

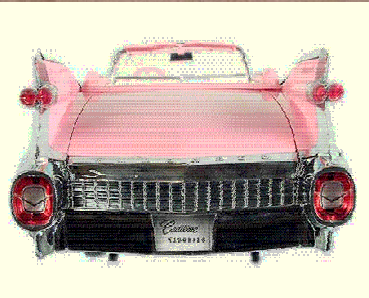


# THE 1950s:

**"Conservatism, Complacency,  
and Contentment"**

*OR*

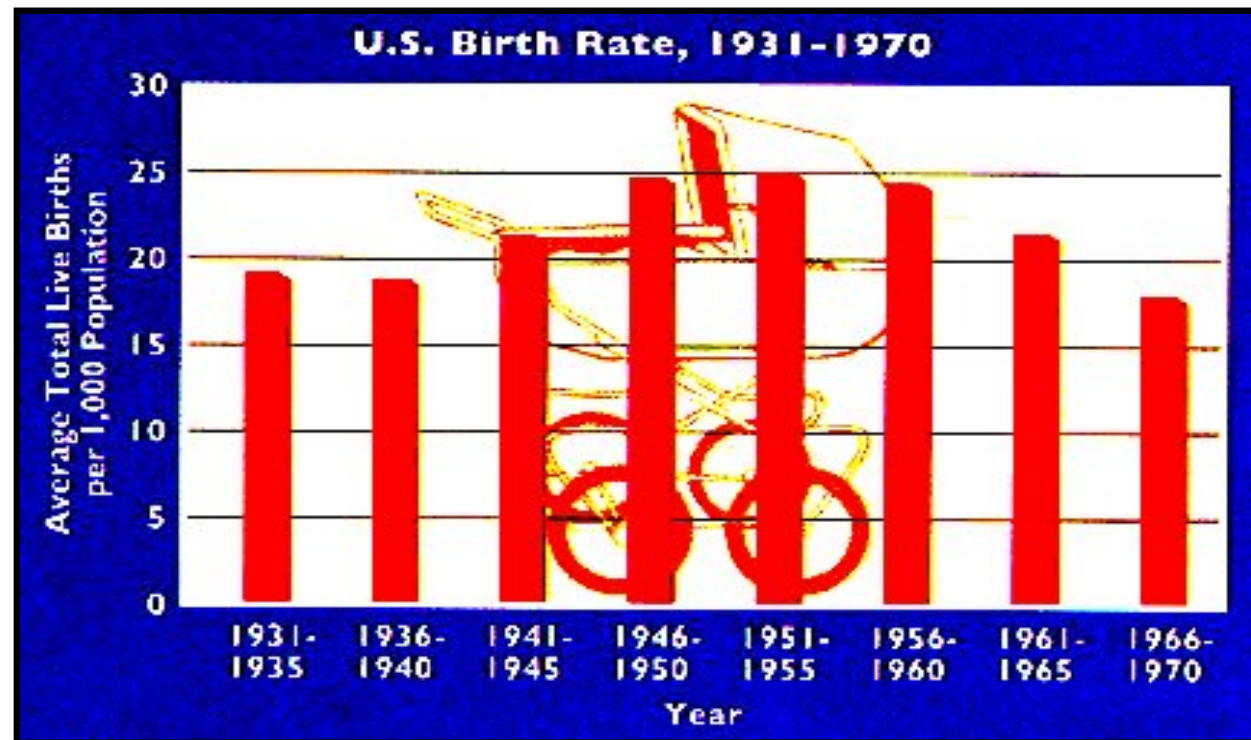
**"Anxiety, Alienation, and  
Social Unrest"??**



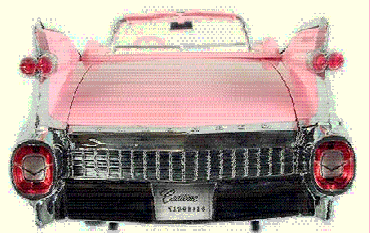
# Baby Boom

*It seems to me that every other young housewife I see is pregnant.*

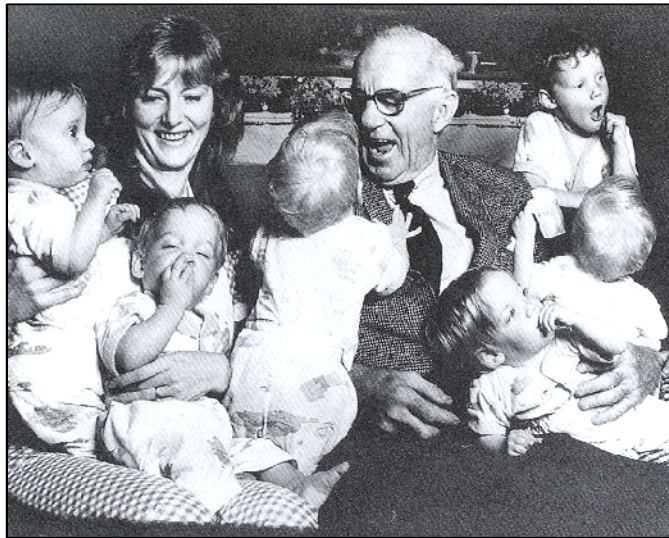
-- British visitor to America, 1958



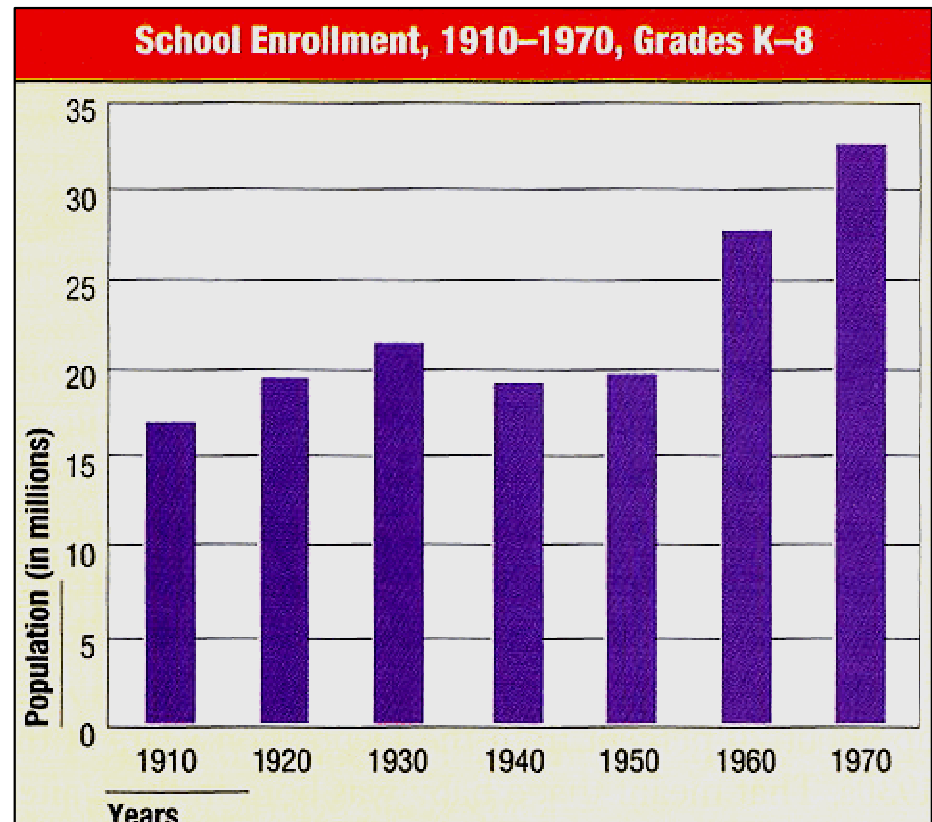
1957 → 1 baby born every 7 seconds



# Baby Boom



**Dr. Benjamin Spock**  
and the Anderson  
Quintuplets



# Suburban Living

Levittown, L. I.: "The American Dream"

1949 → William Levitt produced  
150 houses per week.



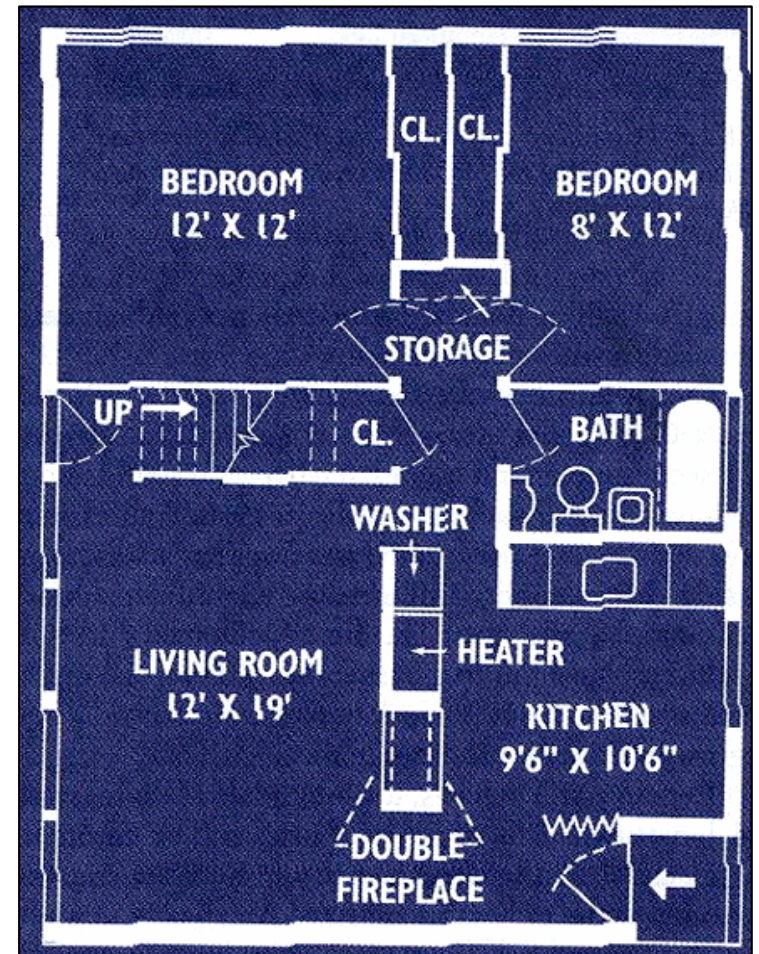
\$7,990 or \$60/month with no down payment.





# Suburban Living: The New "American Dream"

- 1 story high
- 12'x19' living room
- 2 bedrooms
- tiled bathroom
- garage
- small backyard
- front lawn



By 1960 → 1/3 of the U. S. population in the suburbs.



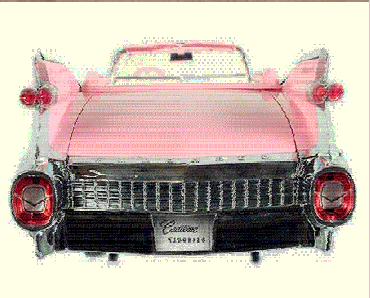


# Suburban Living

## SHIFTS IN POPULATION DISTRIBUTION, 1940-1970

	<u>1940</u>	<u>1950</u>	<u>1960</u>	<u>1970</u>
Central Cities	31.6%	32.3%	32.6%	32.0%
Suburbs	19.5%	23.8%	30.7%	41.6%
Rural Areas/ Small Towns	48.9%	43.9%	36.7%	26.4%

U. S. Bureau of the Census.





# Suburban Living: The Typical TV Suburban Families



*The Donna  
Reed Show*  
1958-1966



*Leave It  
to Beaver*  
1957-1963



*Father Knows Best*  
1954-1958

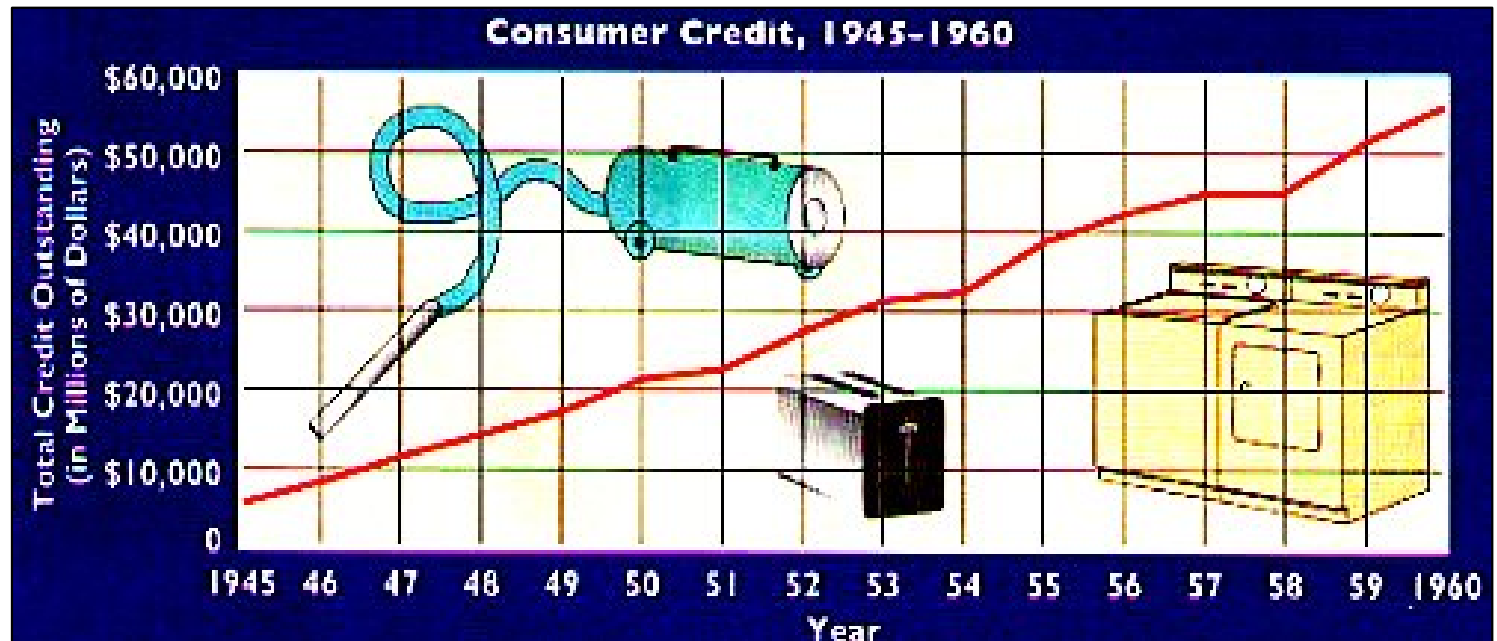


*The Ozzie & Harriet Show*  
1952-1966



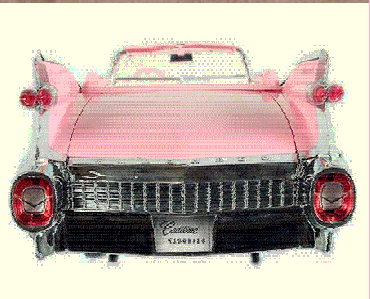
# Consumerism

1950 → Introduction of the Diner's Card



*All babies were potential consumers who spearheaded a brand-new market for food, clothing, and shelter.*

*-- Life Magazine (May, 1958)*





# Consumerism



**"IRON CURTAIN LOOK IS HERE"**

**IRON CURTAIN LOOK IS HERE**  
U.S. ENJOY! BUT FIND MOSCOW MODELS HIGH PRICED, WARE OVERLOOKED, NOT PASTY

**TUPPERWARE**  
THE PROMISE OF PLASTIC IN 1950s AMERICA

Alison J. Clarke



Model 12C109  
Big 12 1/2" tube

**BLACK-DAYLIGHT TELEVISION**

Finest picture plus greatest eye comfort. Tests show 140% greater range of picture tones than ordinary TV! Smartly styled consoles and table models from \$179.95 in the East. Tax, installation extra.  
General Electric Company, Syracuse, N. Y.

**GENERAL ELECTRIC**

# A Changing Workplace

## Automation:

1947-1957 → factory workers decreased by 4.3%, eliminating 1.5 million blue-collar jobs.

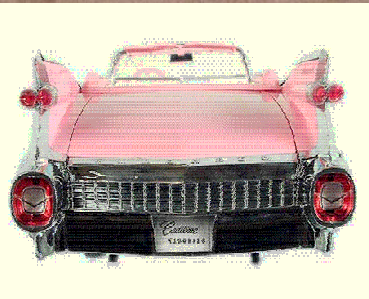
By 1956 → more white-collar than blue-collar jobs in the U. S.

Computers → **Mark I** (1944). First IBM mainframe computer (1951).

## Corporate Consolidation:

By 1960 → 600 corporations (1/2% of all U. S. companies) accounted for 53% of total corporate income.

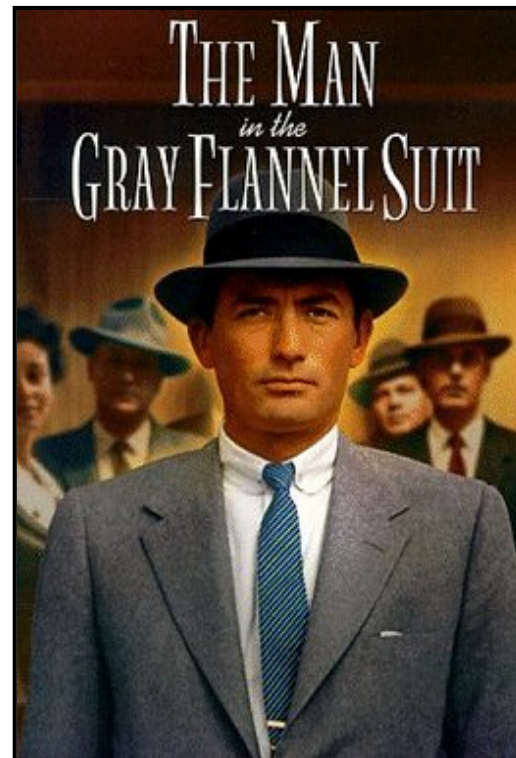
**WHY??** Cold War military buildup.



# A Changing Workplace

## New Corporate Culture: "The Company Man"

1956 → Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*



# The Culture of the Car

Car registrations: 1945 → 25,000,000  
1960 → 60,000,000

2-family cars doubles from 1951-1958



1958 Pink Cadillac



1959 Chevy Corvette

1956 → **Interstate Highway Act** → largest public works project in American history!

 Cost \$32 billion.

 41,000 miles of new highways built.



# The Culture of the Car

America became a more homogeneous nation because of the automobile.



First McDonald's  
(1955)



Howard  
Johnson's



Drive-In  
Movies

# The Culture of the Car

The U. S. population was on the move in the 1950s.

NE & Midwest → S & SW ("Sunbelt" states)

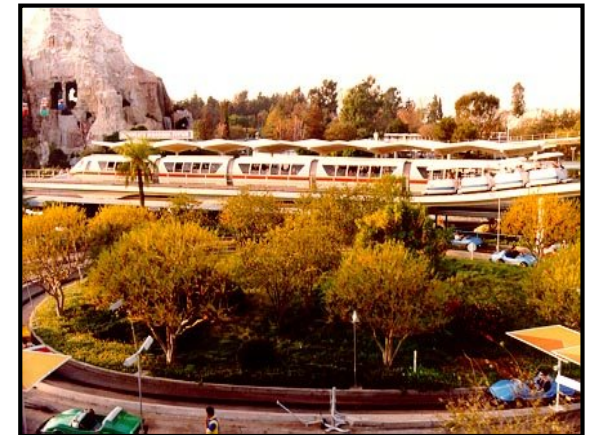
1955 → Disneyland opened in Southern California.  
(40% of the guests came from outside California, most by car.)



Frontier Land



Main Street



Tomorrow Land

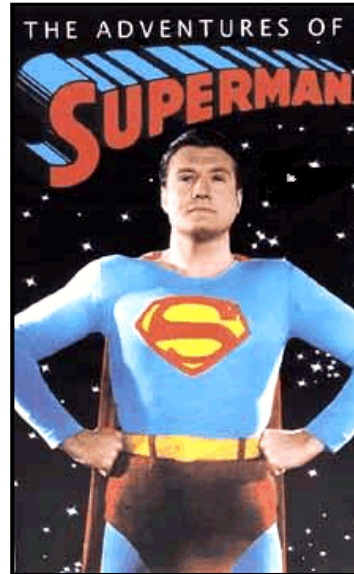
# Television

1946 → 7,000 TV sets in the U. S.

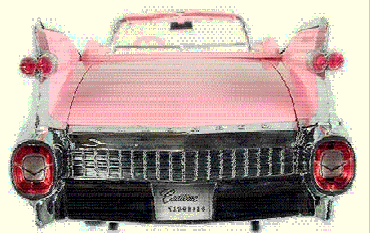
1950 → 50,000,000 TV sets in the U. S.

*Television is a vast wasteland.* → Newton Minnow, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, 1961

Mass Audience → TV celebrated traditional American values.



*Truth, Justice, and the American way!*





# Television - The Western



**Davy Crockett**  
*King of the Wild Frontier*



**The Lone Ranger**  
(and his faithful sidekick, Tonto):

*Who is that masked man??*

**Sheriff Matt Dillon, Gunsmoke**







# Television - Family Shows

Glossy view of mostly middle-class suburban life.



*I Love Lucy*

But...



*The Honeymooners*

*Social Winners?...*

*AND...*

*Losers?*

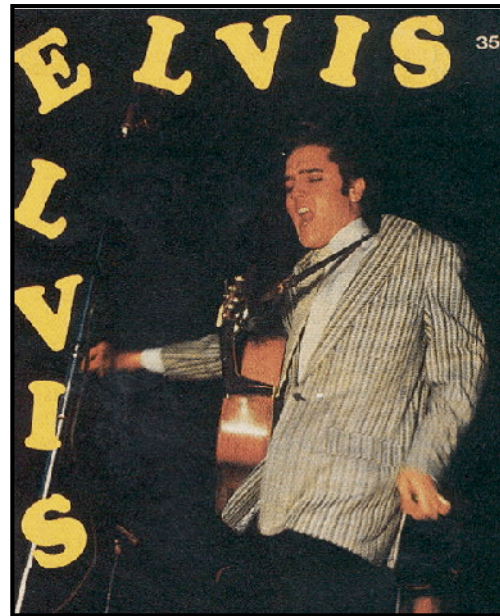


# Teen Culture

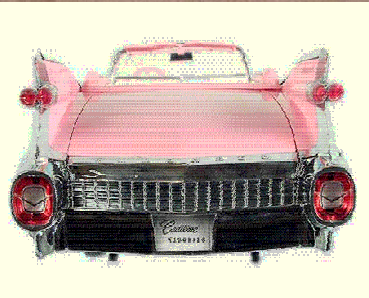
In the 1950s → the word "teenager" entered the American language.

By 1956 → 13 million teens with \$7 billion to spend a year.

1951 → "race music" → "ROCK 'N ROLL"



Elvis Presley → "The King"





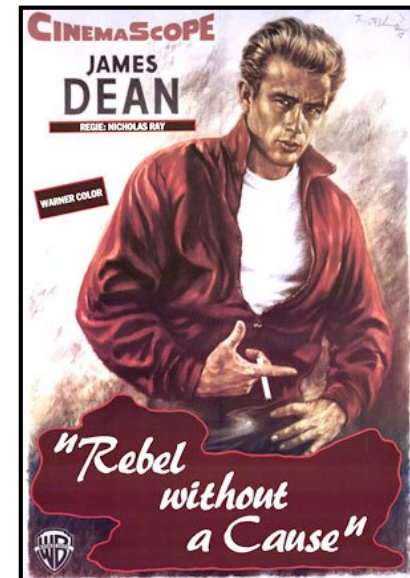
# Teen Culture

"Juvenile Delinquency" ???

1951 → J. D. Salinger's  
*A Catcher in the Rye*



Marlon Brando in  
*The Wild One*  
(1953)




James Dean in  
*Rebel Without a Cause*  
(1955)



# Teen Culture

## The "Beat" Generation:

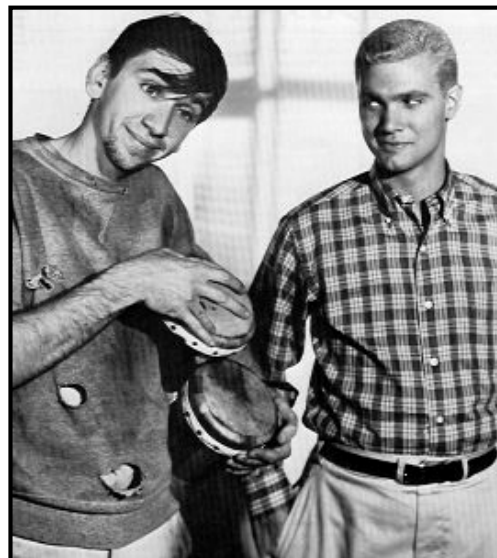
 Jack Kerouac → *On The Road*

 Allen Ginsberg → poem, "Howl"

 Neal Cassady

 William S. Burroughs

"Beatnik"



"Clean" Teen

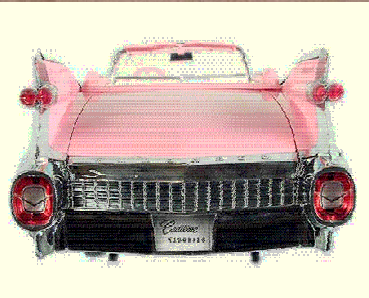




# Teen Culture

## Behavioral Rules of the 1950s:

- Obey Authority.
- Control Your Emotions.
- Don't Make Waves → Fit in with the Group.
- Don't Even Think About Sex!!!



# Religious Revival

*Today in the U. S., the Christian faith is back in the center of things.* -- Time magazine, 1954

Church membership: 1940 → 64,000,000  
1960 → 114,000,000

## Television Preachers:

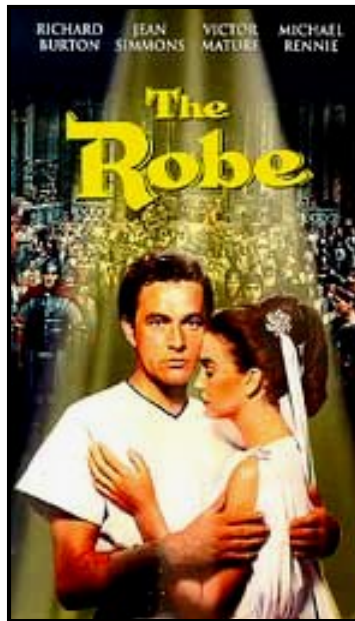
1. Catholic **Bishop Fulton J. Sheen** → "Life is Worth Living"
2. Methodist Minister **Norman Vincent Peale** → *The Power of Positive Thinking*
3. **Reverend Billy Graham** → ecumenical message; warned against the evils of Communism.



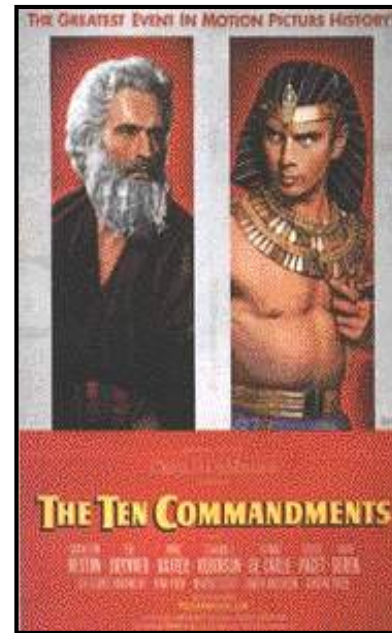


# Religious Revival

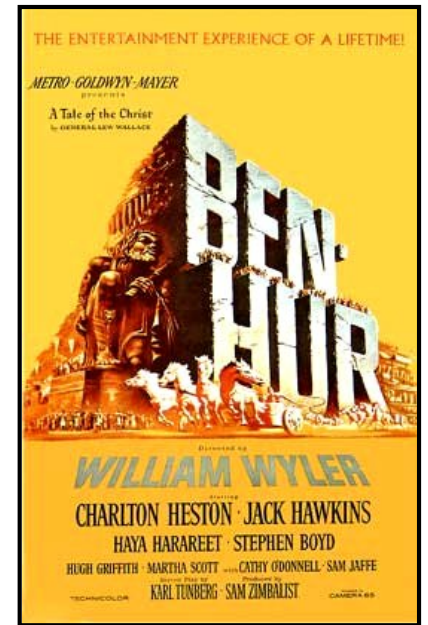
Hollywood: apex of the biblical epics.



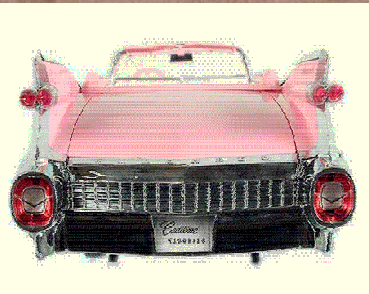
*The Robe*  
1953



*The Ten Commandments*  
1956



*Ben Hur*  
1959



*It's un-American to be un-religious!*  
-- *The Christian Century*, 1954

# Well-Defined Gender Roles

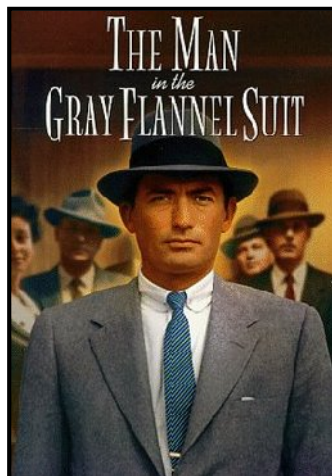
The **ideal modern woman** married, cooked and cared for her family, and kept herself busy by joining the local PTA and leading a troop of Campfire Girls. She entertained guests in her family's suburban house and worked out on the trampoline to keep her size 12 figure.

-- Life magazine, 1956



Marilyn  
Monroe

The **ideal 1950s man** was the provider, protector, and the boss of the house. -- Life magazine, 1955



1956 → William H. Whyte, Jr. → *The Organization Man*



a middle-class, white suburban male is the ideal.





# Well-Defined Gender Roles

## Changing Sexual Behavior:

**Alfred Kinsey:**

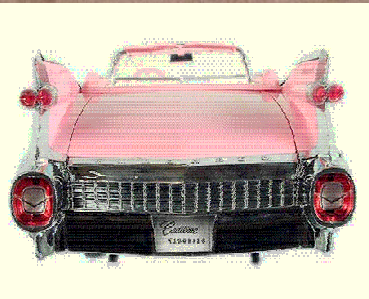
1948 → *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*

1953 → *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*

- ✓ Premarital sex was common.
- ✓ Extramarital affairs were frequent among married couples.

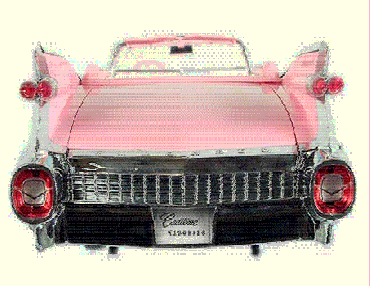
*Kinsey's results are an assault on the family as a basic unit of society, a negation of moral law, and a celebration of licentiousness.*

-- *Life magazine, early 1950s*



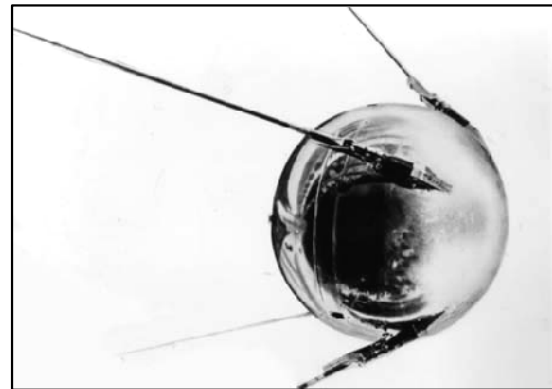
# Progress Through Science

- 1951 -- First IBM Mainframe Computer
- 1952 -- Hydrogen Bomb Test
- 1953 -- DNA Structure Discovered
- 1954 -- Salk Vaccine Tested for Polio
- 1957 -- First Commercial U. S. Nuclear Power Plant
- 1958 -- NASA Created
- 1959 -- Press Conference of the First 7 American Astronauts



# Progress Through Science

1957 → Russians launch **SPUTNIK I**



1958 → **National Defense Education Act**



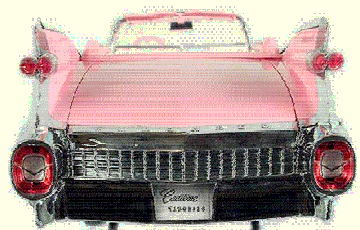
# Progress Through Science

UFO Sightings skyrocketed in the 1950s.



*War of the Worlds*

Hollywood used aliens as a metaphor for whom ??



# Progress Through Science

## Atomic Anxieties:

⊕ "Duck-and-Cover Generation"



## Atomic Testing:

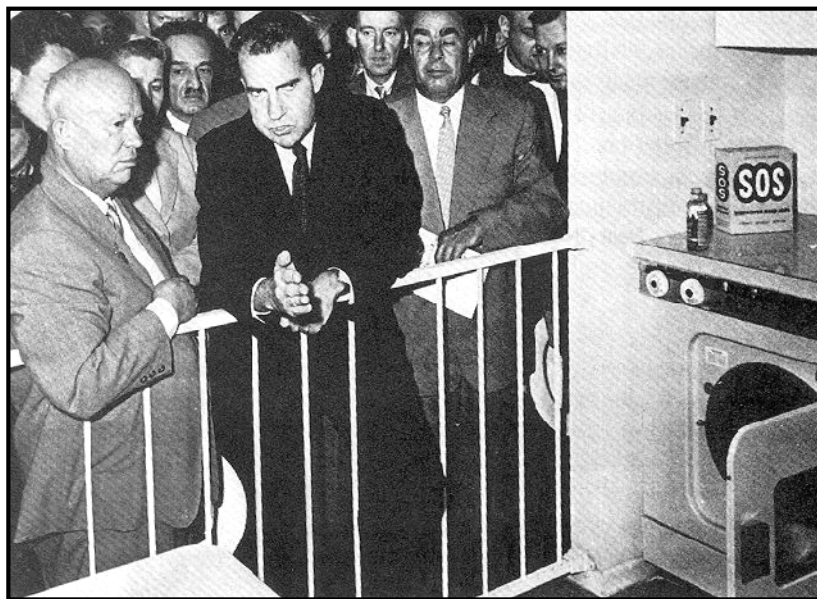
⊕ 1946-1962 → U. S. exploded 217 nuclear weapons over the Pacific and in Nevada.





# The 50s Come to a Close

1959 → Nixon-Khrushchev  
"Kitchen Debate"



Cold War ----->  
Tensions



<----- Technology  
& Affluence



# Discussion / AP Essay Topic:

*The postwar era witnessed tremendous economic growth and rising social contentment and conformity. Yet in the midst of such increasing affluence and comfortable domesticity, social critics expressed a growing sense of unease with American culture in the 1950s.*

**Assess the validity of the above statement and explain how the decade of the 1950s laid the groundwork for the social and political turbulence of the 1960s.**

