

Postwar and the 1950s: On the Surface and In Reality (when have you heard this before?)

General Characterization

- Interesting, bizarre but exciting decade
- Very much a decade of conformity and materialism
- Americans were adjusting to a new role on the world stage
- Invasion of the Television
- Birth of Rock n Roll

On the Surface

1. Economic boom (fueled by savings from WW II, war bond redemption, large military budgets, low energy costs)---contrast with the boom in the 1920s
2. Increase in the standard of living
3. “American dream” seemed attainable for most people
4. U.S. one of the two global superpowers (increases nationalism)
5. Rise of the “**Sunbelt**” (South---from Florida, across the Gulf Coast to Texas to Southern California)
 - *remember, much of the south remained in “3rd world” conditions from the end of the Civil War until World War II

In Reality

1. High inflation, labor problems, Military-Industrial Complex forming
2. Unpopular war (Korea-1950 to 53) and a commitment to the most unpopular war (Vietnam- 1955 to 75)
3. Civil Rights movements (African American, Women, Native American, Latino) start to boil in the 1950s (will explode in the 1960s both peacefully and violently)
4. CIA actions in the world (especially in Latin America and the Middle East)
5. Slow death of the “**Rustbelt**” (northern/midwestern industrial cities)
 - *people migrated to the south primarily following the jobs