

# Culture and Counterculture

## BEFORE YOU READ

In the last section, you read about the women’s movement that emerged in the United States in the 1960s.

In this section, you will read about the emergence of the counterculture movement—and how the nation reacted to it.

## AS YOU READ

Use this diagram to take notes on how the counterculture affected America

**TERMS AND NAMES**  
**counterculture** Movement whose members sought to drop out of mainstream society  
**Haight-Ashbury** Community in San Francisco that attracted many hippies  
**the Beatles** British rock group that helped popularize rock ‘n’ roll  
**Woodstock** Massive outdoor concert that demonstrated rock ‘n’ roll’s popularity

IMMEDIATE EFFECT	LONG-TERM EFFECT
Mainstream America blamed it for decline of traditional values.	Rock ‘n’ roll became a part of mainstream culture.

## The Counterculture (pages 781–782)

### What characterized the counterculture?

During the 1960s, many young people adopted values that differed from those of mainstream society. These Americans were part of a movement known as the **counterculture**.

The movement was made up mostly of white middle-class youths. Members of the counterculture were known as “hippies.” Many hippies shared some of the beliefs of the New Left. They took part in demonstrations against the Vietnam War. However, a majority of hippies chose to turn their backs on America. They wanted to establish a new society based on peace and love.

The main characteristics of the hippie culture were rock ‘n’ roll, colorful clothes, and the use of drugs. Many also chose to live in large groups called communes. Many hippies moved to San Francisco’s **Haight-Ashbury** district. This community was popular mainly because of the availability of drugs.

After a few years, the counterculture movement began to decline. Some aspects of the movement became violent. Many urban communes grew dangerous. The widespread use of drugs also led to the decline of the movement.

More than anything else, hippies eventually found that they could not survive outside mainstream America. They needed money to live. For

many, this meant returning to mainstream society—and getting a job.

1. Name two characteristics of the counterculture.

---

---

## A Changing Culture (pages 783–784)

### *How did the counterculture affect America?*

The counterculture movement collapsed after only a few years. However, some aspects of it had a lasting effect on mainstream culture.

The movement affected the worlds of art and fashion. The 1960s saw the rise of popular, or pop, art.

One celebrated pop artist was Andy Warhol. His work was characterized by bright, simple, commercial-looking images such as portraits of soup cans and other icons of mass culture. These images were repeated to look mass-produced as a criticism of the times. They implied that individual freedoms had been lost to a “cookie-cutter” lifestyle.

The most lasting legacy of the counterculture movement was its music. Rock ‘n’ roll continues to be a popular form of entertainment. Perhaps the most influential band was **the Beatles**. The British group took America by storm and helped rock music become part of mainstream America.

A dramatic example of rock ‘n’ roll’s popularity was an event known as **Woodstock**. This was a massive outdoor rock concert in upstate New York. It occurred during the summer of 1969. More than 400,000 people attended—far more than expected. For three days, popular bands and musicians performed. Despite the crowd, however, the festival was peaceful and well organized.

The counterculture movement affected Americans’ social attitudes as well. The American media began to address the subjects of sex and violence. Before this time, few Americans discussed these topics.

2. Name two areas of society affected by the counterculture.

---

---

## The Conservative Response

(page 785)

### *Why did mainstream America attack the counterculture?*

In the late 1960s, many mainstream Americans criticized the counterculture. They blamed the movement for the decline of traditional American values.

Some conservative groups called the movement a threat to law and order. They also accused members of the counterculture of being *immoral*.

Mainstream America’s anger toward the counterculture affected the country’s political scene. In 1968, the Republicans nominated Richard Nixon as their presidential candidate. Nixon ran on a platform of law and order, and conservative values. His ideas appealed to many voters. As a result, Nixon won the election. He then set the nation on a more conservative course.

3. Cite two reasons why Americans criticized the counterculture.

---

---