaced, size 12 Times New Roman font. Each student will seek peer feedback and conference with the teacher before completing the final copy.

C. Material - Documentation instructions, writing guide sheets, computer disks

D. Standards- CO 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; NS – Reading - entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 4, 6; Speaking and Listening - entry 2

## **Lesson 10 -- Create a time-line and an annotated bibliography**

Time: 2 periods

### A. Objective

Students will demonstrate their ability to focus on key details by creating a time-line of important events pertaining to their issue.

### B. Procedure

1. Students will look at a sample timeline that depicts the historical events from which writers emerged during the time period of the reconstruction to the Renaissance in the United States.
2. Students will review their research and seek new information to complete a similar time line. the should include events that pertain specifically to their issue.

C. Material - paper, markers

D. Standards - CO - 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; NS – Reading - entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 4

## **Lesson 11 - Write an annotated bibliography**

Time: - 1 period

### A. Objective

Students will demonstrate their ability to write annotated citations correctly and to make decisions about the importance of various resources.

### B. Procedure

1. Students will review the resources they used and write an annotated bibliography of the sources they found most useful during their research. Students should refer to *Writers INC* for an example.

C. Material - computer disks, Writers INC books

D. Standards CO - 1, 2, 4, 5; NS Reading - entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 4

## **Lesson 12 - Writing a fiction piece**

Time: 3 periods

### **A. Objective**

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the characteristics of various genres, their understanding of the implications of the issues they researched, and their creative writing skills by writing an original short story, a one act play, a persona letter or a poem that reflects the issues they researched.

### **B. Procedure**

1. Students will first review and discuss the assignment and the characteristics of each genre (short story, play, persona writing, poem).
2. In groups of 3, students will brainstorm ideas for their selection of genre and story line.
3. Students will begin writing their first drafts. They will seek peer and teacher feedback before revising and completing final drafts.
4. Students will share their writing in the reader's circle.

C. Material - computer disks, Review sheets

D. Standards CO - 1, 2, 4, 5,6; NS Writing - entry 2

## **Lesson 13 -- Assembling the Issues Portfolio**

### **A. Objective**

Students will showcase the depth and breadth of their work on this project by assembling all the anchor assignments from this project in a portfolio.

### **B. Procedure**

1. Students will review all final copies of tasks assigned for this project. They will complete final editing or revising.
2. Students must create a table of contents and create a cover that contains the title of their project, their name, subject, teacher and date. The cover may be illustrated.
3. Each page must be placed in a page protector.
4. the portfolio may be housed in a binder, or the pages may be held together with brass fasteners, or students may have the portfolio bound through our printing department.

C. Material - page protectors, brass fasteners, binding material, disks, markers, glue sticks, paper

D. Standards CO - 1, 2, 4, 5,6; NS Reading - entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 2,4,6

## **Lesson 14 -- Multimedia presentation**

Time: Preparation - 5 periods; presentations - 2 periods

### **A. Objective**

Students will demonstrate effective public speaking skills and their ability to use technology effectively by presenting the results of their research project to an audience of their peers and teachers.

B. Procedure

1. Students will prepare a 5-7 minute presentation of their *Issues Portfolios*. Students must use PowerPoint to assist them. They must begin their preparation by creating an outline for their presentation and a “storyboard” for *PowerPoint*.
2. Students must practice in groups of 3, receiving feedback from peers and teacher.
3. Students must sign the sign-up sheet that indicates the order in which students will present their projects.
4. Presentations will be conducted in the library where computers, a *Smartboard* and a projector are available.

C. Material - computers, *Smartboard*, projector, disks

D. Standards CO - 1, 2, 4, 5, 6; NS Reading - entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 4; Speaking and Listening - entry 2, 3

**Lesson 15 - Final Reflection**

A. Objective:

Students will demonstrate their ability to reflect on their work by writing a reflective essay.

B. Procedure

1. Students will discuss what they learned during the course of this project. They will include comments on whether or not they changed from their original stance on their issue after they completed their research.
2. Students will write a draft of their essay and seek peer feedback.
3. Students must revise their draft, complete a final copy and include this in their portfolio before it is bound.

C. Material - disks, page protectors

D. Standards CO - 2, 4, 5; NS Reading- entry 2, 3, 4; Writing - entry 4

**Notes**

**List of 1950s Personalities**

Students may use the following list to help them select a fifties personality to study:

Anderson, Marian  
Ball, Lucille  
Banks, Ernie  
Bunche, Ralph  
Daly, Richard J.  
Eisenhower, Dwight D.  
Floyd Patterson  
Gibson, Althea  
Ginsberg, Allen  
Glenn, John

Graham, Reverend Billy  
Hammarshoeld, Dag  
Hellman, Lillian  
Khrushchev, Nikita  
King, Martin Luther  
Kinsey, Alfred  
Levitt, William  
McCarthy, Joseph R.  
Monroe, Marilyn  
Nixon E. D.  
Parks, Rosa  
Peale, Norman Vincent  
Robeson, Paul  
Rosenberg, Ethel and Julius  
Salk, Dr. Jonas  
Smith, Margaret Chase  
Truman, Harry S

## **District Standards / New Standards Portfolio**

Pittsburgh Public Schools requires that all students demonstrate skill and knowledge that address 62 content standards in the areas of: Communications (CO), Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), Mathematics (MA), Arts and Humanities \*AH), Citizenship (CI), Wellness and Fitness (WF), Science and Technology (ST), Environment and Ecology (WW), and Career Education and Work (CW) While this curriculum unit addresses standards in a number of content areas, only the communications standards have been identified in the lesson plans. They are as follows:

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including to narrate, inform and persuade in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgements about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias, recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.
6. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately and promoting effective group communications.
7. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.
8. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
9. All students converse at a minimum level of “intermediate low” as defined in the oral proficiency guidelines developed by The American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages in at least one language other than English including the native language if other than English.
10. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

## **New Standards Portfolio**

High School students in the Pittsburgh Public Schools are required to compile a reading, writing, speaking and listening portfolio each year through their English class. The entries are as follows:

Reading Exhibit: Part A - Evidence of Reading Accomplishment - Entry 1 - Literature; 2 of the following - Entry 2- Informational text, Entry 3- Public documents, Entry 4 - Functional documents; Part B- Evidence of Quantity, Range and Depth (reading of 1 million words) - Entry 5 - Teacher Certification

Writing Exhibit: Part A - Writing Accomplishment - 1 entry from A, 1 entry from B, and 1 free pick from A or B; A - Entry 1 Response to literature, Entry 2 - Demonstration of proficiency in a literary genre, Entry 3 - Narrative account; B - Entry 4- Report, Entry 5- Narrative Procedure, Entry 6 - Persuasive Essay, Entry 7 - Free Pick. Part B - Entry 8 - Evidence of control of writing conventions (apply this to the choice from category A above) Entry 9 - Evidence of the use of processes and strategies (attach drafts and revisions to one piece)

Speaking and Listening Exhibit - Part A - Informal speaking and listening Entry 1- Teacher certification; Part B - Speaking Accomplishment - Entry 2 - Gathering and reporting, Entry 3 - Influencing the opinion of others; Part C - Entry 4 - Viewing Option

Reflective Essay - Write an essay that describes how you have changed as a reader, writer, speaker and listener during the course of the school year.

## **Annotated Bibliographies**

### Student Reading List

*African American Literature*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1992.

This anthology is a collection of works primarily by African American writers. It also contains historical and other background information on the writers and social environment from which the literature emanated.

Beatty, Jane N. *Literature and Language*. Dallas: McDougal Littell Inc., 1994.

This is a resource book that gives examples and explanations of various types of writing and literature.

Dillard, Annie. *An American Childhood*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.

Memoir of growing up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s.

Kallen, Stuart A. *The 1950s: A Cultural History of the United States Through the Decades*. San Diego: Lucent Books, 1999.

This book provides important facts and information about life in America in the 1950s.

Peacock, John. *Fashion Sourcebook*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 1997.

This book contains pictures of popular clothing trends of the 1950s.

“Stack of Decades: 1950.” *Electric Library*. Online. Internet. 4 April 1999.

This source lists a number of interesting details about the fifties including people, television shows, fashion trends, music, slang, literature and politics.

## Teacher's Annotated Bibliography

- Bernstein, Carl. *Loyalties : A Son's Memoir*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989.  
Memoir, by the journalist most famous for his Watergate reporting of his fathers' blacklisting.
- Boyer, Paul, *By Bombs Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994.  
Boyer places the development of atomic weapons in the context of the cultural and intellectual history of the postwar years.
- Branch, Taylor, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954-63*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1989.  
A biography of Martin Luther King which places his accomplishments in broad historian context.
- Connell, Evan S, *Mrs. Bridge*. New York: Viking Press. 1959.  
Novel of an upper middle class housewife's realization of the emptiness of her life; predates and prefigures Friedans's *The Feminine Mystique*.
- Coontz, Stephanie, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap*. New York: Basic Books, 1992.  
Coontz challenges a variety of mythologies pertaining to the organization of family life in the United States with particular focus on the mythologies that either circulated in or were a product of the 1950s.
- Dillard, Annie, *An American Childhood*. New York: Harper & Row, 1987.  
Memoir of growing up in Pittsburgh in the 1950s.
- Doherty, Thomas, *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Boston: Unwin Hyman: 1988.  
S study of the organization of teenagers as an audience for movies in the 1950s.
- Ehrenhalt, Alan, *The Lost City. The Forgotten Virtues of Community in America*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.  
Ehrenhalt argues that the 1950s are too much maligned and that they offered a sense of community missing from the contemporary U.S. He presents histories of two urban neighborhoods in Chicago - both working - class, one white and one black - and a suburban subdivision to make his case.
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, *The Hearts of Men: American Dreams and the Flight from Commitment*. New York: Anchor Books, 1983.  
The first half of Ehrenreich's book deals with the constructions of masculinity in the 1950s.

- Ferlinghetti, Lawrence, *A Coney Island of the Mind*. New York: New Directions, 1958.  
Beat poetry from the founder of City Lights Books; contrasts interestingly in tone with Ginsberg's *Howl*.
- Foreman, Joel, ed., *The Other Fifties: Interrogating Midcentury American Icons*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997.  
Essays which explore postwar popular culture with an eye on how it reveals the tensions and contradictions of the times.
- Friedman, Betty, *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: Norton, 1963.  
Work generally seen as initiating the "second wave" of American feminism; a scathing indictment of the social and cultural expectation of middle class women in the 1950s.
- Gans, Herbert, *The Levittowners*.  
Gans's sociological study of Levittown, NJ, a prototypical 50s suburb in which he lived from 1958 until 1962.
- Ginsberg, Allen, *Howl, and Other Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1956.  
The key work of Beat poetry, offering the full range of celebration and despair that characterized the movement.
- Goldman, Eric. *The Crucial Decade: America, 1945-1955*. New York: Knopf, 1956.  
Useful survey history written in the period in question.
- Goodman, Paul, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System*. New York: Random House, 1960.  
Widely read study of the "problem of youth."
- Gordon, Richard E., Katherine K. Gordon, and Max Gunther, *The Split-Level Trap*. New York: Random House, 1960.  
Out of Print but worth finding, this is one of the first book length anti-suburban diatribes to come out of the postwar suburban experience.
- Halberstam, David, *The Fifties*. New York: Random House, 1993.  
Recent, extremely popular narrative history of the decade, made into a mini-series for cable by the History Channel.
- Harrington, Michael, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States*, rev. ed. New York: Pelican Books, 1971.  
Harrington's searing portrait of poverty in postwar America gives lie to the image of the decade as one of uniform abundance.
- Harvey, Brett, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.  
Interviews based history focusing on sexuality, marriage and motherhood.

- Hellman, Lillian, *Scoundrel Time*. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1976.
- Jackson, Kenneth, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985.  
Critical but even-handed survey history of suburbanization in the U.S.
- Kluger, Richard, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown vs. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality*. New York: Knopf, 1975.  
Definitive study of the court case that outlawed segregation in the U.S.
- Kunstler, James Howard, *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscapes*. New York: Touchstone, 1973.  
Survey history of planned and mass-produced space, which gives appropriate emphasis to the postwar suburban boom and commercial designs that accompanied it.
- May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.  
Study which connects cold war politics to the organization of family life in the 1950s.
- Meyerowitz, Joanne, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.  
Collection of essays by contemporary historians which illuminate the full range of women's activities in the 1950s from a multicultural perspective.
- Navasky, Victor. *Naming Names*. New York: Penguin Books, 1982.  
History of the blacklist in Hollywood.
- Polenberg, Richard, *One Nation Divisible: Class, Race and Ethnicity in the United States since 1938*. New York: Penguin Books, 1980.  
Useful survey history of social divisions in the U.S.
- Rosen, Ruth, "The Female Generation Gap: Daughters of the Fifties and the Origins of Contemporary American Feminism." *U.S. History as Women's History. New Feminist Essays*. Kerber, Linda K., Alice Kessler Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995, pp. 313-334.  
Essay looks at the ways in which the experience of growing up female in the 1950s shaped the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.
- Rupp, Leila J., and Verta Taylor, *Survival in the Doldrums: The American Women's Rights Movement, 1945-1960*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1987.

Rupp and Taylor survey a range of political activism by women in the 1950s which, they argue, paved the way for the feminist movement of the 1960s and 1970s.

Selby, Hebert, Jr, *Last Exit to Brooklyn*. New York: Grove Press, 1964.  
Powerful novel of poverty and despair in the 1950s: an excellent companion to both Ginsberg and Harrington.

Sitkoff, Howard, *The Struggle for Black Equality, 1954-1992*. Revised Edition. New York: Hill and Wang, 1993.  
Survey history of the civil rights movement from *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka*, Kansas forward.

Swerdlow, Amy, "The Congress of American Women: Left-Feminist Peace Politics in the Cold War," *U.S. History as Women's History. New Feminist Essays*. Kerber, Linda K., Alice Kessler Harris, and Kathryn Kish Sklar, eds. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995, pp. 296-312.

Whyte, William H, *The Organization Man*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956.  
Widely read study critiquing the expectations of corporate loyalty among middle class men in the 1950s.

Wilson, Sloan, *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955.  
Best-selling novel of an advertising man's dissatisfaction with middle class corporate life. Precursor and fine companion piece to Whyte.