Beyond the Suburbs

Trace how postwar prosperity changed American communities.

USH.6.2 "Analyze key economic, cultural, political, and social changes in post-World War II American life."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two places where a government action helped cause an economic change, circle one cultural message, and number two different effects of suburban growth on Americans.

A House at the Edge of Town

1 In 1950, a family leaving a crowded apartment might find a new house at the edge of town. After World War II, factories shifted from military production to consumer goods, and rising wages helped many workers buy cars and appliances. Federal programs backed home loans for eligible veterans, while builders used repeated designs to construct houses quickly and cheaply. The 1956 Interstate Highway Act funded roads that made commuting from suburbs easier. These economic and political choices worked together: more families could afford homes farther from city jobs, and highway access made that distance practical.

2 The new neighborhood offered more than a different address. Television sets became common, bringing national advertisements and similar programs into living rooms across the country. Advertisements often presented a suburban house, a car, and new appliances as signs of a successful family. Yet that image hid barriers. Some sellers and lenders denied Black families the same opportunities to buy suburban homes, even when those families could afford them. As many white families and businesses moved outward, some cities lost taxpayers and jobs. Suburban growth therefore expanded choices for some Americans while deepening racial and economic divisions for others.

3 The struggle over who could enter these neighborhoods became a political question. Civil rights activists challenged housing discrimination, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned discrimination in most home sales and rentals based on race, color, religion, or national origin. The law did not instantly erase unequal wealth or decades of unequal access to mortgages. Meanwhile, parents, workers, and local officials debated how to fund schools and services as communities changed. By 1970, the suburban home was both a symbol of postwar prosperity and a place where Americans argued over the meaning and limits of equal opportunity.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did federal home-loan programs and interstate highways work together to change where some families lived?

2. How did the image of success in television advertisements differ from some families' experience of buying a suburban home?

3. How could the movement of families and businesses to suburbs affect both suburban residents and cities?

4. How did the Fair Housing Act change the rules for home sales and rentals, and why did it not end unequal housing opportunities at once?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a five-sentence statement for a 1968 town meeting arguing whether suburban prosperity was shared fairly. Connect one economic change to one cultural or social change from the passage, propose a specific local action to widen opportunity, and use at least two accurate details from the passage.

ANSWER KEY

Beyond the Suburbs

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.6.2

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two places where a government action helped cause an economic change, circle one cultural message, and number two different effects of suburban growth on Americans. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did federal home-loan programs and interstate highways work together to change where some families lived?	**Federal programs helped eligible veterans finance homes, while highways made travel between suburban homes and city jobs easier.**
2	How did the image of success in television advertisements differ from some families' experience of buying a suburban home?	**Advertisements presented suburban homes and consumer goods as signs of success, but some sellers and lenders denied Black families the opportunity to buy those homes.**
3	How could the movement of families and businesses to suburbs affect both suburban residents and cities?	**Some suburban residents gained more housing choices, while some cities lost taxpayers and jobs.**
4	How did the Fair Housing Act change the rules for home sales and rentals, and why did it not end unequal housing opportunities at once?	**The act banned discrimination in most sales and rentals based on race, color, religion, or national origin. It did not erase unequal wealth or the effects of decades of unequal mortgage access.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Suburban prosperity was not shared fairly, even though rising wages helped many workers buy homes. Television advertisements made a suburban house and a car look like signs of success for every family. In reality, some sellers and lenders denied Black families the chance to buy suburban homes. Our town should create an office where residents can report housing discrimination and where officials can investigate complaints. That action would help make the promise of the new Fair Housing Act meaningful in our community.

Accept other supported cause-and-effect explanations and local actions. The town-meeting statement should connect changes in different areas of postwar life, make a clear argument, and meet the five-sentence requirement.