

The Baby Boom

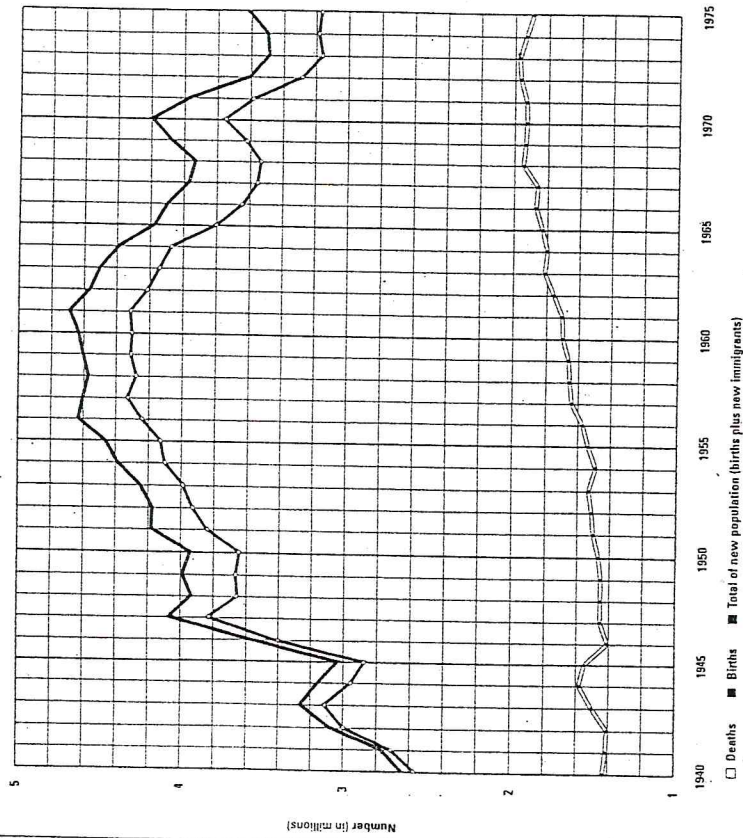
Directions: Read the paragraphs below and study the graph carefully. Then answer the questions that follow.

The term *baby boom* refers to the years 1946 to 1964 when the population of the United States soared due to a dramatic postwar increase in the annual birthrate. The birthrate had been declining fairly steadily for decades, falling below 20 births per 1,000 people for the first time in 1931. In 1941, however, the birthrate edged back up over 20 and stayed above that figure through 1964.

At the height of the baby boom, from 1954 to

1961, more than 4 million babies were born in the United States every year. Many women who might have stayed childless at other times decided to have children. One sociologist wrote about the "pro-child social values" that characterized the period: "Those who didn't want children were an embarrassed and embattled minority. It [not having children] was almost evidence of a physical or mental deficiency."

The U.S. Baby Boom in Perspective, 1940-1975



1. What happened to the number of births in the two years prior to 1946?

2. What was probably the major cause of the beginning of the baby boom?

3. Look at the graph's 1959 totals. What does the 4.30 level indicate?

What does the level of 4.60 indicate?

What does the level of 1.66 indicate?

By how much did the U.S. population increase in that year?

4. Nearly 60,000 more people immigrated to the United States in 1965 than in 1964. Why then does the top line in the graph dip down between those years?

5. What is significant about the number of births in 1972? (Hint: Look at the number of births for the first year of the baby boom.)

Why do you think 1964 is considered the final year of the baby boom?

6. Contrast the patterns of births and deaths during the years 1940-1975.