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The History of British youth culture post 1945: Which decade or youth subculture was the most significant and why?



About this unit

This unit takes a thematic approach to consider the changing roles and perceptions of young people in Britain over the last century. The unit will explore broad changes in the lives of young people, considering how changes in education, work, politics and leisure came to reshape the nature of teenagers' experiences. However, it will also look in more depth at a series of youth subcultures and use these as a way of thinking about how these broader changes combined to create distinct communities and cultures at specific moments in time.

Unit Structure

This unit is structured around 3 sequential enquiries:

What was significant about the Teddy Boys subculture?

Which decade or youth subculture was the most significant and why?

How has technology changed the way we listen to music over time?

How this unit links to the new national curriculum for primary history

The unit involves the study of an aspect or theme in British history that extends pupils' chronological knowledge beyond 1066.

Enquiry 1: What was significant about the Teddy Boy Subculture?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS
<p>What was happening in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s?</p> <p>What were Teddy Boys?</p>	<p>What was happening in Britain at this time?</p> <p>After the end of World War II, Britain faced an economically challenging time. Britain had borrowed millions of pounds from the United States of America for food and materials during the war. The Blitz had also caused a lot of damage which needed repairing. Despite the war ending in 1945 there were still shortages of food and materials. This meant that rationing, which had been introduced in 1940, continued until 1954.</p> <p>A new post-war government</p> <p>In the 1945 general election, the Labour party, led by Clement Attlee, defeated Churchill's all-party coalition government. The new Labour government promised Britain a programme of social and economic reconstruction. Key industries were nationalised and the welfare state created, with the NHS being launched in 1948. Also in 1948 the British Nationality Act was passed. This gave all citizens of Commonwealth countries the right to have a British passport and to work in the UK. There was a labour shortage after World War II and many people from the Commonwealth migrated to Britain to live and work.</p> <p>Social change</p> <p>The 1950s was a time of rapid change. As the 1950s progressed the economy boomed and living standards improved significantly. People worked fewer hours, had more leisure time and more money in their pockets. However there was still an expectation that if they married and had children, women would become housewives rather than work.</p> <p>British youth culture</p> <p>In the 1950s, with more money in their pockets, young people had more influence. Although they were a hugely diverse group they had a collective identity in society – the 'teenager', a term that originated in America in the mid 1940s. Large markets catering for teenagers' interests were developed, in particular, music and clothes (Shuker, 2016). A number of different youth subcultures developed and these challenged and changed society over the decades. Teenagers and young people formed and expressed their own ideas about how society should be run.</p> <p>The link between music and identity can be a strong one. Hesmondhalgh (2001) argues that music is much more than just entertainment, describing it as 'a means by which people affirm, create and nurture their individual identities'. Through their choice of music, young people aligned themselves to particular social groups, ideologies and views.</p> <p>The following provides a brief overview of a few of the many and hugely diverse youth subcultures and artists prominent in Britain from the 1950s to the end of the twentieth century, each making their own contribution towards a changing British society.</p> <p>Children to identify what was happening at the time of the creation of the 'Teddy Boy Subculture'.</p> <p>Children to then identify what Teddy Boys were and how they could be identified.</p> <p>Children to create a fact file about these. Presenting findings of historical study through a variety of means with accurate using of some key words and phrases related to the period of study</p>

<p>Did Teddy Boys deserve their bad reputation?</p> <p>Who were the Teddy Girls and why do we know less about them?</p>	<p>During the early 1950s specific anxiety cohered around the Teddy boy. Sometimes interpreted as a revival of Edwardian fashions, the Teddy boy's long, drape jacket was more precisely a British 'take' on American styles of the 1940s. First identified in London's working-class neighbourhoods in 1953, the Teds were presented by the press as the perpetrators of a 'new' wave of uniquely violent street crime. The scare-stories, however, were often inflated. Notions of a quantum leap in delinquency seemed borne out by rising crime figures, but – as is often the case – this 'juvenile crime wave' was largely a statistical phenomenon produced by new approaches to policing and changes in the collation of crime data. Indeed, rather than being a response to a genuine eruption of youth crime, the heightened fears are better seen as a symbolic focus for wider anxieties at a time of rapid and disorienting social change.</p> <p>But delinquency and violence were not the only things that attracted postwar ire. Often, the very sartorial styles adopted by the young were viewed as a symptom of wider national decline. For many commentators of the time, America – the home of monopoly capitalism and modern consumerism – epitomised processes of cultural dissipation and, from this perspective, trends in youth culture embodied Britain's general drift towards a tawdry 'Americanisation'. Writers like Richard Hoggart, for instance, poured scorn on 'the juke box boys' with their 'drape suits, picture ties and American slouch', who spent their evenings in 'harshly lighted milk bars' putting 'copper after copper into the mechanical record player' – a realm of cultural experience that, Hoggart argued, represented 'a peculiarly thin and pallid form of dissipation'.</p> <p>Such opinions, however, reek of snooty condescension. And, more importantly, they miss the powerful investment young people make in their style. In postwar Britain, for example, images of US popular culture seemed thrilling and romantic. Compared to the drab conventions of 1950s Britain, American style was exotic and exciting, and offered kids a seductive sense of individuality and worth. Indeed, it is exactly this sense of identity and empowerment that underpinned the succession of subcultural scenes that flourished through subsequent decades.</p> <p>Children look at various sources/extracts given by teachers. They are to decide whether the teddy boy deserved the given bad press.</p> <p>Children to then identify who teddy girls were? Children to suggest why we know less about the Teddy girls.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was significant about the Teddy Boys subculture? • What was the legacy of the Teddy Boys? 	<p>Using all of the prior knowledge gained from research, children use the various sources of information to suggest what was important about the Teddy boy subculture and what legacy they left behind as the country entered the 60s.</p>

How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?

Children will be able to use material culture to help understand the impact of this subculture on history..

- Students will be able to draw inferences from a wide range of source materials

Students will be able to ask valid historical questions to investigate the impact of this subculture on history..

- Students will be introduced to specific subject vocabulary around youth subcultures.

How this enquiry might be adapted for children of different ages and different abilities?

Suggest reasons why the Teddy boys were portrayed in the way they were by the media/politicians?

Debate whether this is fair about the portrayal?

What influence did this have on music and fashion?

Enquiry 2: Which decade of Youth Subculture was the most significant and why?**LEARNING OBJECTIVES****KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS**

Children should learn to identify the key youth subcultures of the 1960s
Beatlemania?

The Beatles

The 1960s continued to be a time of change. What became known as the '1960s counter-culture' arose. This was an anti-establishment ideology, encompassing many different youth cultures and forms of expression, including political protest. The Beatles were part of this. Formed in Liverpool in 1960, the 'fab four' as they became known are still considered to be one of the most influential bands of all time. They commanded a huge and loyal fan base worldwide. Fans' often frenzied appreciation of their idols was known as 'Beatlemania'. Their music drew on many different influences (including skiffle, beat, and rock and roll) and their sound, style and image developed in many different ways throughout the 1960s. The Beatles remain the biggest-selling band in the history of music.

Children to identify the impact of the Beatles on the culture at the time using the resource pack.

Create a Slideshow based on what impact the Beatles had on society and on music in general during this period.

<p>Children should learn to identify the key youth subcultures of the 1960s including Mods and Rockers and hippies.</p>	<p>Mods and Rockers both emerged in the 1960s. They were conflicting youth cultures who on occasions were involved in well publicised clashes. Both had their roots in the Teddy Boy subculture and despite their differences, they shared similarities, including their working-class demographic. Mods got their name from the term 'modernist', stemming from modern jazz. Mods listened to soul, rhythm and blues, ska and beat music. They were clean cut and often rode motor scooters. Rockers were bikers who were influenced by American films and culture. They listened to 50s-style rock music.</p> <p>Children use sources of evidence to compare the mods and the rockers. Where are there any similarities and differences? Children to also feature information about the Hippies.</p>
<p>Children should learn to identify the key youth subcultures of the 1970s including hippies and Punk. Children use sources of evidence to show the influence of reggae and artists such as David Bowie in changing people's perceptions and promotion of acceptance.</p>	<p>David Bowie had a career spanning six decades, from the 1960s until his death in 2016. He embodied many different personas and identities. David Bowie challenged gender norms of the 1960s and 1970s, and in doing so became a role model for many teenagers and young people. David Bowie was, and remains, an LGBT+ icon with an undeniable impact on the visibility of the LGBT+ community over the years. Many credit David Bowie with helping Britain become more inclusive in this respect.</p> <p>Reggae originated in Jamaica in the late 1960s. It was a fusion of different musical eras and styles – including Mento (Jamaican folk music), ska and rocksteady. Reggae became associated with the religious movement Rastafarianism.</p> <p>Reggae became popular in Britain in the 1970s. Reggae poet and recording artist Linton Kwesi Johnson who came to London in 1963 described the importance of Reggae for the children of the Windrush generation saying: 'We rejected the caution and restraint our parents had in a hostile racial environment. We were the rebel generation – Reggae afforded us our own identity.'</p> <p>Punk</p> <p>Punk was an anti-establishment, anti-authority youth culture which was particularly prominent in Britain in the late 1970s. It represented teen rebellion and anarchy and was manifest in punk music and fashion.</p> <p>Children to identify key influences of these different genres of music before identifying why reggae music was important to the Windrush generations. Children to create a factfile identifying the different styles of music with examples of songs/artists/clothing for each style.</p>

<p>Children should learn to identify the key youth subcultures of the 1980s including new romantics and Goths.</p> <p>Which era had the greatest influence on society and why?</p>	<p>Post-punk</p> <p>Following the punk era of the 1970s, the early 1980s saw a variety of ‘post-punk’ movements such as the New Romantics and the gloomier Goths. Also important to young people were different forms of world music including the continued rise in music from Jamaica and India. For example, Bhangra originated in the Punjab region of India and Pakistan. It is a fusion of music and dance with modern Bhangra mixing Indian and Western genres. It was in the 1980s that Bhangra music really came to prominence in Britain with bands such as Alaap. It is a positive affirmation of diverse Asian cultures and identities.</p> <p>Children to identify how these groups could be identified using clothing, music and bands they would listen to. Suggest how world music may have become more popular in Britain.</p> <p>Children compare and contrast the two and make comparisons to the clothing of today.</p> <p>Final activity is to suggest which era had a greatest influence on society giving reasons why?</p> <p>Children put the different cultures on a timeline.</p>
<p>How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?</p> <p>Children will be able to use material culture to help understand the impact of this subculture on history..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to draw inferences from a wide range of source materials <p>Students will be able to ask valid historical questions to investigate the impact of this subculture on history..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be introduced to specific subject vocabulary around youth subcultures. 	<p>How this enquiry might be adapted for children of different ages and different abilities?</p> <p>Suggest reasons why the various youth cultures were portrayed in the way they were by the media/politicians?</p> <p>Debate whether this is fair about the portrayal?</p> <p>What influence did this have on music and fashion?</p> <p>Compare the groups identifying similarities. Did they all want the same thing?</p>

Enquiry 3: What has the impact of technology been on how we listen and purchase music?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	KEY CONTENT AND SUGGESTED LESSON IDEAS
<p>What impact has the Internet and World Wide Web had on the continued development of Britain's youth cultures?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What music do you like to listen to? • What do you know about the artists? 	<p>2000 onwards</p> <p>Youth culture continues to change and develop. Those born between 1982 and 2003 are widely described as 'Millennials'. Whereas it used to be that many young people would align themselves with different youth subcultures, expressing their identity through the music they listened to and the way they dressed, this has become less defined since the millennium.</p> <p>One significant influence is the Internet and the rapid growth of the use of digital technology and social media platforms in the twenty-first century. It has had an impact on the way many young people express their identities. Petridis (2014) explains: 'We now live in a world where teenagers are more interested in constructing an identity online than they are in making an outward show of their allegiances and interests.'</p> <p>As a consequence, music, associated identities, ideals and values are more accessible to everyone. Young people are able to pick and choose as they please and have a 'universe of hybrid "style-fusions" and options' to explore (Osgerby, 2020). Despite this, new and former youth subcultures are still present in our society. However, they are no longer so strongly associated with teenagers and the distinction between youth and adulthood now is less defined. Children identify and think about what influences them and how they dress/act/socialise with/what they like. How is this different? How has technology influenced this? Children can identify what music they like and what they know about the artists.</p>
<p>How has technology changed the way we listen to music over time?</p>	<p>Children to create a slide show/extended piece of writing describing how the way we listen to music has changed over the course of time.</p>

How will this enquiry help children to make progress in history?

- Children will be able to use material culture to help understand the impact of this subculture on history.
- • Students will be able to draw inferences from a wide range of source materials
- Students will be able to ask valid historical questions to investigate the impact of this subculture on history.
- • Students will be introduced to specific subject vocabulary around youth subcultures.

How this enquiry might be adapted for children of different ages and different abilities?

Suggest reasons how the change in technology has impacted the change in society. Debate whether this is good or bad?

What influence did this have on music?