CHAPTER 31

Society in Flux

ANTICIPATION/REACTION

Directions: Before you begin reading this chapter, in the column entitled “Anticipation” place a check mark beside any of the following seven statements with which you now agree. When you have completed your study of this chapter, come back to this section and in the column entitled “Reaction” place a check mark beside any of the statements with which you then agree. Note any variation in the placement of check marks from Anticipation to Reaction and explain why you changed your mind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anticipation</th>
<th>Reaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. _____ In the United States in the 1950s, more people were well educated in religious doctrine than at any other time in the twentieth century.</td>
<td>_____ 1.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. _____ Norman Mailer was perhaps the most popular American writer in the 1950s, and the particular favorite of college students.</td>
<td>_____ 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. _____ Post-World War II technological advances created some problems for the United States, but the problems were trivial when compared to the great benefits technology produced.</td>
<td>_____ 3.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. _____ In the 1960s, African American militants used violence primarily to force a change in white racial attitudes and in U.S. government policies.</td>
<td>_____ 4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. _____ Student protests in the 1960s emphasized local and campus problems and failed to focus attention on genuine social and political weaknesses in the United States.</td>
<td>_____ 5.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. _____ “Hippies” and student radicals shared political and social opinions, but they differed on what they proposed to do about them.</td>
<td>_____ 6.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. _____ The women’s rights movement that emerged in the 1960s stressed the supposed greater purity and higher moral character of women as compared to men.</td>
<td>_____ 7.</td>
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading Chapter 31 you should be able to:

1. Evaluate the impact of religion on mid-twentieth century American life.
2. Analyze the racial turmoil of the 1950s-1970s and show how the ways African Americans pursued civil rights were similar to and different from other minorities who sought redress of their grievances.

3. Evaluate educational developments of the postwar years and explain the rationale of the student revolt.

4. What did the student revolt and the counterculture of the 1960s have in common? How were they different?

5. Explain the appearance of the sexual revolution in the 1960s and the identify the connection(s) between that revolution and the rise of a new women’s liberation movement.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

A Society on the Move

Advances in transportation and communication help explain postwar social change in the United States. Americans always appeared to be moving. Postwar Americans owned more powerful and more comfortable automobiles, and gasoline consumption set new records. The interstate highway system, begun in 1956, was a stimulus to mobility. It also shifted population away from the inner cities to the new suburbs, and, while safer than the old roads, the interstates often had an adverse environmental impact. Also, the increase in automobiles produced an upsurge in traffic fatalities. Another milestone in transportation was reached when commercial air service (which began in the 1930s) came of age in 1958 when the Seattle-built Boeing 707 jetliner launched service.

The Advent of Television

By 1961 some 55 million television sets were in operation. A few years later, government and commercial satellites were relaying instant pictures from one continent to another. Television became the prime medium for advertising and news broadcasts. Its coverage of the Kennedy assassination made history come alive for tens of millions. Though some excellent programs were aired, Newton Minow of the Federal Communications Commission called the programming offered by most stations “a vast wasteland.” In time, television became the chief means by which politicians communicate with voters. In the 1980s and 1990s, the growth of cable companies and the explosion of new specialized channels modified the importance of the three major television networks. The introduction of the video cassette recorder (VCR) further increased the utility of television sets.

At Home and Work

With the marriage and birth rate soaring and the divorce rate falling, the family again became the focus of a wholesome personal life in the postwar years. Child rearing experts insisted that raising healthy children called for professional skills and loving but not overly permissive parents.
The material progress of this era encouraged people to be conformists for the sake of their families and employers. Many college-educated women sacrificed plans for a professional career to concentrate instead on home management and child development. Men’s chief responsibility was to earn enough to support the family. Work was readily available, but the character of work was changing, becoming more clerical and more bureaucratic. The need to subordinate one’s personal interests to the requirements of corporate employers was described by contemporary sociologists and novelists. Blue-collar workers did not much differ from the middle class in their attitudes toward marriage, child rearing, and work.

Family life in the new suburbs functioned as havens for work-weary men. Federal income-tax deductions encouraged taxpayers to have children and to borrow money to purchase houses and furniture.

The Growing Middle Class

The percentage of American families with middle-class incomes grew rapidly during the postwar years, and the percentage of immigrants in the population declined to less than five percent. These trends contributed to social and cultural uniformity. The incomes of industrial workers rose, and they enjoyed more fringe benefits such as paid vacation time, medical insurance, and pensions. Blue-collar workers steadily climbed into the ranks of the middle class, moved to suburbs, and became more conservative.

Religion in Changing Times

Though traditionally concerned with eternal values, organized religion was influenced by the social, cultural, and economic developments of the postwar years. Immediately after World War II, the Catholic Church and Protestant churches built hundreds of new churches and schools for thousands of new members. Surveys showed that nearly all Americans believed in God, but many were ignorant of religious history and doctrine. The New Deal had placed upon government a large share of the burden for charity previously borne by churches. The expansion of higher education under the GI Bill introduced young adults to new ideas and made them more tolerant of the religious beliefs of others.

Some churches became involved in the civil rights movement and the antiwar demonstrations of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The sweeping social changes of those decades had religious ramifications, as feminists demanded ordination of female ministers and priests. Scientific and technological developments, especially television, also affected both religious values and the way people worshiped. In addition, “Creation theory” and medical advances had direct effects on organized religion.

Literature and Art

Leading books based on military experience in World War II included Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead* and James Jones’ *From Here to Eternity*. Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, typical of the new “beat” school of literature, was obsessed with violence, perversion, and madness. Popular novels among self-absorbed college students were J. D. Salinger’s *The
*Catcher in the Rye* and Joseph Heller’s *Catch-22*, an indignant denunciation of warfare. John Updike’s *Rabbit* tetralogy expressed the postwar’s idealization of adolescence and fear of the responsibilities of adulthood. Despite the appeal of television, sales of books increased, partly the result of the cheapness, portability, and availability of paperbacks.

Postwar artists like Jackson Pollock led the subjective school of abstract expressionism, which stressed the “unconscious” in art. Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein created “op art” and “pop art,” often satirical portraits of mundane objects such as flags, comic strips, soup cans, and packing cases.

**The Perils of Progress**

By the 1960s the nation seemed to face two dilemmas. One was that progress was sometimes self-defeating. Products such as DDT, which killed insects, had an adverse impact on birds, fish, and people. Goods manufactured to make life happier produced waste that polluted the land, air, and water. Parents who tried to transmit the accumulated wisdom of the years to their offspring found that it had little application to their children’s problems. The second dilemma was that the modern industrial society placed a premium on social cooperation and undermined the individual’s sense of essence. Individuals had an increasingly difficult time feeling they could make a difference. These dilemmas produced a paradox. Though the United States was the world’s richest and most powerful nation, it seemed unable to mobilize its resources to confront challenges. No real consensus emerged as society remained fragmented and individuals remained uncertain and insecure.

**The Costs of Prosperity**

The gross national product surpassed $1 trillion in the postwar period, but inflation put workers under pressure to constantly demand raises, which further drove up prices. Technological improvements proved to be a mixed blessing. Such new industries as plastics increased the volume of trash. In the 1950s, scientists began manufacturing electricity from nuclear fuels, but that created the danger of radiation. Computers revolutionized the collection and storage of records, but displaced clerks and workers. Petroleum needed for fuel released pollutants into the air and made the nation vulnerable to shortages. Fertilizers increased food production, but washed into streams and destroyed aquatic life. Technology increased the capacity of the earth to support people, but as production and consumption increased, so did the exhaustion of raw materials. The material benefits of technology had troubling secondary effects.

**New Racial Turmoil**

To the disappointment of President Johnson and its supporters, Great Society programs did not produce the racial peace and social harmony that was expected. Malcolm X left the Black Muslims and stressed black self-help and militant defense of black rights, yet was making a speech for racial harmony when he was assassinated in 1965. Martin Luther King, Jr. became more aggressive. Some disenchanted blacks, such as Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, adopted the slogan “Black Power” and refused to cooperate with whites in the civil rights movement. Groups like the Black Panthers collected
weapons to resist police. In 1965, black anger engulfed Watts, Los Angeles, in riot, and similar outbursts occurred in scores of other cities over the next two summers.

In April 1968, when King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, blacks in more than a hundred cities began burning and looting. A commission headed by Illinois Democratic Governor Otto Kerner, blamed “white racism” for having deprived blacks of jobs, crowded them into slums, and eroded their hopes of success. To escape urban tensions, millions of middle-class whites moved to the suburbs or called on police to “maintain law and order.” The riots tended to polarize society along racial lines. The Black Panther party called for the resegregation of schools and public compensation for past injustices to blacks. Middle-class whites were infuriated by the seeming favoritism of government affirmative action, and school busing programs. Black radicalism caused a “white backlash.”

Native-Born Ethiocs

As blacks struggled for equality, so did millions of Mexican Americans in the Southwest. During and just after World War II, federal legislation encouraged the importation of braceros, temporary farm workers from Mexico. Moreover, other Mexicans and other Spanish-speaking peoples called mojados (“wetbacks”) entered the country illegally across the Rio Grande and settled with other Hispanics in urban slums called barrios. There, low-paying but steady work could be found and they remained apolitical. In the 1960s, Spanish-speaking “Chicanos” emerged to demand political, social, economic, and educational improvements. In 1965, Chicano leader Cesar Chavez, the organizer of migrant farm workers, launched a boycott of grapes, which attracted the estimated support of 17 million people.

Meanwhile, the American Indian Movement (AIM) sought self-determination, the return of lands taken from their ancestors, and the revival of tribal culture. In 1973, radicals occupied the town of Wounded Knee, South Dakota, site of an 1890 Sioux massacre, and held it at gunpoint for weeks. In 1975 Congress passed the Indian Self-Determination Act to give tribes more control over education, welfare, and law enforcement.

Despite the hurdles, many minorities made striking gains. In 1965, Robert Weaver became the first black to serve in the Cabinet as the first secretary of housing and urban development. Two years later, President Johnson appointed his solicitor general Thurgood Marshall, the attorney for the plaintiffs in the Brown decision, to become the first black to serve on the Supreme Court. In 1966, Edward Brooke, a Massachusetts Republican, was elected the first black senator since Reconstruction. A number of large cities elected black mayors. Blacks scored in sports as well. Jackie Robinson in baseball and Joe Louis and Muhammad Ali in boxing attracted fans of all races.

Rethinking Public Education

After decades of “child-centered” emphasis on “adjustment,” “self-esteem,” and emotional development of youngsters, it became clear that the educational system was producing poor work habits, fuzzy thinking, and ignorance of basic knowledge. Former Harvard president James B. Conant, in The American High School Today (1959), flayed the schools for neglecting foreign languages, ignoring the needs of the brightest and the dullest students, and for not effectively
teaching grammar and composition. He argued that teachers’ colleges should emphasize subject matter over educational methodology.

The success of the Soviet *Sputnik* dealt a heavy blow to American overconfidence and spurred a renewed interest in mathematics, sciences, and foreign languages. Congress reacted by passing the National Defense Education Act (1958), which authorized the first federal loans to college students. Population growth and demand for specialized skills contributed to an increase in college enrollment. To bridge the gap between high schools and universities, more than 1,300 two-year colleges were serving nearly seven million students by 1990.

**Students in Revolt**

By the 1960s many students, trained by teachers who were New Deal liberals, revolted against established trends in politics, economics, and education. These students felt guilty when they thought about the millions of Americans without the material comforts and advantages they had enjoyed. They regarded poverty, atomic weapons, and racial prejudice as intolerable. Students for a Democratic Society, organized in Port Huron, Michigan, in 1962, challenged the economic and military investments that the United States had made in the Cold War. The new organization grew with the escalation of the Vietnam War, and an ever-growing list of local campus issues.

In 1964, a student outburst known as the “Free Speech movement” convulsed the University of California at Berkeley, leading to the resignation of university president Clark Kerr. At Columbia University in 1968, SDS and black students occupied university buildings and made “non-negotiable” demands concerning military research and the needs of minority groups. When police came to clear the buildings, rioting caused injuries to dozens of students. The unrest compelled the resignation of university president Grayson Kirk.

Critics of radical students found them infantile because they refused to tolerate delay, unwise because their ideas had been refuted by earlier philosophers and scientists, and authoritarian because they would not hesitate to override majority rule. Some black students withdrew to themselves, rejected the “white” curriculum, and demanded “black studies” programs taught and administered by blacks.

**The Counterculture**

Young people known as “hippies” retreated from the modern world into a counterculture of communes, drugs, casual sex, and mystical religions. Allen Ginsberg, in his poem *Howl*, argued that the new generation’s “best minds” had been destroyed by the “madness” of society. The hippie counterculture stressed feelings over thought, natural things over anything manufactured, and rejected materialism and power. Hippies shared many of the beliefs of their radical peers, particularly opposition to the Vietnam War, but they rejected activism and embraced passivism as a philosophy.
The Sexual Revolution

Many young people in the 1960s challenged conventional ideas about premarital sex, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, and pornography. The causes of this revolution included the appearance of more efficient methods of birth control and antibiotics that cured or controlled venereal disease. At the same time, Alfred C. Kinsey, in Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, emphasized the diversity of sexual urges, and the foolishness of societal attempts to prescribe narrow standards of morality. Kinsey’s research encouraged “consenting adults” to view sex in physical terms, a prospect frightening to those holding to principles of traditional morality. The “sexual freedom” had profound psychological results and fueled rampant illegitimacy, an explosion of such venereal diseases as gonorrhea and syphilis, and the lethal Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS).

Women’s Liberation

The sexual revolution and the civil rights movement contributed to a revival of the women’s rights movement. The new feminists argued they were being dominated by a male-oriented society and must fight back. One of the leaders of the new movement was Betty Friedan, whose The Feminine Mystique (1963) argued that “the only way for a woman . . . to know herself as a person is by creative work of her own.” Her concern was that opinion-shaping forces were undermining the capacity of women to use their intelligence and talents creatively. In 1966, Friedan and other activists founded the National Organization for Women (NOW), which adopted the tactics of black activists in the political arena. NOW demanded expanded employment opportunities for women, an equal rights amendment to the Constitution, changes in divorce laws, and the legalization of abortion.

In 1970, Kate Millett’s Sexual Politics denounced male supremacy and argued that the real biological distinctions between the sexes need not perpetuate learned gender differences. The more radical feminists gathered in small consciousness-raising groups, advocated the rearing of children in communal centers, and proposed the abolition of marriage as “legalized rape,” and insisted on total equality.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

Define the following:

“vast wasteland”

“organization man”

“white racism”

222
black power

barrios

braceros

Chicanos

hippies

Describe the following:

SNCC

American Indian Movement

NDEA

Port Huron Statement

Sexual Behavior in the Human Male

Identify the following:

Dr. Benjamin Spock
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Norman Mailer</td>
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<td>Jack Kerouac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph Heller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jackson Pollock</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Warhol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stokely Carmichael</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad Ali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James B. Conant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allen Ginsburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate Millett</td>
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SELF-TEST

Multiple-Choice Questions

1. Initial legislation for the interstate highway system passed in the _____ Administration and was a major cause of increased population mobility in the postwar era.
   A. Truman
   B. Kennedy
   C. Eisenhower
   D. Johnson

2. In 1961, Newton Minow of the FCC referred to television as
   A. a mere “vehicle of political advertising.”
   B. “combining the strengths and weaknesses of radio and film.”
   C. a “vast wasteland” of barren programming.
   D. creating the “illusion of intimacy.”

3. Key postwar social trends continued wartime increases in all of the following EXCEPT
   A. early marriage.
   B. large families.
   C. the divorce rate.
   D. the birth rate.

4. From World War II to 1965, the percentage of _____ declined steadily.
   A. families with middle-class incomes
   B. immigrants in the total population
   C. the population living in the suburbs
   D. families attending church regularly

5. Sociologists and commentary on contemporary affairs observed that the weakest element of society in the 1950s was
   A. conservatism.
   B. consensus.
   C. conformity.
   D. individualism.

6. The most successful radio preachers in the postwar years were
   A. Roman Catholic.
   B. Mainline Protestants.
   C. Evangelical Protestants.
   D. Fundamentalists.

7. All of the following postwar novels had a wartime theme EXCEPT
   A. Norman Mailer’s The Naked and the Dead.
   B. Joseph Heller’s Catch-22.
   C. John Updike’s Rabbit, Run.
   D. James Jones’ From Here to Eternity.
8. The general expansion of interest in culture broadly defined in the postwar decades resulted from all the following EXCEPT
A. affluence.
B. the growth of higher education.
C. improvements in printing technology.
D. the victory of objectivity over subjectivity in art.

9. Match the following artistic style with its characteristic.
   A. abstract expressionism 1. devoid of social connotations
   B. op art 2. satirized many aspects of American culture
   C. pop art 3. shaped by European influences
   D. 4. required considerable verbal explanation to communicate its meaning

   A. A3, B1, C4
   B. A2, B4, C3
   C. A4, B1, C2
   D. A4, B2, C1

10. Among the dilemmas that conveyed the “Perils of Progress” in the postwar years were all of the following EXCEPT
A. well-intentioned reforms often made things worse.
B. accumulated wisdom had little application to current problems.
C. specialized production techniques produced inferior goods.
D. industrial culture required social cooperation that undermined individual self-confidence.

11. Postwar technological advances included all of the following EXCEPT
A. electricity made from nuclear fuel.
B. the moving assembly line.
C. electronic computers.
D. plastic packaging material.

12. The Kerner Commission that investigated urban riots in the 1960s found that all of the following were true EXCEPT
A. rioters were expressing frustration and despair.
B. race riots were a new phenomenon in American history.
C. the basic cause of the riots was white racism.
D. black ghettos bred crime.

13. Match the policy toward Mexican immigration with its time period.
   A. 1920s 1. imported temporary farm workers
   B. 1930s 2. deported or persuaded to return to Mexico
   C. 1940-1965 3. unlimited immigration
   D. 4. immigration based on skills and profession

   A. A4, B4, C3
   B. A3, B2, C1
   C. A1, B4, C3
   D. A3, B1, C2
14. In 1965, Cesar Chavez led the grape pickers on strike to gain
   A. pride in Hispanic traditions and full civil rights.
   B. higher wages and union recognition.
   C. return of land taken from their Mexican ancestors.
   D. self-determination and control over their own education.

15. The 1975 Indian Self-Determination Act provided Native Americans greater control over
   all of the following EXCEPT their
   A. education.
   B. ancestral land.
   C. law enforcement.
   D. welfare programs.

16. The leader of the movement for more intellectually rigorous school curriculums in the
   1950s-1960s was
   A. James Conant.
   C. Robert Weaver
   D. Edward Brooke.

17. A major stimulus to the enactment of the National Defense Education Act in 1958 was
   A. the Soviet’s launch of *Sputnik*.
   B. the need for more integrated schools created by the *Brown* decision.
   C. John Dewey’s publication, *School and Society*.
   D. the GI Bill had expired.

18. Main concerns of the Port Huron Statement included all of the following EXCEPT
   A. escalation of the Vietnam War.
   B. racial bigotry.
   C. the atomic bomb.
   D. government hypocrisy.

19. Unlike student radicals, hippies
   A. were disgusted by dishonest politicians.
   B. rejected political activism.
   C. were appalled by racism.
   D. were horrified by the brutality of the Vietnam War.

20. Causes of the sexual revolution of the 1960s included all of the following EXCEPT
   A. renewal of the women’s rights movement.
   B. availability of more efficient methods of birth control.
   C. publication of Alfred Kinsey’s *Sexual Behavior of the Human Male*.
   D. antibiotics that cured or controlled venereal disease.

**Essay Questions**

1. Evaluate the significance of James Conant’s study on education in the late 1950s and early
   1960s. Explain how the status of education had changed by the 1990s.
2. Explain how television influenced American thought and culture in the postwar years.

3. Evaluate the success of organized religion in its attempt to meet the changing needs of Americans in the postwar era.

4. Explain how racial tensions marred the late 1960s despite the implementation of Great Society programs.

5. Assess the “two dilemmas” that America faced from a cultural standpoint in the postwar years.

CRITICAL THINKING EXERCISE

Few issues have been the subject of more controversy since the 1960s than women’s liberation. Analyze these statements and place an “F” before those that represent a feminist viewpoint and a “T” before those that reflect the more traditional role of women.

_____ 1. One should not think of the adjectives “strong” and “efficient as” male characteristics and “passive” and “tender” as female traits.

_____ 2. “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

_____ 3. Government childcare centers are essential to the preservation of family life into the next century.

_____ 4. “Help wanted” advertisements should be segregated by sex so that job seekers will know whether employers prefer men or women for open positions.

_____ 5. “I’m not saying that women leaders would eliminate violence. We are not more moral than men; we are only uncorrupted by power so far.”

_____ 6. Abortions should be funded at taxpayer expense because poor women might not otherwise have access to all their reproductive choices.

_____ 7. Reproductive freedom and the “right to privacy” are inherent in the Constitution.

_____ 8. The loosening of sexual mores in the 1960s and 1970s produced side effects its proponents did not expect: namely, rampant illegitimacy and abortion, venereal diseases, and grave psychological impact.

_____ 9. An ERA is superfluous; federal civil rights laws already guarantee “equal pay for equal work.”

_____ 10. A woman can best judge her success by maintaining a happy, peaceful home amid an uncertain world of tension and heartache.
11. Government should address recurring problems of “latchkey” and other neglected children because families have been unable to do so.

12. The institution of the patriarch is outmoded and is headed into the dustbin of history.