History of Rock ‘n’ Roll: 1950s

I. Roots of Rock & Roll

a. During the 1920s & 1930s, many white Americans enjoyed seeing and listening to African-American jazz and blues.

b. A few black R&B musicians achieved crossover success with whites and blacks but more were rewarded with poverty and obscurity.

c. Rock and roll first emerged when? _______________

d. Early R&R was heavily influenced by what?

   i. Rock and Roll was also influenced by blues, country, jazz, folk and gospel.

   e. Although R&R was greatly influenced by R&B, the genre also changed as it was performed by white musicians. HOW SO?

   f. Early Rock and Roll music was characterized by saxophone and piano, later the electric guitar became more prevalent.

II. Popularization of Rock & Roll

a. African-Americans had been playing rock and roll for years – why did white audiences know very little about them?

b. What changed by the mid-1950s, that helped rock and roll to become wildly popular across the color line? (LIST)

c. **Bill Haley & the Comets**
   
   i. 1954 release of ______________________, followed by “Rock Around the Clock” helped make “rock” part of the national language.
d. How did major label recording practices in the early 1950s contribute to the growth of Rock and Roll with the white mainstream?

e. Who was Sam Phillips and what did he do that helped to bring rock & roll to the white mainstream?

f. Elvis Presley
   i. Received his first guitar at 11.
   ii. Early influences included: hymns, gospel, country, and bluegrass.
   iii. In 1947 his family moved to Memphis and he began listening to blues and R&B.
   iv. He appeared 3 times on The Ed Sullivan Show (1956-1957)
   v. In 1956, Elvis had the #1 country single (“I Forgot to Remember to Forget”), the #1 R&B single (“Heartbreak Hotel”), and the #1 Pop single (“I Want You, I Need You, I Love You”).
   vii. Made 31 films over the course of his career.

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<th>Video break: The Fifties: The Beat</th>
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<td>How did Elvis help to break down racial barriers?</td>
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<td>What power did teens have in the 1950s?</td>
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<td>How did control over music change hands in the 1950s?</td>
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ix. Elvis brought a huge number of vocal styles into rock and roll
x. Persona in which country and R&B, black and white cultures mesh
xi. Style combination of honky-tonk, Western swing, R&B, with unique vocal style
xii. Created a sub-genre of rock and roll = **rockabilly** (DEFINE)

g. **Buddy Holly**
i. *That’ll Be The Day* a hit in 1957
ii. Rapid string of seven hit records with band The Crickets
iii. Killed in plane crash in 1959 - “The Day The Music Died”

h. **Jerry Lee Lewis**
i. Recorded “Whole Lotta Shakin’ Goin’ On” in 1957. Went wild kicking out the piano stool on the *Steve Allen Show.*
ii. Nicknamed “The Killer” for his outrageous on-and-off-stage antics.
iii. What made Lewis a rather scandalous figure?

i. **Little Richard**
i. On September 13, 1955 Richard recorded “Tutti Frutti.” (racy lyrics adjusted to not shock audiences)

j. **Chuck Berry**
i. In September 1955, he recorded “Maybellene,” a remake of the country hit, “Ida Red (May)” which reached #5 on the pop charts and #1 on the R&B charts.
iii. Legal troubles:

### III. What influence did major labels have on rock ‘n’ roll? (LIST)

### IV. **American Bandstand**
a. Began broadcasting from Philadelphia in 1957
b. Projected clean-cut, safe, mostly white image of rock and roll
c. Launched careers of teen idols and musicians alike
d. Created & promoted dance crazes
V. What was the civic reaction to rock ‘n’ roll?

VI. What do the two films (Rebel Without a Cause and Blackboard Jungle reveal about teenage concerns in the 1950s? What message do these popular films send to adults about teenage life and temptations?)

a. Consider how films such as these impacted adult perceptions of teens and teen culture.

VII. What led to rock ‘n’ roll’s decline in the late 1950s?

a. Payola Scandals: (DEFINE)