

1950s Conformity DBQ

Name _____ Date _____ Per _____

Historical Context: World War II gave Americans an unprecedented era of affluence, technological growth, leisure, and opportunities for education and research. Out of this came four new factors pressuring people to conform, and especially to spend more to keep the consumer economy growing: modern advertising, television, credit cards, and babies.

Document A: *Crabgrass Frontier* by Kenneth T Jackson

The young families who joyously moved into the new homes of the suburbs were not terribly concerned about the problems of the inner-city housing market or the snobbish views of Lewis Mumford and other social critics. They were concerned about their hopes and dreams. They were looking for good schools, private space, and personal safety, and places like Levittown could provide those amenities on a scale and at a price that crowded city neighborhoods, both in the Old World and the New, could not match . . . If the dream did not include minorities or the elderly, if it was accompanied by the isolation of nuclear families, by the decline of public transportation, and by the deterioration of urban neighborhoods, the creation of good, inexpensive suburban housing on an unprecedented scale was a unique achievement in the world.

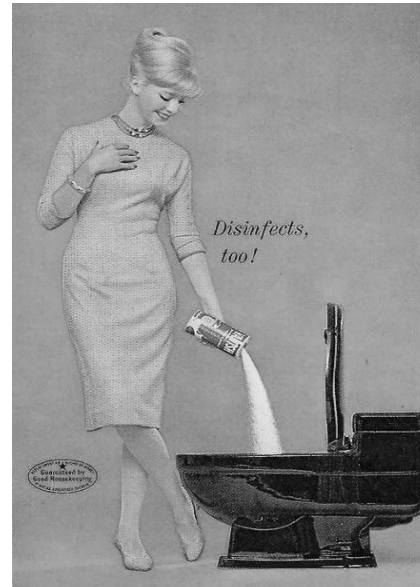
Why did people move to Levittowns?

What were Levittown residents trying to escape?

Document B: *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan

The suburban housewife -- she was the dream image of the young American woman and the envy, it was said, of women all over the world. The American housewife -- freed by science and labor-saving appliances from the drudgery of housework, the dangers of childbirth, and the illnesses of grandmother. She was healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned only about her husband, her children, her home. She had found true feminine fulfillment. As a housewife and mother, she was respected as a full and equal partner in his world. She was free to choose automobiles, appliances, supermarkets; she had everything that women ever dreamed of . . .

How does Betty Friedan describe the suburban housewife?



Document C

Does this ad symbolize the "suburban housewife" as described in Document B? Why or why not?

How does this ad reinforce the stereotype of how a women should be in the 1950s? Note specific examples from the image

Vocabulary

- **Conformity:** doing & thinking as others do as deemed socially acceptable
- **Dissent:** to disagree with a widely held majority of opinion
- **Discontent:** A desire for something different or better

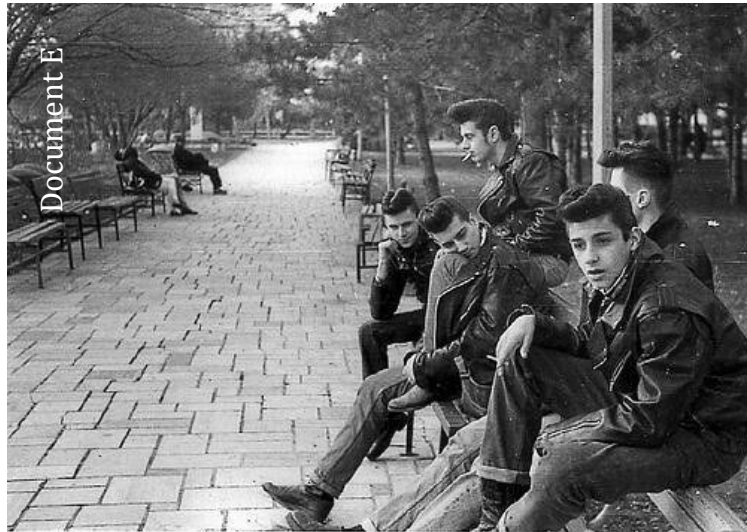


Document D: Chase and Sanborn Coffee

What is the purpose of this ad?

How does this ad reveal the relationship between husband and wife at this time?

Do you think this ad was successful? Why or why not?



List three things that are different about Document E and Document F

Do you think the men in Doc E are conformists? Why or why not? Use additional information from your notes to support your answer

Do you think the man in Doc F is a conformist? Why or why not? Use additional information from your notes to support your answer

Document G

"I Am Waiting" BY LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI

I am waiting for my case to come up
and I am waiting
for a rebirth of wonder
and I am waiting for someone
to really discover America
and wail
and I am waiting
for the discovery
of a new symbolic western frontier
and I am waiting
for the American Eagle
to really spread its wings
and straighten up and fly right
and I am waiting
for the Age of Anxiety
to drop dead
and I am waiting
for the war to be fought
which will make the world safe
for anarchy
and I am waiting
for the final withering away
of all governments
and I am perpetually awaiting
a rebirth of wonder

What is Ferlinghetti's discontent about?

What does the author think will help his discontent?

Do you think the author is a conformist? Cite a specific verse from their poem to support your response.

Assignment: A Conformist is someone who complies or goes along with a set of rules, standards, or laws. On a separate sheet of paper write a paragraph response to this statement using the documents above and your notes, "The decade of the 1950s deserves its reputation as an age of political, social and cultural conformity." Explain whether or not you agree with that statement. Be sure to use cite the documents in your paragraph response.