

The Eisenhower Years

Main Idea President Eisenhower promoted policies to maintain prosperity at home and to compete with the Soviets abroad.

History and You Have you ever taken part in an exciting contest to win first prize? Read to learn how the United States and the Soviet Union were rivals in a "contest" for world leadership.

In November 1952, Americans elected **Dwight D. Eisenhower** to the presidency in a landslide victory—the first Republican to win the White House since 1928. Eisenhower collected more than 6 million popular votes over Illinois Governor Adlai E. Stevenson, his Democratic opponent, and carried the electoral college 442 to 89. The Republicans also won control of Congress.

Born in Texas and raised in rural Kansas, Dwight D. Eisenhower rose steadily through the army to become supreme commander of the Allied forces in Europe during World War II. People called him "Ike"—and voters trusted him. He won wide support with his pledge to bring the Korean War to an "early and honorable end."

Domestic Policy

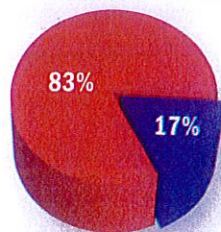
During his two terms in office, Eisenhower followed a moderate, or middle-of-the-road, approach to domestic policy. He avoided ambitious new government programs but resisted the pressure to end popular older ones, and sometimes he even expanded them. As he once told reporters: "I feel pretty good when I'm attacked from both sides. It makes me more certain I'm on the right track."

President Eisenhower wanted to make the federal government "smaller rather than bigger." He backed free enterprise, shifted some financial powers to the states, and cut federal spending. When Eisenhower completed his second term in 1961, the federal budget had a **surplus**, or excess, of \$300 million.

The greatest domestic program of the Eisenhower years involved building a network of interstate highways. In 1956 Congress passed the Federal Highway Act. The law funded the building of more than 40,000 miles (64,000 km) of highways that tied the nation together. The highway program spurred economic growth, especially in the automobile and oil industries, while improving military mobility in case of an attack.

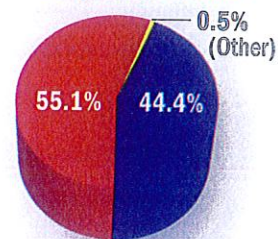
Primary Source Election of 1952

Electoral Vote



■ Dwight D. Eisenhower (R)
■ Adlai E. Stevenson (D)

Popular Vote



■ Dwight D. Eisenhower (R)
■ Adlai E. Stevenson (D)

Critical Thinking

- Interpreting** Which candidate won a majority of the popular vote?
- Applying** What is a landslide victory? Would you consider Eisenhower's election a landslide? Explain.



United States–Soviet Rivalry

During the 1950s, the United States and the Soviet Union engaged in a nuclear **arms race**. Both sides built more and more **nuclear**, or atomic, warheads and guided missiles that could destroy the other side many times over. With the threat of nuclear destruction so great, the United States and the Soviet Union had to act carefully. A crisis, badly managed, could lead to all-out war.


In 1956 two crises tested the superpowers. First, trouble arose in the Middle East when Egypt's president Gamal Abdel Nasser seized the Suez Canal from its European owners and blockaded Israeli shipping. In October, Britain, France, and Israel invaded Egypt. Britain and France hoped to get rid of Nasser, and Israel wanted to end Egypt's military threat. American and Soviet opposition finally forced the three nations to pull out of Egypt.

The second crisis erupted in Hungary, when students and workers demonstrated to demand changes in the government. A new government called for Soviet troops to withdraw. In early November 1956, Soviet leader

Nikita Khrushchev (kroosh-CHAWF) ordered Soviet forces to crush the revolt. President Eisenhower condemned the Soviet crackdown but did not intervene.

By the mid-1950s, the superpowers were interested in easing Cold War tensions. In July 1955, Eisenhower, NATO leaders, and Soviet officials met at a summit conference in Geneva, Switzerland. A **summit** is a meeting of heads of government. The leaders discussed major issues, raising hopes for peace.

After the Geneva summit, a policy of peaceful coexistence emerged. This meant the two superpowers would compete but avoid war. For example, the U.S. and the Soviet Union began competing in a space race. In October 1957, the Soviets sent into space the world's first artificial satellite, called *Sputnik*. The United States set up its own space program headed by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

 **Reading Check** **Describing** How did relations between the superpowers change after the Geneva summit?

LINKING PAST TO PRESENT

Computers

THEN In the mid-1940s, the earliest computers were built specifically for scientific calculations in military use. Unveiled in 1946, ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer) was the first programmable, general-purpose digital computer. It could take workers days, using punch cards, plug boards, and switches, to program the machine for each new task.

★ **1940s** ENIAC
Weight—30 tons
(27 metric tons)
Area—1,800 sq. feet
(167 sq. m)

★ **1990** Microsoft Windows 3.0 software introduced

★ **1977** First preassembled desktop, personal computer with color graphics; called "Apple II"

★ **1991** World Wide Web available to general public

Prosperity and Change

Main Idea A booming economy changed the social and cultural life of Americans during the 1950s.

History and You You probably have heard this expression: “Those were the good old days.” For some older Americans, this expression describes the 1950s. Read to find out why the 1950s has this appeal for them.

During the 1950s, the American **economy**—the system of production, distribution, and consumption—grew rapidly. Americans earned higher wages and bought more consumer goods than ever before. As a result, factory production soared. A “baby boom,” or increased birthrate, promised even more economic growth in the future.

Many women left the workforce to stay home and raise children. The demand for baby products and services grew. School enrollment soared as the “baby boomers” reached school age, putting a strain on the educational system.

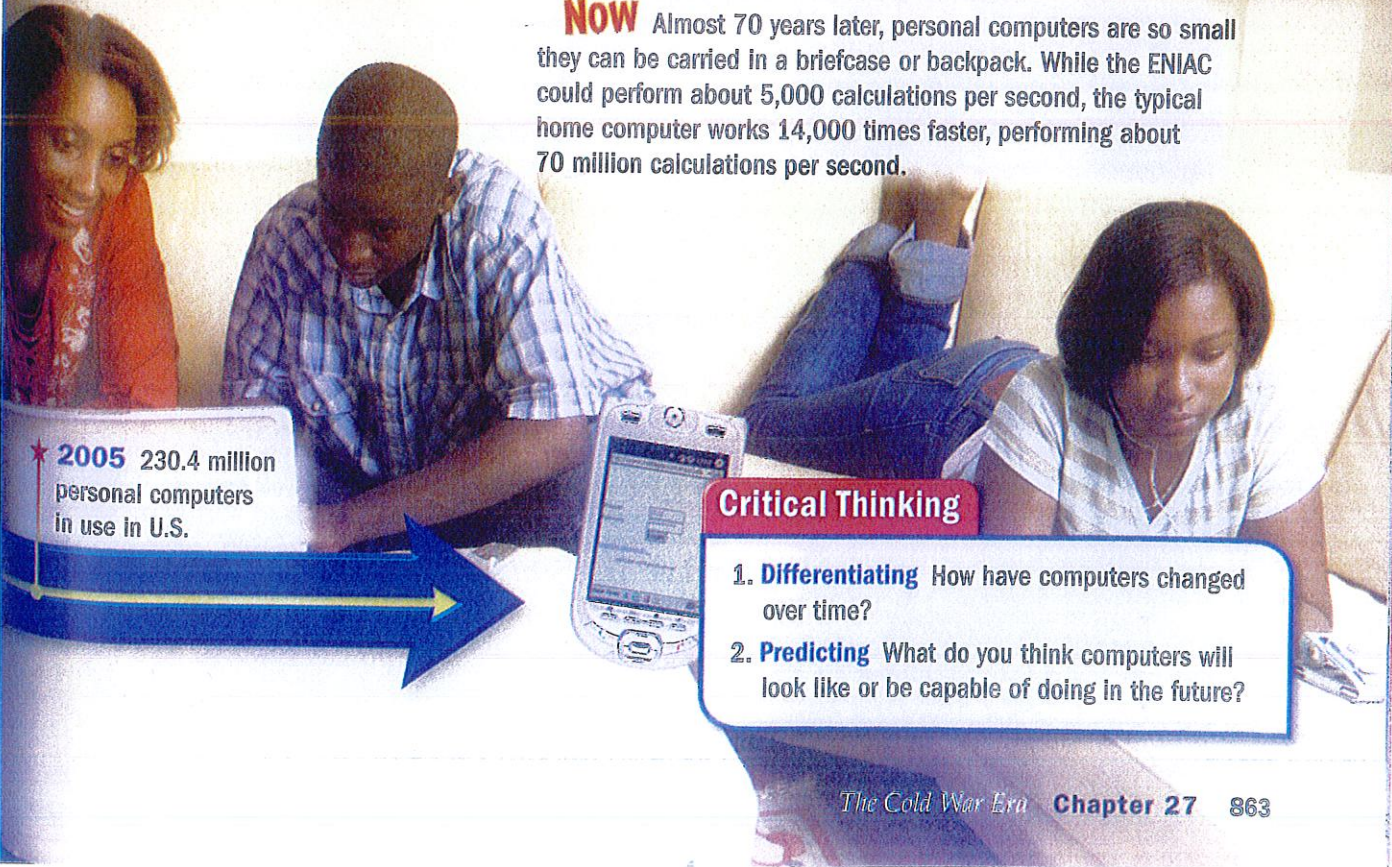
The Consumer Society

Americans of the 1950s went on a buying spree. **Affluence**, the growing variety and quantity of products available, and expanded advertising all played a role in the increased demand for consumer goods. Buying goods became easier, too. Many Americans used credit cards, charge accounts, and easy-payment plans to purchase goods.

Consumers sought the latest products—dishwashers, washing machines, television sets, stereos, and clothes made from synthetic fabrics. The growing market for cars prompted automakers to outdo one another by manufacturing bigger, faster, and flashier cars. New models added stylish features such as chrome-plated bumpers and soaring tail fins.

The advertising and marketing of products on television, on radio, and in magazines created consumer fads and crazes that swept the nation. In the late 1950s, Americans bought millions of hula hoops—large plastic rings they twirled around their waists. Other popular fads included crew cuts for boys, poodle skirts for girls, and a new snack—pizza.

Now Almost 70 years later, personal computers are so small they can be carried in a briefcase or backpack. While the ENIAC could perform about 5,000 calculations per second, the typical home computer works 14,000 times faster, performing about 70 million calculations per second.



★ **2005** 230.4 million personal computers in use in U.S.

Critical Thinking

- 1. Differentiating** How have computers changed over time?
- 2. Predicting** What do you think computers will look like or be capable of doing in the future?

An American Culture

By 1949 more than 900,000 American households had television sets. The sets, in large wooden cabinets, had small screens that displayed grainy black-and-white images. During the 1950s, an average of 6.5 million sets were produced annually. By the end of the decade, most American families had television.

Television changed American life. It became the main form of entertainment as well as an important source of news and information. Millions of Americans gathered to watch weekly episodes of programs such as *I Love Lucy* and *Father Knows Best*. The images shown in many programs—of happy families in neat, middle-class homes—helped shape Americans' expectations for their own lives.

A new form of music—rock 'n' roll—achieved great popularity among teenagers. Rock 'n' roll grew from the rhythm and blues music that African American musicians cre-

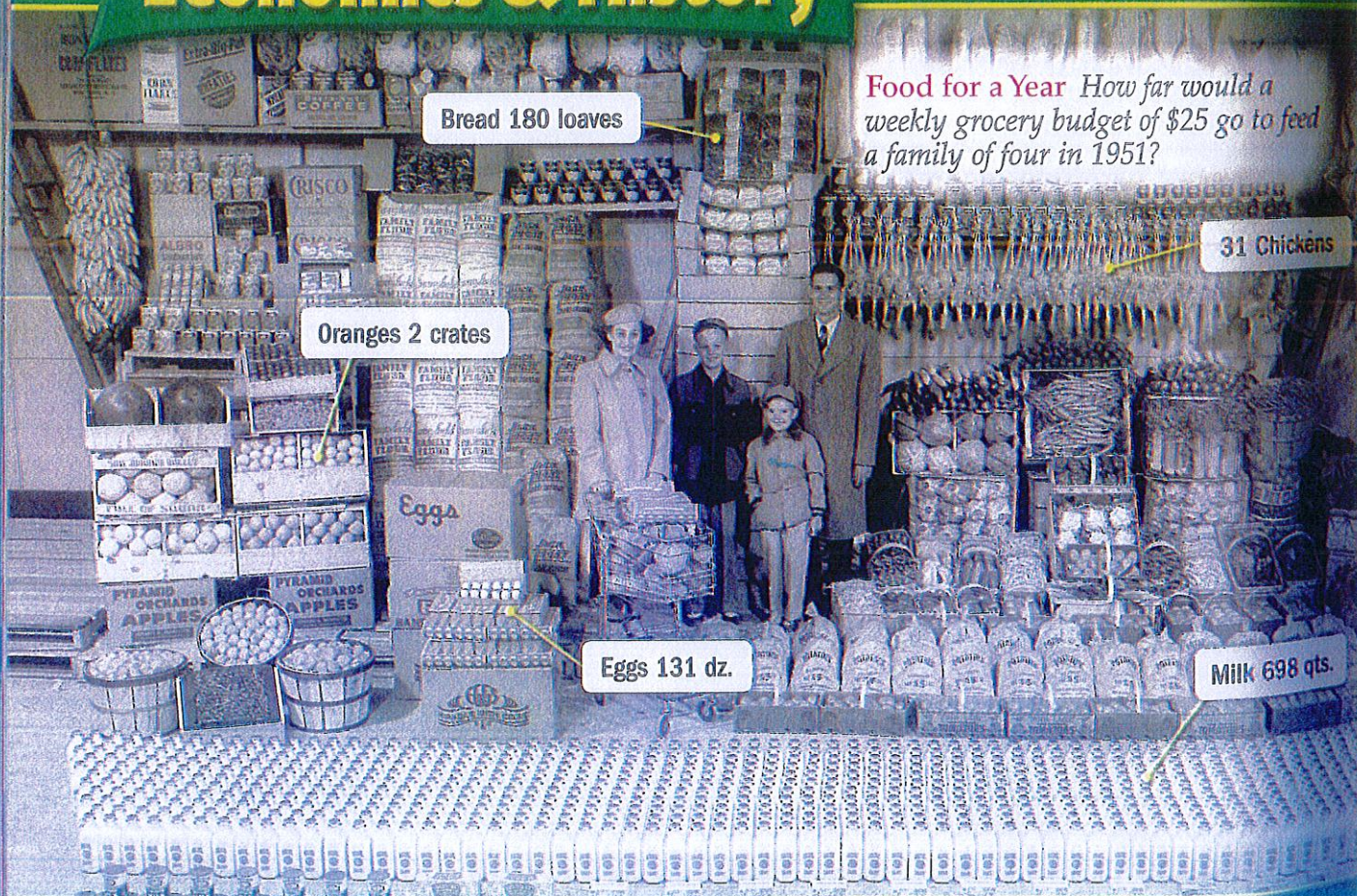
ated years before. It often had some elements of country music. In rock 'n' roll, the tempo was quicker, and electrically amplified instruments—mostly guitars—were used.

One of the first rock hits, reaching number one in 1955, was Bill Haley and the Comets' *Rock Around the Clock*. Adapting the style of African American performers such as Chuck Berry and Little Richard, Elvis Presley burst on the national scene in 1956. Presley quickly became an idol to millions of young Americans. Many young men copied his ducktail haircut and swaggering mannerisms.

For teenagers, the shared experience of listening to the music helped forge a common identity. The differing attitudes of the older and younger generations toward music and other forms of popular culture later came to be known as the generation gap.

 **Reading Check** **Analyzing** How did television change American life in the 1950s?

Economics & History



Bread 180 loaves

Oranges 2 crates

Eggs 131 dz.

31 Chickens

Milk 698 qts.

Food for a Year How far would a weekly grocery budget of \$25 go to feed a family of four in 1951?

Problems in a Time of Plenty

Main Idea Many Americans did not share in the prosperity of the 1950s.

History and You Can you recall hard times in your life? Read on to learn what groups considered the 1950s to be hard times.

In the 1950s, more than 20 percent of Americans lived in poverty. Millions more struggled to survive on incomes that were only slightly above the poverty level. Such poverty marred the landscape of the affluent society.

Many farmers did not share in the prosperity of the 1950s. Business enterprises created large profitable farms that used new technology to produce an abundance of food for American and foreign consumers. Small farms, however, could not compete with large farms, so many small-farm families sold their land and migrated to urban areas. Small farmers who continued to farm struggled.

Rural poverty did not always come from agricultural problems. In Appalachia—a region stretching along the Appalachian Mountains—the decline of the coal industry plunged thousands of rural mountain people into desperate poverty. During the 1950s, about 1.5 million people abandoned Appalachia to seek a better life in the nation's cities.

Urban Poverty

As increasing numbers of middle-class Americans moved to the suburbs in the 1950s, they left the poor behind. The inner cities became islands of poverty. Still, people came to cities looking for work. Continuing their migration from rural areas of the South, more than 3 million African Americans moved to cities in the North and the Midwest between 1940 and 1960. For many, however, life proved to be little better in Northern cities. Many poor Latinos—Puerto Ricans in the East and Mexicans in the Southwest and the West—also moved to American cities.

The migration of poor African Americans and Latinos to Northern cities hastened the departure of whites to the suburbs. This “white flight” turned some areas of cities into ghettos—neighborhoods that were inhabited mainly by poor minority groups.

Few good job opportunities existed for the urban poor. Many factories and businesses relocated to suburban areas. In addition, automation—producing goods using mechanical and electronic devices—reduced jobs in the industries that remained. It became more and more difficult for the urban poor to rise from poverty and improve their lives.

The urban poor struggled not only with poverty but also with racial discrimination in employment, housing, and education. Crime and violence often grew out of inner-city poverty, especially among young people who saw no hope for escape from life in the ghetto.

By the Numbers

1951	Comparing by Cost	2009
\$0.92	Milk, per gallon	\$3.15
\$0.75	Eggs, per dozen	\$1.50
\$0.15	Loaf of bread	\$1.77
\$0.49	Oranges, per dozen	\$1.37
\$0.60	Chicken, per pound	\$3.38
\$0.03	Cost of first-class postage stamp	\$0.44
\$0.49	Movie ticket	\$7.18
\$1.45	Average hourly wage	\$18.58
\$1,995	Average cost of a new car	\$25,632
\$3,709	Median income for a family of four	\$70,354
\$299	Television set	\$763

—from various sources

Critical Thinking

Calculating What percentage of a family's income in 1951 was needed to buy a new car? In 2009?

History ONLINE

Student Web Activity Visit glencoe.com and complete the Chapter 27 Web Activity about life in the 1950s.

Social Critics

Changes in American society in the 1950s caused some people to question the values that were emerging. Some critics charged that the sameness of corporate and suburban life had a cost—the loss of individuality. Others condemned American **materialism**—a focus on accumulating money and possessions rather than an interest in personal and spiritual matters.

Leading social critics examined the complexity of modern society. Many wrote about its effects on individual behavior. William H. Whyte, Jr., studied American business life in *The Organization Man*. He drew a picture of young executives as “organization men” who “have left home spiritually as well as physically.” He concluded that businesses discouraged independent thinking and considered the person with new ideas “a threat.” Young executives who abandoned their own views were the ones most likely to fit in.

In his book, *The Affluent Society*, economist John Kenneth Galbraith wrote of the prosperous American society of the 1950s. However, not all Americans shared in this prosperity. Galbraith described a suburban family, com-

fortably installed in an “air-conditioned, power-steered and power-braked automobile, driven through cities that are badly paved, made hideous by litter, blighted buildings, and billboards.” Prosperous Americans, Galbraith claimed, often ignored the hardships faced by the rural and urban poor.

Changing Times

A group of writers called the Beats had even sharper criticism of American society. The term “Beat,” said novelist Jack Kerouac, meant “weariness with all forms of the modern industrial state.” Many young Americans read the works of Kerouac, poet Allen Ginsberg, and other Beat writers. Some adopted Beat attitudes of rebellion against middle-class America.

With American society changing, women and African Americans began questioning their roles. They became increasingly impatient for change and less willing to accept their status as second-class citizens. In the 1950s both groups launched efforts to gain greater freedom and equality.

 **Reading Check** **Describing** What criticisms were made about American society in the 1950s?

Section 4 Review

History ONLINE
Study Central™ To review this section, go to glencoe.com.

Vocabulary

1. Write each of the terms and a definition of each in your own words: surplus, arms race, nuclear, summit, economy, affluence, materialism.

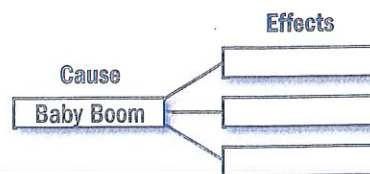
Main Ideas

2. **Discussing** While president, what was Eisenhower’s greatest domestic achievement, and why was it important?
3. **Explaining** What does it mean to say that Americans became a consumer society in the 1950s?

4. **Summarizing** Why did urban poverty increase during the 1950s?

Critical Thinking

5. **Determining Cause and Effect** On a chart like the one below, identify the direct effects of the 1950s baby boom.



6. **Descriptive Writing** Write a brief description of the types of music that were popular in the 1950s.

7. **Answer the Essential Question** How did the American prosperity of the 1950s affect the country’s economy and culture?

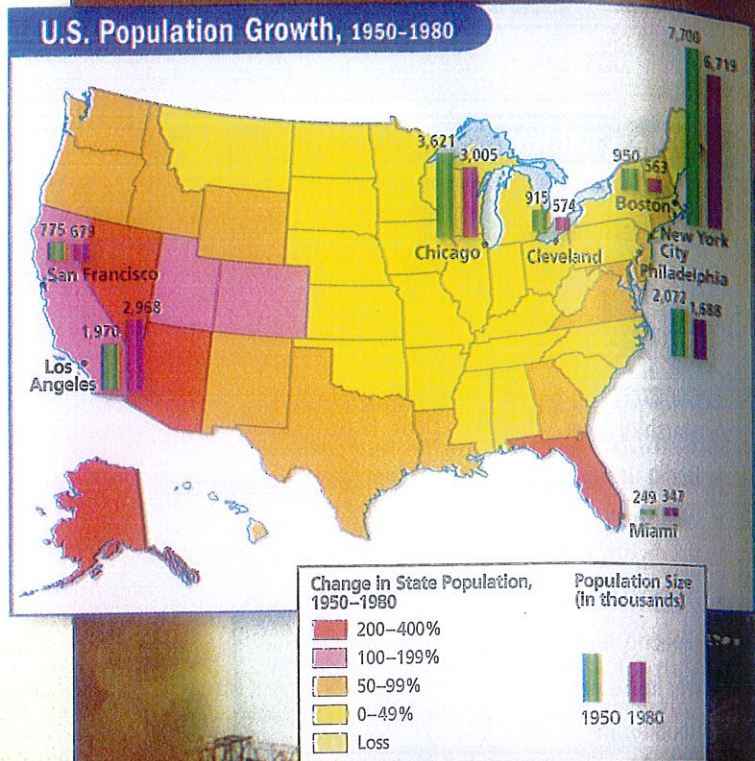
Changing Settlement Patterns

Shortly after World War II, suburbs sprang up around American cities. By 1960 a majority of Americans lived in suburban areas rather than in cities. Meanwhile, many people were moving from older cities in the Northeast and Midwest toward newer centers in the South and West, the so-called Sunbelt. In most cases, people were going to where the jobs were.

How Did Geography Affect Changing Settlement Patterns?

The open spaces of the Sunbelt were well-suited for population growth. The economy of this area expanded as government defense spending created many jobs. A relatively cheap, nonunion workforce also drew industries from other parts of the nation. Additional factors in the Sunbelt's growth were low housing costs, lower taxes, improved public health, and milder climates. Some of the greatest growth occurred in Florida, Texas, and California.

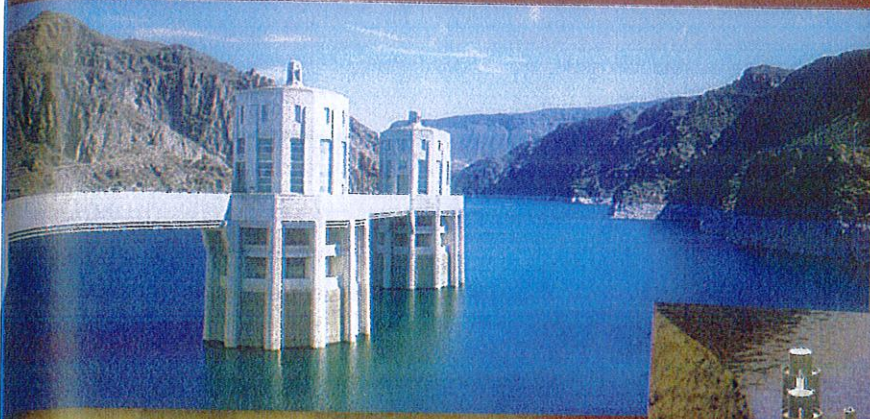
Over the past several decades, population growth has been greatest in Southern and Western states.



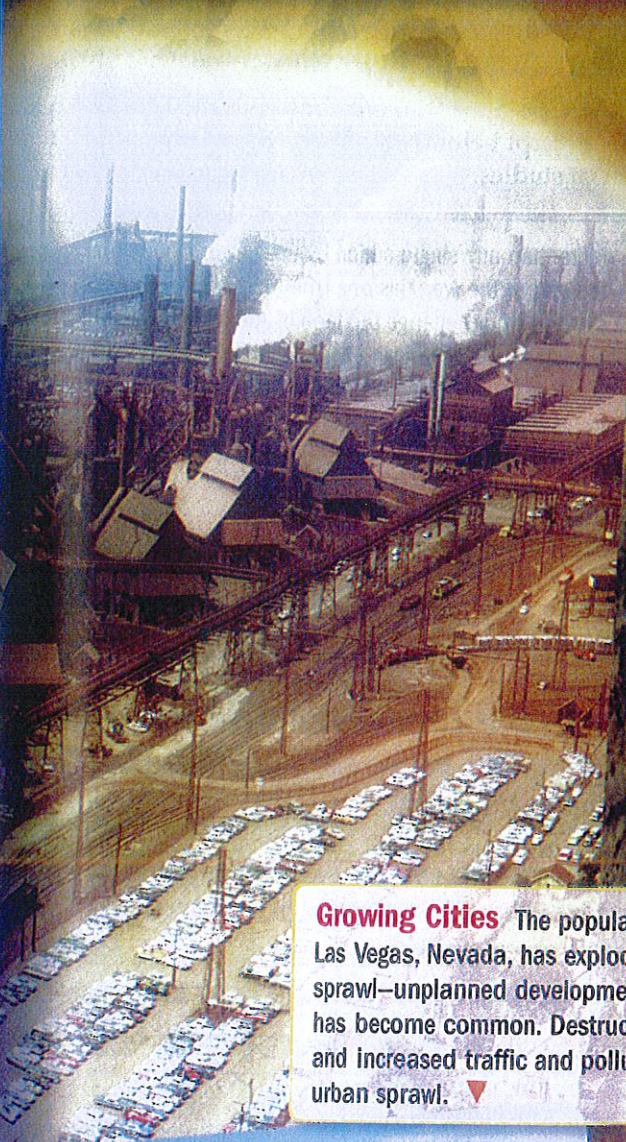
Increasing Mobility

Automobiles were essential to the development of the Sunbelt. The Interstate Highway Act of 1956 authorized the construction of a national highway system linking the entire country with roads that were at least four lanes wide. The highways made it easier for Americans to travel west and south.

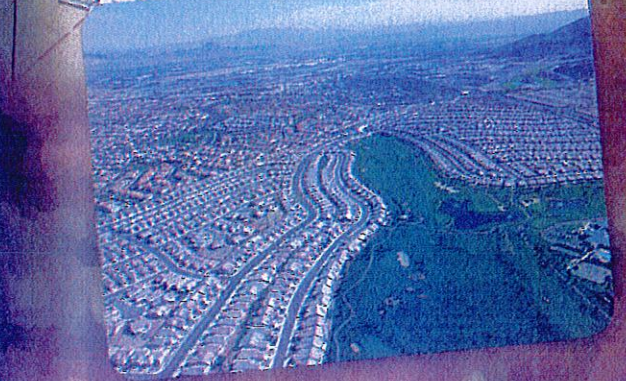
A Changing Economy In the 1960s, the U.S. economy began to change from a manufacturing-based economy to a service economy or information economy. Many U.S. firms relocated overseas—partly to take advantage of cheaper labor and production costs. Older industrial regions of the Northeast and Midwest started to decline and these areas came to be known as the Rust Belt, in contrast to the thriving Sunbelt.



Resources As people moved to the dry Southwest, they needed water and electricity. Hoover Dam, on the Colorado River, was built in the 1930s to control flooding and provide electric power. Today, the electricity produced is shared by Arizona, Nevada, and California.



Growing Cities The population of Sunbelt cities such as Las Vegas, Nevada, has exploded in recent decades. Urban sprawl—unplanned development across the landscape—has become common. Destruction of natural habitats and increased traffic and pollution are some effects of urban sprawl. ▼



Analyzing Geography

1. **Movement** Between 1950 and 1980, which states had the largest percentage of population growth?
2. **Human-Environment Interaction** What kinds of challenges do you think the Sunbelt faces as a result of rapid growth?