

Printable Teaching Guides
A Day in the Life – A Young Person’s Life in the 1950s

Objectives

Students will:

- Learn about a young person’s life in the 1950s.
- Discuss how life in the 1950s was similar to and different from life today.
- Choose one fad or trend from the 1950s. Write a paragraph comparing it to a similar fad or trend today.

Brief Description of Internet Site

The *FiftiesWeb* website provides information about life in America during the 1950s.

Build Background

- Explain to students that life in America changed during the 1950s. After the hard times of the Depression and World War II, Americans were ready to relax and have fun. The 1950s began a time of “fads,” trends or activities that were popular for a short period of time. Ask: *What fads became popular during the 1950s?* (Pogo stick, the drive-in restaurant, the hula-hoop, 3-D movies)
- Tell students that 3-D movies were first made with a three-dimensional quality in the 1920s. A new process improved the quality in the 1950s and made this type of film popular again. Ask: *How do 3-D movies work?* (The process works by using two different cameras to film a scene; each camera represents either the left or the right eye. The camera lenses are positioned the same distance apart as a person’s eyes – about 2 ½ inches. Two projectors show the images on the screen, and the viewer who watches the film wears special glasses with differently tinted glass for each eye.)
- Tell students the hula-hoop became part of an enormously popular pastime for young people in the 1950s. Two toymakers from California met with huge success when they developed millions of these toys. Ask: *How does a hula-hoop work?* (Adults and young people enjoy trying to keep the hoop moving around their waists by moving their hips.)
- Tell students that the pogo stick became a popular toy in the 1950s. Pogo sticks were popular earlier in the 1920s with dancing girls, who performed entire shows on them. Ask: *How does a pogo stick work?* (People hop up and down using a pogo stick, while trying to keep their balance and remain on the toy. A pogo stick works with spring-loaded footpads that the person balances on while jumping to compress the spring. The spring pushes back, and the person hops inches or even feet into the air with the stick.)

Teach

What to do:

- Connect to: <http://www.fiftiesweb.com/fashion/3-d-movies.htm>
- Read about 3-D movies during the 1950s and look at the pictures. Ask: *What movie started the 3-D fad of the 1950s?* (Bwana Devil)
- Select Hula Hoops. Read about this popular fad of the 1950s. Ask: *Where did the name hula hoop come from?* (The name "hula hoop" came from the Hawaiian dance hula hoop users seemed to imitate.)

Close

- Have students discuss what they learned about a young person's life in the 1950s.
- Have students choose one fad or trend from the 1950s. Then have them write a paragraph comparing it to a similar fad or trend today. Have them find photographs of both fads to paste alongside their paragraphs.