

### How Far did young people's lives change between the early 1950's and the late 1960's?

Young people in the early 1950's had quite an upsetting and distressing life; England was just recovering from the Second World War. There was extreme damage that had been inflicted upon people's housing and their businesses. Basically the whole of England needed rebuilding from scratch. Young people living in these times not only had to suffer with all of the stress of having to watch their houses and businesses falling to pieces and then being rebuilt, they all had to have their food rationed until 1954.

There was no such word as 'teenager' in the 1950's; people went from being a child straight to being an adult. They reached "adulthood" at the age of about 12, and when they did, they dressed, acted and spoke almost exactly the same as their parents. They wore suits and ties, and were interested in all of the things that their parents were interested in. Overall, as well as having a very hard life, they also had a boring life. They liked singers like Pat Boone and Frank Sinatra, these were both singers who were not very daring in the way that they sung and the way that they danced. Pat Boone was famous for trying to sing black jazz songs, and not very well at that! And even though Frank Sinatra was a very talented and popular singer, he was not at all daring, and this was, I think one of the reasons that the parents liked him as well as the children - because he posed no threat to their children.

Children's attitudes to their parents was that they were very respectful and they obeyed everything that they told them to do. This was because the children were brought up to believe that insolence towards your parents was a very bad thing, and often, measures were taken to ensure that this was known very well by all of the children, by their parents hitting them with a belt or a cane, whenever they disobeyed them.

Towards the end of the fifties, and at the beginning of the sixties Britain became a lot wealthier - Britain had finally been re-built and people's wages and leisure time was increasing. This meant that people had a lot more money to spend on things that would occupy them in their extra leisure time. Because of this increase in wages, children and teenagers got more money too. They became more daring about what they bought, and resultantly, the items that they bought became a lot more daring and versatile, so as to increase the buyer's choice.

By the mid 60's, teenagers had completely changed. They were no longer exact replicas of their parents; they had finally adopted views and

mannerisms of their own. The fashion had completely changed and so had the teenager's tastes in music. Male teenager's fashions had changed from black and white and grey suits and shirts and basically just boring clothes to bright shorts, t-shirts and pretty much anything that they wanted to wear. Female teenager's fashions changed from long skirts, boring colours, long sleeves etc. to short skirts, short sleeves, bright colours and pretty much anything they felt like wearing. Groups of fashions and interests, these groups included 'Rockers' who wore jeans and leather jackets and who rode around on motor bikes.

Then there were the 'Mods' who were the rivals of the Rockers and who wore tailored, expensive clothes and who had neatly and carefully cut hair. Another group were the 'Teddy Boys' these all had long, greased back hair and wore Edwardian Jackets with crepe-soled shoes. They all used to 'hang around' in cafes and listen to their favourite music on the duke boxes. The late 60's was the birth of the Hippies, these were a group of young people who believed that there were no rules holding them down whatsoever - they did pretty much whatever they liked. Teenager's tastes in music also changed very dramatically. Music was becoming more and more daring and as singers like Elvis Presley and The Beatles became popular - these were all singers who had adopted their own styles of singing and melodies. All of their dance routines (especially Elvis Presley's) were also becoming very daring and thus was considered un-dignified to all of the parents who believed that this would be setting a very bad example to all of their children - encouraging them to act in similar ways.

Teenager's attitudes completely changed too. They were no longer obedient to their parents - the fact that their parents did not agree with what they were doing made it even more appealing to them, and so encouraged them to be even more rebellious. Teenager's attitudes to health and safety also almost disappeared. Young teenagers begun to smoke, drink alcohol and take drugs. These teenagers would also put themselves in unnecessary danger - like riding motorbikes - which was also strongly disliked by many parents. They had all completely lost all order - as far as they were concerned they could do whatever they wanted, when they wanted, and there was actually no one there to stop them.

Even with all of the changes just mentioned, there were still some factors, which stayed the same. The fact that the music completely changed from 1950 to the 1960's does not mean that the teenagers were not interested in music in 1950, it was just as popular, it was just that as music became more and more daring, so did the teenagers. Also, the fact that teenager's fashions changed, does not necessarily mean that the children and

teenagers in the 1950's were not interested in fashion - they followed all of the necessary trends etc. Thirdly the programs on television and the radio stations that the teenagers listened to or watched stayed basically the same, because they could not change unless more transmitters were to be used. Of course the programs themselves could change their images, but the programs watched did not change - people still watched programs such as Blue Peter in the 1950's and the 1960's.

So, as a final basic answer to the question mentioned in the title, young people's lives changed an awful lot from 1950 to the 1960's in almost all areas of their everyday lives, their home lives and their social lives, and basically the whole way that they thought about everything. They had begun to find a life of their own, a life that was not like their parent's or their younger siblings. They had created a whole new word - "teenager" and this meant that from that moment that the first adolescent started to rebel, so would all of them, because teenagers have the right to be naughty nowadays - they are expected to be naughty and are (in a lot of cases) expected to blame everything onto their parents. Without all of these young people who decided on a change, we might never have gained all of these rights and expectations, which do, in fact, make our lives a lot better now.