

### '50s-'70s Music Essay

***In what ways does the pop culture of the 1950s-1970s give us insight into the many changes that were happening at the time?***

Choose 2 of the 3 decades & answer the bolded question with specific, detailed examples from that part of the unit supported by your own analysis. Examples should be drawn from the pop culture we covered in class (music, art, fashion or movies.)

#### GENERAL REQUIREMENTS:

- You are going to write a 3 paragraph essay (an intro paragraph & 2 argumentative body paragraphs.)
- Your 2 body paragraphs should open with an argumentative topic sentence, which addresses the bolded question above, and be followed by 2-3 specific pieces of evidence.
  - You should try wherever possible to use PRIMARY SOURCES as your evidence. You must have at least 1 primary source quote in each of your body paragraphs.
  - Evidence could be drawn from song lyrics, quotes from artists or detailed description of scenes from a film, quotes from historians, etc.. (You will find these things in the slideshows & class work. No additional research is required.)
- You do NOT need a bibliography for this assignment as you should be using material from class (NO OUTSIDE RESEARCH.)

#### Resources ([LINK TO UNIT SLIDESHOW](#))

- '50s Rock & Roll
- *Rebel Without a Cause*
- Music of the 1960s
- Psychedelic Movement
- Pop Art
- VH1's *NY77: The Coolest Year in Hell*
- Disco

## Essay Planning

**Step 1: Brainstorm** to remind yourself of what you know.

- A. Choose your decades. Consider which 2 decades of the 3 you feel most familiar with, know the most about, relate the most to or found the most interesting. Then think about what was happening in those decades. What were some of the political, social and/or economic trends or themes of the time? What was going on in each decade? (HISTORICAL INFO GOES ON THE LEFT SIDE OF THE CHART BELOW)
- B. Now shift your focus back to music. What are some of the trends we learned about in pop culture at this time? Consider the music, artists, specific songs, styles of music, and other aspects of culture like clothing, films, art, etc.. (FILL THIS INFO IN ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE CHART BELOW)

<u>HISTORICAL CONTEXT:</u> Decade & historical trends	<u>POP CULTURE EVIDENCE:</u> Pop culture in that decade (detail on music, songs/artists, films, etc.)
<p><b><u>1950s</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Suburbia</li> <li>❖ Baby Boom post-WWII -&gt; teenagers</li> <li>❖ Conformity</li> <li>❖ Conservative (values, sexual norms, &amp; politics)</li> <li>❖ Racism &amp; segregation</li> </ul> <p><b><u>1960s</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Civil Rights Movement</li> <li>❖ Vietnam War</li> <li>❖ Youth rebellion</li> <li>❖ Rise of the counterculture (rejection of mainstream values, use of drugs, changing sexual norms)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>1950s</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Rock &amp; roll emerges from black culture (R&amp;B)</li> <li>❖ Radio stations segregated</li> <li>❖ White teens began listening to black stations -&gt; radio stations eventually start playing “race music” to appeal to youth (EX: Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Big Joe Turner, etc.)</li> <li>❖ White artists start making covers of black artists &amp; achieving commercial success &amp; tone down racy lyrics (EX: Elvis, Bill Haley, Pat Boone, Buddy Holly, etc.)</li> <li>❖ Dancing became more popular (EX: the Twist, mashed potato, etc.) - style made adults scared</li> <li>❖ Adults/conservatives reject rock &amp; roll for a variety of reasons (fears around interracial mixing, sexual lyrics or dances, encouraging teen rebellion, etc.)</li> <li>❖ Media was used to scare parents into thinking all their children were doing bad things (EX: <i>Rebel Without a Cause</i>, <i>Blackboard Jungle</i>, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b><u>1960s</u></b></p>

<p><b><u>1970s</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Economic slump</li> <li>❖ Distrust in politicians post-Watergate/Vietnam</li> <li>❖ Loss of the Vietnam War</li> <li>❖ Social activism &amp; equal rights movements (women, LGBTQ, Native American, environmental, etc.)</li> <li>❖ Cities starting to decay (i.e., NYC) as middle &amp; upper-classes moved to suburbs</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>1970s</u></b></p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------

**Step 2:** Make connections between the left and right side of your brainstorming ↑↑ chart. Where are there overlapping themes that you could use to guide your paragraph? Choose 2-3 themes/trends that you understand and feel comfortable explaining in depth.

**Step 3:** Write a thesis statement that BOTH answers the question and integrates the 2 themes/trends you plan to explore.

**Step 4:** Gather evidence from your notes (readings, class notes, films, etc.) to support those themes. Find SPECIFIC, DETAILED evidence. Your paragraph should have a minimum of 2-3 detailed examples to illustrate the theme.

**Step 5:** Plan out your body paragraphs

- Open with your topic sentence (Be sure it's analytical and makes a clear argument that answers the bolded question at the top of this assignment)
- Start off your paragraph with some brief historical background on the decade.
- Add in the 2-3 detailed examples from the unit along with the evidence you plan to use. Pull those detailed examples from class notes/slideshow, primary sources, etc.. Remember, you need to use a minimum of 1 primary source quote in your body paragraph.
- Remember to pause after each example and analyze the evidence. You're trying to connect it back to the idea that music tells us something about the time.

## Paragraph I (Introduction)

**ESSAY QUESTION:** In what ways does the pop culture of the 1950s-1970s give us insight into the many changes that were happening at the time?

**What is the general topic of this essay?** (Remember, you want to start your intro broad and get more narrow/focused as you go on.)

**What general information does the reader need about this topic?** (What is the topic being discussed? What information is needed to give the reader enough background to understand the topic? This is where you cover the 5Ws.)

**THESIS: What will this essay explain and/or argue?** (Your thesis should directly answer the essay question above and hint at the topics of your body paragraphs.)

## Body Paragraph #1

**What is the topic of this paragraph?** (What specific point will this paragraph illustrate with 2-3 examples?)

**What are the detailed examples that illustrate the specific topic?** (Summarize & give detailed evidence for each example and then explain what each example shows = this is your analysis.)

Historical context:

1.) PC example:

2.) PC example:

3.) PC example (OPTIONAL):

**What statement wraps up this topic?** (What conclusion can be drawn from the examples from the examples in this paragraph?)

## Body Paragraph #2

**What is the topic of this paragraph?** (What specific point will this paragraph illustrate with three examples?)

**What are the detailed examples that illustrate the specific topic?** (Summarize & give detailed evidence for each example and then explain what each example shows = this is your analysis.)

Historical context:

1.) PC example:

2.) PC example:

3.) PC example (OPTIONAL):

**What statement wraps up this topic?** (What conclusion can be drawn from the examples from the examples in this paragraph?)