

US History
1950s Teenager Parent Dialogue

Name: _____

Directions: You (and a partner if you wish) will be writing a dialogue between a parent in the 1950s and a teenage son or daughter. The main topic of the discussion will be “Teenagers in the 1950s” and how they were expected to behave and act. Your dialogue should reflect people’s common perceptions of teenagers in the 1950s as seen through television and other media and whether or not that applied to ALL teenagers in the 1950s. You will also be including some images and 50s teenager slang to help bring your dialogue to life.

Researching your dialogue: IF POSSIBLE, consider interviewing someone who was a teenager in the 1950s (they would have been born in the 1940s) and asking them what life was like for a teenager in the 1950s. (Find someone who was in the United States, life in other countries was very different) Ask them about some of the things we learned about in class, TV, the suburbs, etc.

If you can’t find someone to interview, use some of the interviews found here to help:

Interviews with three men who lived through the 50s:

<http://www.dce.k12.wi.us/srhigh/socialstudies/histday/1950s/1950.htm>

Interviews with a wide variety of people who lived in the 50s (click on their names)
(These are recordings – you need to listen to them)

<http://www.storycorps.net/?s=1950s>

Interviews with members of the Little Rock 9:

- Interview with Elizabeth Eckford
- <http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/historyonline/familyhistory.cfm>

- Interview with Melba Beals
- <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/article.jsp?id=4799>

You can also refer to Chapter 19 in your textbook at home for help with this.

How to write your dialogue: Teenagers and parents haven’t changed much from the 1950s. Think about discussions you have had with your parents about what they think teenagers are supposed to be like. Try to include some elements of the history of the time that may have been important to parents and teenagers back then like:

- Communism, McCarthy, Sputnik, the Red Scare
- Civil Rights, Jackie Robinson, Little Rock High School, Rosa Parks, braceros
- Rock & Roll (Devil’s Music!) Elvis, Beat poetry, “Greasers”
- The suburbs (Levittown!) automobiles, consumerism, drive-ins,
- Images of families, The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, The Happy Housewife, Leave it to Beaver. I Love Lucy, teen movies

The format of your dialogue:

- Your dialogue should be about 500 words (three pages) and should reflect the differing or similar views of life in the 1950s from the perspective of an adult and a teenager.
- You need to refer to at least 4 of the items in the list above in your dialogue.
- You should also include two images, one of the parent and one of the teenager with your dialogue. (These should be pictures of 1950s people, not you and your folks now!)
- You should include ten (10) slang terms that a teenager would use from the list at this website: (Underline these in your dialogue)

<http://www.mvhsdrama.com/50sSlang.htm>

Grading for your dialogue

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Dialogue Content (20 points)	Dialogue refers to 4 elements of 50s history	Dialogue refers to 3 elements of 50s history	Dialogue refers to 2 elements of 50s history	Dialogue refers to 1 element of 50s history
Dialogue Theme (10 points)	Dialogue reflects both conformity and non-conformity in the 50s			Dialogue only shows one point of view
Images (10 points)	2 1950s images included		1 1950s image included	No 1950s images
Slang (10 Points)	Dialogue uses 10 slang terms which are underlined	Dialogue uses 8 slang terms which are underlined	Dialogue uses 5 slang terms which are underlined	Dialogue uses 3 slang terms which are underlined
Neatness & creativity	Dialogue is neat and creative	Dialogue is neat	Dialogue is typed, but contains spelling errors	Handwritten, sloppy