



DAILY LIFE
1950-1960

The Emergence of the Teenager

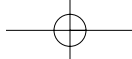
Life after World War II brought changes in the family. For the first time, the teenage years were recognized as an important and unique developmental stage between childhood and adulthood. The booming postwar economy made it possible for teenagers to stay in school instead of working to help support their families, and allowed their parents to give them generous allowances. American business, particularly the music and movie industries, rushed to court this new consumer group.

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▲ **TEENS AS CONSUMERS**
Comic books, pimple creams, and soft drinks were just a few of the products aimed at teenagers with money to spend.





THE TEEN MOVIE SCENE ▲

Teenagers with money in their pockets often found themselves at the movies. Hollywood responded by producing films especially for teens. *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) told the story of a troubled youth driven by anger and fear. It starred teen heart-throbs James Dean and Natalie Wood.



◀ ROCKING TO A NEW BEAT

Teenagers seeking a collective identity found it in rock 'n' roll, a fresh form of music that delighted teenagers and enraged their parents. Dick Clark's *American Bandstand* (shown at left) showcased young performers playing music ranging from doo-wop (shown above) to hard-driving rhythm and blues. The songs they sang underscored themes of alienation and heartbreak.

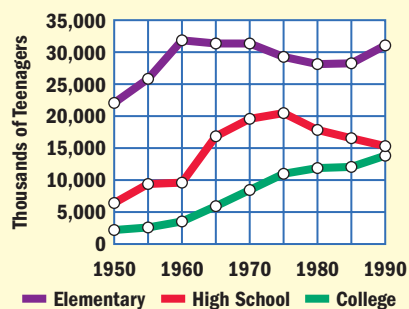
DATA

FILE

TEENAGE TIDBITS

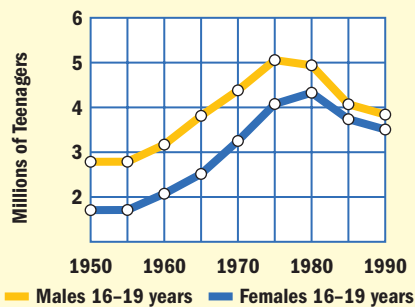
- A *Life* magazine survey showed that, during the 1950s, teens spent \$20 million on lipstick alone.
- In 1956, a total of 42,000 drive-in movie theaters—heavily frequented by teenagers—took in one-quarter of the year's total box-office receipts.
- College enrollments more than doubled between 1946 and 1960.
- A weekly credit payment for a record player was \$1.

U.S. School Enrollments, 1950-1990



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995

Teenagers and Employment, 1950-1990



Source: Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1995

THINKING CRITICALLY

CONNECT TO HISTORY

1. Interpreting Data What were some causes of the booming teenage market in the 1950s? To answer the question, review the entire feature, including the Data File.

SEE SKILLBUILDER HANDBOOK, PAGE R28.

CONNECT TO TODAY

2. Analyzing Movies Today What types of movies do American studios make for the teenage market today? How do these movies differ from those of the 1950s?