

Culture and Religion

Headings	Notes
CULTURE IN THE AGE OF CONSENSUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The 20 years after the Second World War are sometimes called 'the age of consensus'. During them, many Americans agreed in being proud of their country, happy with economic and society and optimistic about the future.
THE AGE OF CONSENSUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This consensus was due to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The economic prosperity that followed the hardships of Depression in the 1930s, and war in the early 1940s. Pride in America's success as 'defender of the free world' in the Second World War and the Cold War. The 'red scare' and McCarthyism of the 1950s made it difficult to publicly criticise America without being accused either of sympathising with communism or of being unpatriotic. In these years it seemed as if 'the American Dream' – that anyone who worked hard could succeed – was true. The consensus was reinforced by books, films and TV programmes where the good guys always won and the endings were always happy.
THE GROWTH OF LEISURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The post-war economic boom gave the majority of Americans a higher income and more free time than ever before. The average working week fell from over 50 hours in 1914 to 40 by 1960, and the Federal government introduced laws which guaranteed all workers an annual holiday. Money and leisure allowed many ordinary people to enjoy activities that once only the wealthy could afford. A leisure industry emerged to supply their needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companies sprang up to organise package holidays. People took cruises or went on overseas holidays. Firms like Disney branched out from making films to creating theme parks and other holiday activities. A popular leisure activity was shopping and large shopping malls were opened to take advantage of this.
Keywords	Summary
The Age of Consensus	The age of consensus covers the twenty year period in the USA following World War II.
Red Scare	It came as a result of economic prosperity following the Great Depression and WWII, US pride as the 'defenders of the free world' following WWII and during the Cold War, and the period of the
the American Dream	Red Scare where it was difficult to publicly criticise America without being accused of being communist. The American Dream was an idea that anyone who worked hard could succeed and during the age of consensus this was generally a true reality. It was backed up by various forms
Leisure Industry	of media such as books and films where the 'good guys' always won and the endings were happy. This period of time also saw the rise of leisure time as work hours were reduced from 50 a week to 40, leaving time for a leisure industry to be needed to entertain people on their free time.

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FILMS AND TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before the war people went to the cinema several times a week and Hollywood stars were admired and copied.• After the war the film industry suffered a double blow:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The arrival of TV cut into its audiences.• The McCarthy witch-hunts targeted leading writers and undermined trust in the industry.• TV was invented before the war, but TV broadcasting in America did not begin until the 1940s.• Early TV sets were very expensive, but prices fell sharply in the 1950s, and by 1960 most had one. At first the pictures were black and white, but colour was widespread by 1970.• TV changed family life. The TV set became the focal point of the living room. Families gathered around it during meals, often eating pre-cooked 'TV dinners'.• From the start, TV programmes were sponsored, with up to ten minutes of advertising every hour. Sponsors had a big influence on the programmes that were put out. Many were 'soap operas', but sport was also hugely popular.• The novelty of having entertainment at home tempted people away from the cinemas. Hollywood fought back with colour spectaculars, lavish musicals and special effects which were best enjoyed on a big screen. In the 1980s films like Star Wars and ET won back audiences from TV.
SPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Money and more leisure time allowed more people to enjoy tennis, cycling and golf than ever before. Sports centres and an interest in fitness also encouraged people to swim and run.• But far more people watched sport on TV than ever played a game. Once advertisers realised this they poured millions of dollars into spectator sports.• The main American sports – baseball and American football – became multimillion-dollar businesses. Teams turned professional and star players became famous and wealthy.• Big national competitions, like the Super Bowl, attracted millions of viewers and huge advertising revenue for TV channels.• Minority sports, like tennis and golf, also attracted large audiences. The number of tournaments increased rapidly and the leading players made fortunes.
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YOUTH CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The children born after the war (the 'baby boomers') were entering their teens from the late 1950s. The first 'teenagers', they were better educated than their parents, with no memory of economic depression or war.• They could easily get part-time jobs and with money to spend they developed a distinctive youth culture.• A whole industry grew up to supply them with magazines, films, records, make- up and books.• Many of them rejected the consensus of the 1950s and wanted to follow their own tastes and opinions.• This created a 'generation gap' between young people and their parents.
MUSIC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Music played a key part of youth culture.• In the late-1950s, musicians like Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley, with their rock and roll rhythms ('devil's music' according to many of the older generation) and open sexuality, appealed to teenagers but outraged parents.• In the 1960s, young people admired pop groups like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones, copied their dress and hairstyles and listened to their views on drugs, race and war.
THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young people in the 1960s had a more permissive attitude to sex than their parents because the contraceptive pill reduced the fear of pregnancy.• This in turn undermined support for the censorship of books and films and encouraged the open discussion of issues like pornography, homosexuality and abortion, which before had been almost totally hidden.
COUNTER-CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A minority of young people turned their backs on the consumer society and the American Dream.• Many were students who were active in the civil rights or women's movement or in opposing the Vietnam War.• Others went further. Known as 'hippies', they wore colourful old clothes, and long hair, used drugs and practised 'free love'. Some went to live in communes where all property was held in common.
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COUNTER-CULTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A few advocated an all-out attack on the capitalist society, using violence and terror.• The counter-cultural movement fizzled out in the 1970s because:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The decline in the economy reduced the amount of money available and forced students to work harder.• Reasons for protest disappeared when the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War and the bans on abortion and homosexuality were removed.• The spread of sexually transmitted diseases in the 1970s, and especially HIV/ AIDS in the 1980s, made casual sex dangerous.
MULTICULTURALISM	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Part of the 'American Dream' was the idea that the US was a 'melting pot' where all races blended and could live together harmoniously.• The civil rights campaign showed this was a myth, at least where black people were concerned.• In the 1970s, some black people began to seek their roots in Africa.• They also pointed out that they and their achievements had been written out of American history and culture. For example, there had been many black cowboys, but they were not mentioned in books or films.• This led to demands that schools and universities teach African-American studies.• Others groups followed their example. American Indians renamed themselves Native Americans. They dug up old treaties that the US government had made with their ancestors and demanded that it keep the terms. They also began to revive their ancient cultures and languages.• Women pointed out that women's experiences were also written out of American history. Universities began to offer courses in 'women's studies'.• After that Irish, Jewish, Polish and many other racial groups became interested in the experience of their immigrant ancestors and tried to construct the stories of their people's experience in America.• Until the 1960s, most immigrants to America were from Europe, but that changed in 1965. America now accepted immigrants from around the world on the basis of the skills they had to offer.
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THE MORAL MAJORITY OF THE 1980S	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 'Moral Majority' campaign ended when a number of televangelists were involved in financial and sexual scandals.• But fundamentalist Christians remained a powerful group in America over the last four decades – one which all political leaders have had to pay attention to.
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EXAM QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What did you learn about two of the following: how Marilyn Munroe represented Hollywood and the American Dream; what Billy Graham contributed to religion and American culture; how Betty Friedan influenced the changing role of women? (HL 2022 DP)• What was the contribution to American life of two of the following: Betty Friedan; Billy Graham; Marilyn Monroe? (HL 2022)• What was the contribution to American life of one or more of the following: Joe McCarthy; Billy Graham; Norman Mailer? (HL 2019)• What did Marilyn Monroe and/or Billy Graham contribute to American life? (HL 2018)• How did one or more of the following challenge widely-held views in the US: Norman Mailer; Betty Friedan; Muhammad Ali? (HL 2017)• What was the significance of one or more of the following in US history: Hollywood, 1945- 1968; the Montgomery bus boycott; religion in modern American culture? (HL 2012)• What did one or more of the following contribute to American culture: Marilyn Monroe; Muhammad Ali; Billy Graham? (HL 2011)• What contribution did Betty Friedan and/or Norman Mailer make to society in the United States? (HL 2007)

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The Age of Consensus

1. **1945-1968**
2. Americans focussed on things that united them in the 1950's
3. Dominant mood of optimism after victory in WW2
4. Having lived through the Great Depression and WW2. They wanted a quite life
5. The booming economy allowed many Americans enjoy 'the good life'

Factors

1. Victory in WW2 encouraged 'patriotism'
2. The Cold War contributed to this
3. Growing middle-class created 'uniformity'
4. Middle Class cultural tastes, beliefs and customs set the standards for majority of Americans
5. Rising incomes for workers allowed them to share the affluence
6. Percentage of immigrants declined (in 1965 (% of Americans were native-born)
7. Revived interest in religion
8. Politicians were trusted

The American Dream

1. Central idea – US offers opportunities to everyone regardless of class or background
2. American was the 'land of opportunity'
3. Those who worked hard would be successful
4. Driven by a belief that American had unlimited power and resources
5. Hollywood promoted the American Dream with 'feel-good' movies
6. USA good – USSR bad
7. Hollywood icons – Marilyn Munroe 'rags to riches'

Hollywood and the Red Scare

1. Growing hysteria over communists in America
2. McCarthy witch-hunts
3. During 1930's many actors and screen-writers were drawn to Communist Party in opposition to fascism
4. House Un-American Activities Committee called 19 people to give evidence.
5. The 'Hollywood Ten' refused to attend
6. They 'pleaded the 5th' (5th Amendment to Constitution 'right to remain silent')
7. Public opinion – must be guilty if they won't give evidence
8. Over 300 Hollywood employees cited as 'communist and blacklisted'

Cultural Impact of Red Scare

1. Many anti-communist films released
2. Social problems no longer given attention in books or film
3. Education became focus for anti-communism – hundreds of teachers sacked and blacklisted
4. Young people become increasingly conformist – the 'silent generation'
5. Media controlled by anti-communist publishers
6. Civil liberties attacked – phone-tapping etc became common
7. 'Freedom of speech' restricted

Exceptions and criticisms

1. Occasional films bucked the trend - '*Rebel without a cause*' and '*On the Waterfront*'
2. J.D. Salinger's '*Catcher in the Rye*' won many literary awards
3. People looked back on the 1950's with nostalgia
4. A time of calm and national unity
5. Critics claim it was bland and culturally sterile
6. William Shannon said the 1950's '*has been the age of the slob*'
7. Norman Mailer '*one of the worst decades in the history of man*'

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Discord and Conflict

1. **1968-1989**
2. Consensus replaced by discord and conflict
3. Racial conflict and Urban riots
4. Escalation of Vietnam War
5. Growth of protest movements
6. Widespread disillusionment with traditional American beliefs
7. Many felt shut out of the democratic process
8. Some resorted to violence to get 'system' to listen to them

Youth Culture

1. 'Baby Boomers' were teenagers in 1960's
2. Most young people stayed in full-time education longer than before
3. Part-time jobs made them consumers
4. Teenagers developed a cultural identity
5. Attitudes towards sex changed
6. Contraceptive pill invented in 1950's
7. Conventional attitudes towards pre-marital sex, contraception, abortion, homosexuality and pornography challenged
8. By late 1970's concern over STD's and AIDS
9. Youth Culture created 'generation gap' – Rock'n'Roll

Counter-Culture

1. Counter-Culture developed during the 1960's and 1970's
2. Behaviour and attitudes previously forbidden were no longer so
3. By 1980's influence in decline
4. Later generation not interested in challenging society
5. Late 1980's an era of calm after the turmoil of 1960's-70's

Hippies

1. Youth groups involved in protest movements – anti-Vietnam War and Civil Rights
2. Others 'dropped-out' and created 'counter-culture'
3. Contempt for middle-class values – dress and hair
4. Used slang
5. Development of 'flower-power' – 'in tune with nature'
6. Many lived in 'communes'
7. Practised 'free love' and used lots of drugs (LSD)
8. 400,000 attended Woodstock in 1969

Hippy Movement Fades

1. By 1970 – sharp divisions
2. More militant element began to emerge
3. Advocated use of violence
4. Many hippies suffered from their own excesses
5. Physical and Psychological effects of drug-abuse, broken relationships etc.
6. Provoked a 'conservative' backlash in American society
7. Many of their children adopted a conservative outlook (middle class)
8. Lasting impact on environmental movement

Multi-Culturalism

1. Many young people began looking for their emigrant roots (Europeans)
2. Irish Bars, Italian Pizza Parlours etc
3. Ethnic consciousness among Mexican Americans
4. American Indians began to demand recognition (still live on reservations)
5. Immigration and Nationality Act 1965 – changed national quotas for immigrants

Critics of Multiculturalism

1. Many whites opposed multicultural trends
2. Claimed it would lead to racial tensions
3. A threat to 'traditional American values'
4. Claimed it would impact on Education standards
5. 'New Right' formed – supported Ronald Reagan for President in 1981
6. In 1985 500,000 immigrants from Asia and Latin American. Spanish more used than English in some cities