Postwar Connections

Trace how changes in housing, families, and media shaped daily life.

USH.C.5.4.B "Explain changes in society during the postwar era (e.g., urban population migration to the suburbs, the baby boom, growth of the middle class, home ownership, development of mass media, consumerism)."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline at least three changes in postwar society. Circle a condition that helped bring about each change, then draw a line connecting each pair.

A Changing American Neighborhood

1 In 1954, a family leaving a crowded Chicago apartment might have driven past new houses on the city's edge. After World War II, millions of Americans moved from cities to suburbs, helped by new highways and federal mortgage programs that made buying a house easier for many families. The GI Bill offered eligible veterans help with home loans, while builders put up large developments quickly. As more people owned homes, they bought appliances and furniture to fill them. But these opportunities were not shared equally: discriminatory lending and housing practices kept many Black families out of suburban neighborhoods.

2 At the same time, the baby boom brought a sharp rise in births from 1946 to 1964. Families with more children needed schools, clothes, and larger homes, which increased demand for goods and services. Many workers found jobs in expanding industries and earned wages that supported a growing middle class. Union contracts and benefits helped some workers afford cars and household products. Suburban growth changed daily travel, too: living farther from city jobs often meant commuting by car. Roads, new houses, and car ownership reinforced one another, spreading homes and shopping areas beyond older city centers.

3 Television also changed how Americans spent money and shared experiences. By the late 1950s, most U.S. households had a television set. Families watched the same programs and saw advertisements for products such as breakfast cereal and washing machines. Advertisers used national broadcasts to reach millions of possible buyers, helping turn shopping into a shared part of popular culture. Demand for goods could support factory and retail jobs, which helped more families buy the products they saw advertised. Yet the picture of prosperity on television often left out people living in poverty and families barred from suburban housing.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Explain how two postwar programs or building changes helped Americans buy suburban homes. Who still faced barriers?

2. How did the baby boom change the need for both homes and goods?

3. Explain how suburban growth and car ownership reinforced each other.

4. How could television advertising affect both shopping and jobs?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four- or five-sentence museum label for a 1950s suburban house. Explain how at least three postwar changes from the passage connected in daily life, and include one limit on who could share in these opportunities.

ANSWER KEY

Postwar Connections

HIGH SCHOOL · USH.C.5.4.B

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline at least three changes in postwar society. Circle a condition that helped bring about each change, then draw a line connecting each pair. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Explain how two postwar programs or building changes helped Americans buy suburban homes. Who still faced barriers?	**Federal mortgage programs and GI Bill home-loan benefits helped eligible buyers, while rapid homebuilding increased the supply of houses. Discriminatory practices kept many Black families out.**
2	How did the baby boom change the need for both homes and goods?	**More children increased demand for larger homes, as well as clothes and other family supplies.**
3	Explain how suburban growth and car ownership reinforced each other.	**Living farther from city jobs made cars useful for commuting. Roads and car ownership, in turn, supported the spread of homes and shopping areas beyond cities.**
4	How could television advertising affect both shopping and jobs?	**National ads reached many possible buyers and encouraged purchases. Demand for products could then support factory and retail jobs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A growing middle class and federal loan programs helped many families buy houses outside cities. With more children born during the baby boom, these neighborhoods needed more schools and family supplies. Television ads encouraged families to buy household goods, and demand for those goods supported jobs. Discriminatory lending kept many Black families from the same chance to own a suburban home.

Accept other accurate connections among changes described in the passage. For the museum label, look for at least three connected changes and a specific limit on access to postwar opportunities.