

Milwaukee 1950s

WORD FOR THE DAY: ALOOF: Distant, not engaged.

1. The 1950s are generally regarded to be the beginning of the consumer culture. It was also a time where the role of women became compromised. When the GIs returned from World War II they wanted to reclaim their dominance in the home, but women had been out working during the war years and this became complicated.
2. In films the 1940s had been a great age of women of substance with actresses like Hepburn, Stanwyk, Bacall, and Davis lighting up the screen as women who ran ranches, had their own businesses, and were generally the decision-makers in their environments. This all changed in the 1950s where the stars tended to be more sex symbols than women of intelligence and direction.
3. You might ask the students if the consumer culture is still here. They may say it is actually much worse, with most teens having more electronic gadgets, designer clothes, and bikes/cars/cycles, etc.
4. During the Cold War 50s and 60s, Americans were not just building bomb shelters, often called fallout shelters. They were also building freeways designed to get people out of the cities fast in the event that an air raid siren indicated a nuclear attack. People in the rural areas did not need to worry about being targeted, as the bombs were usually designed to hit large cities where the most deaths would result.
6. Slinkies were little coils that youth played with in the 50s. If let go, they would walk on their own and climb up and down steps. The hula hoop was another craze. Everyone had to have one and there were contests everywhere on who could keep a hula hoop going the longest.

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