

GCSE History Coursework

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Describe Popular Culture In Britain At The Beginning Of The 1960s.

The 1960s did not start off with colourful clothes and loud music. The years 1960 - 1962 were still very much influenced by 1950 styles. However, American influences were starting to come through majorly in Britain.

The fashion in these years was mainly items that had carried over from the 1950s. Most children fashions were identical to their parent's. However, as more and more young people started to rebel in the 1960's, many new fashions arose to suit the youths, and give them more freedom in what they could wear. A very popular American fashion icon was Jacqueline Kennedy. She wore shifts and A-line dresses, which had been designed several years ago, but had never been worn till 1960. They quickly became popular, and it gave women a new sense of freedom and allowed them to dress in their own way. Also, Mary Quant opened her first shop in Carnaby Street, which soon became very popular. She opened the way for a new generation of British fashion.

The music charts in the early 1960s were frequently dominated by American singers, still quite heavily influenced by 50's Rock 'n' Roll themes. Such stars included Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, Ricky Vallance, Eddie Cochran, and Neil Sedaka. The British artists – Cliff Richard and The Shadows, Billy Fury, and Adam Faith were all modelling themselves on these American singers. There was also a new style of music beginning to appear. In 1954 Lonnie Donegan had started to record a new style of music, which were called Skiffle. Skiffle started becoming very popular at the end of the 1950's / beginning of the 1960's.

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TV also started to become very popular as the young people had more leisure time. Some of the new shows appearing included 'Coronation Street', and 'The Avengers'. Another TV show that became very popular in the early 1960's was 'Jukebox Jury'. It was a jury based show that commented on new singles. This show enabled people to make their own decisions about new music that was around. It entertained young people and brought out new styles of music.

At the beginning of the 1960s, radio was still a very dominant means of entertainment. Comedy shows were becoming popular, like 'The Goon Show'. Another well-liked radio show was 'Beyond the Fringe', a show that criticized the way the country was run, in a light-hearted comedic way. This also made people think more about politics and changed the way people thought.

The British film industry was in decline. Most films in the cinema were American, such as 'West Side Story' and 'Psycho'. In 1960, something new came to cinemas: the 'Carry On' films. They showed a different and new British humour, which people had never seen in films before.

In conclusion, Britain's popular culture in the early 1960s was a mix of American influences and remaining styles from the 1950's. However, changes were just beginning to develop. Britain was starting to pull away from America, and create a new popular culture and era of its own.