

Elvis Presley Coursework

1. Study Source A.

What can you learn from Source A about Elvis Presley's impact on popular music in the USA in 1955?

In Source A the magazine "Billboard" Presley is described as:

"A Winner! Presley Hot As \$1 Pistol"

This statement means that Elvis is in demand and that he is popular and wanted as a musician by lots of different people.

When Presley brought out two tracks in March 1955 (called Heartbreak Hotel and I Was The One) he went straight to number 2 in the charts, even though people knew that he was singing black style music. In number 1 place was Perry Como's jukebox Baby, Perry Como was a respectable, conforming, all-round nice guy of the time. So this Source tells us that despite the style of Presley's music he still was "good enough" to cause a worry to the existing, well loved singers of that time.

2. Study Sources A and B.

(i) In what ways do the sources differ?

Source A says positive things about Presley like, he can sing, there is high demand for him and that he is wanted by the listeners of America, whereas Source B is against Elvis and describes him "caterwauling unintelligible lyrics in an inadequate voice, during a display of primitive physical movement..."

The sources can be inaccurate because Source A is a music and entertainment magazine and is sure to say that Elvis Presley is wonderful and great, so it can raise its ratings and so that people buy their magazine.

Source B is inaccurate because the quotes taken to say how awful Elvis Presley is are all taken from newspapers that are aimed for the white middle class businessman, and their families, so the reports that are given will mostly be against Elvis and his style of music.

(ii) Use Sources C and D, and your own knowledge, to explain why sources A and B differ.

Source C is from the Catholic weekly and says that "If his entertainment could be confined to records, it might not be too bad an influence on the young, but unfortunately Presley makes personal appearances". This Source suggests that Elvis could be coped with if he would only release records, and that only his style of dancing and general appearance was the source of all the problems that were currently surrounding him.

Source D is from Roy Orbison, a respected and well-established singer at that time. Orbison said, "He was this punk kid, singing like a bird." Now this impression that Orbison gives describes Presley as a rough, off-the-streets who came on stage to sing in the same way he would go into a bar, Orbison says "First thing he came out and spat on the stage. In fact he spat out a piece of gum. Plus he told some real bad, crude jokes, which weren't funny". All of this is creating a very bad image of Elvis. Roy Orbison would want this to happen because Elvis Presley would be a threat to him. Elvis became very popular very fast, even with his style of music.

Source B + C is aimed at the same audiences that are white, catholic, businessmen.

The majority of these types of people will be against Elvis's music

because of the style, (black) dancing (provocative) and the bad image given of him by famous music stars and newspapers. Therefore Sources A + B differ because they are for different audiences

3. Study Sources B, E and F.

Do Sources E and F support the evidence of Source B about the impact of Elvis Presley? Use your own knowledge to explain your answer.

Source E shows the Milton Berle show became very popular when Elvis Presley made an appearance. It was so popular that it even beat the family comedy Sgt Bilko in T.V ratings.

Source F is a photograph of Elvis Presley performing on stage in 1956, in the background you can see girls of about 11 years plus of age trying to scramble on to the stage and screaming wildly in the background. Even though the year before there was great controversy about his dancing, it hasn't affected his popularity. Source B was one of the group's people who were against Elvis and his music, they said that "Mr Presley has no singing ability" and "Also he gave an exhibition that was suggestive and vulgar". These people were trying to give negative images of Elvis and turn people against him. These statements that were made drew attention to Elvis, before many parents viewed him as just another craze that their children were going through, but now all of this media attention had been brought upon him parents heard exaggerated statements that he was a "striptease with clothes on" and began to take notice and action.

Source E contradicts Source B. Source E says "The Milton Bearle show topped Phil Silver's Sergeant Bilko in the ratings for the first time all season".

Whereas Source B says that Presley couldn't sing, danced with "...primitive physical movement..." and that he sang ". Unintelligible lyrics in a inadequate voice..." Even though he was criticised badly, he also was so popular that he rose the ratings of Milton Bearle show so high that it beat that mitched loved family show Sergeant Bilko.

Source F does support Elvis in one way, and that's to show he is really famous.

Source F confirms what Source B is afraid of - the impact of Elvis on the youngsters. The picture shows Elvis dancing and that even though he was "knocked" and critized he didn't fade away, but he became more famous.

4. Study Source G.

Use your own knowledge to explain why these different views were expressed.

Source G i) If the congressman wanted to do away with Elvis he could do it by wrecking his career, to do this he would need to speak in public against Elvis and get support of other adults, by doing this he could cause enough damage to Presleys reputation so that he would disappear or get knocked off the charts by another singer/band.

Source G ii) The KKK would want to have Elvis stopped because he was spreading Negro music to people, and people were beginning to enjoy this new style. The KKK want blacks out of their country, they also want things that are related to blacks to be stopped as well, the want all traces of black people wiped out of the country, the KKK will also kill people who want or try to help black people. Presley is singing black music and becoming very popular and the KKK want this stopped. This ".. twenty-man committee.. " Has been made to try and decide how to stop Elvis.

5. Study Source I.

Source I suggests that attitudes to Elvis Presley were beginning to change by 1958. Use the source, and your own knowledge, to explain why this was happening.

Elvis Presley joined the army even though he could have bought his way out.

Mainly from this onwards Elvis is seen as a caring responsible person. In 1958 his mother dies, so the way that the newspapers broadcasted this made Elvis look like a caring person, instead of the wild image he has before.

It was around now that Elvis had started to make films, these films weren't all action packed, adventure films, but they were mainly romances and love stories.

One of these films was Love Me Tender; this movie portrayed the softer and more romantic side of Presley.

Source I comes from a magazine, by the style of the article it seems to be from a more adult magazine than a teenagers, the source is admiring Elvis and America in the way that people act in times of need. Elvis could of quite easily bought his way out of service, yet his went into the army because serving his country in war was more important than entertainment.

Another reason for his service could be that he didn't want the communists to invade America, if this happened any money that Elvis would earn from his music would go straight to the government instead of himself. One part of the source says " This is US democracy at its best." This is describing that before Elvis began making music, he was a poor child, and that now his is one of the richest singers of his time. The source describes America as the land of oppourtunity, the country where people are free to do what they want.

6. Study all the Sources.

"The impact of Elvis Presley on US society during the 1950s was more the result of television coverage of his performances than of his music." Use the Sources, and your own knowledge, to explain whether you agree with this view of the career of Elvis Presley.

1950s America was a prosperous time in American history, with the war over America is owed vast ammouts of money by Britian, France, Russia and other contries, this leads to an economic boost in American society, and with the growing electronics market more and more people can now afford televisions and radios, with people now having eaiser access to these machines communication increases and more are reached by advertising, entertainment and new ideas. This new frontier of entertainment also brings fear, especially adults, their fear is what will be shown and how this will influence their children, this is all also happening during a time of changing culture which played a role in the way this was all taken in by the parents and children.

Source A describes Elvis as "The hottest artist" and an "amazing country warbler" this gives a positive fact about his music where as source B is saying how awful Elvis's preformance was on the Milton Bearle show and that he gave a show of "primitive pshsical movement" and that he was "appalling musically", source C is not quite going againted Elvis's music, but is saying that if it wasn't for his television appearence, he would be socially acceptable.

Source E has been obtained from a television ratings magazine and describes that even with all of the bad press that Elvis was getting, he still was that most watched preformer on that particular night, all of this bad press would of actually boosted his T.V ratings because people would of wanted to see this Elvis Presley so they could make their own minds up about him and his music.

All of the sources mentioned (source B,C + E) where influenced by television, if he hadn't made his appearence on the Milton Bearle show source B and C would of been all different. Source B describes how awful Elvis's music was, and this desision was made because of his television appearence. Source C was also decided on his appearence on the Milton Bearle show, the source comments on his dancing behaviour, how he was causing some youngsters to roll in the aisles. This could of only really been known by viewing on television or by actually being there.

Source D is from Roy Orbison a famous singer of the time, his view, allthough it would be slightly biased, would be noted by adults and added to the list of the bad things that they had read or seen

about Elvis. Orbison describes Elvis as a "punk kid" and that he couldn't speak properly, dance nor sing, the source ends almost as if Orbison was deeply shocked by Elvis, Orbison saw Presley at a concert, in the concert Orbison would have seen similar scenes as those in source F.

Source H shows some of the years that Elvis had number 1's in. During the years of 1956 and 1957 Elvis had 7 of his songs voted as the top song of the charts for the year. This could have been helped by his television appearances, more people would have seen him on television, than in concerts. The years of 1956 and 1957 would be particularly helpful to his career because of the economic boom and the wide range of electronic equipment Elvis was vastly helped by all of the advertising he got by the media.

There was an uproar when Elvis made his first television appearance, sources B,C+G seemed to be based on the view of the people of the time, most of these negative comments wouldn't have been said if Elvis hadn't been seen on T.V.

Source I doesn't mention T.V, it was Elvis serving time in the army so he could protect his country from the Nazi and Communist threats was what made him popular during this time of crisis. Elvis's recent television attack by the media would have drawn more attention to his enlistment, if he had only existed on the radio or concerts, only a small fuss would have been made about him joining, but since he has all of this press attention as a wild, uncaring animal it was quite a shock that he would risk his life in the battle against communism, even though he could have bought his way out.