




THE

NATIONAL

ARCHIVES

How did people live in 1960s
Britain during the second
decade of the Queen's reign?



Postwar 1945-present
Lesson Pack

Teacher's Notes

Focus

To encourage pupils to use original sources to find out about life in the 1960s; the second decade in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II.

Part 1: Pupils engage with the starter source, a photograph showing Carnaby Street in 1969, with prompt questions for discussion. A second source, a poster, expands discussion and encourages pupils to think about the decade in a more global context.

Part 2: Building on this approach, pupils study 4 sources which reflect examples of technological and social change in the decade: housing, toys; food; holidays. They will also consider the similarities and differences that these sources reveal between the 1960's and today.

Part 3: Three suggested creative activities:

- Design a toy and register it in our copyright files
- Design a fashion advert
- Design a menu for a Sixties dinner party

Teachers may prefer to use any of the original sources here to create their own resources and activities or adapt the activities provided here for use in their schemes of work.

Enquiry Question: What can we find out about life in 1960s Britain using documents from the time?

You can find this lesson online at: nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/resources/platinum-jubilee/life-in-1960s-britain/

Suitable for:

Primary History

Time period:

Postwar 1945-present

Connections to the Curriculum:

Events within living memory that are significant nationally or globally.

Teacher's Notes

Introduction:

Teacher explains that the 1960s were the second decade of Elizabeth II's reign and an exciting time, with lots of change!

The Sixties saw many significant events and changes to the way people dressed; the music they listened to and how they behaved; the types of technology that was available and even the places that could be visited on holiday!

Following the shortage of housing after the war, many new homes had been built and most people's houses had access to electricity and 'modern' appliances such as the fridge and cooker. By the end of the decade, most homes even had televisions!

However, not everyone living at this time experienced such comfort, and there were still homes that didn't have access to hot water or to their own toilets. Increasingly, tower blocks (high-rise buildings containing lots of flats) were being quickly built to meet the continued demand for modern housing. These tower blocks were initially popular; they were cheaper to build than houses, had larger rooms and views, and residents were able to use the open public spaces instead of having to look-after their own private gardens. As the decade progressed, tower blocks became less and less popular. Many of them started to deteriorate and become places where crime was on the rise.

Children enjoyed playing with lots of new toys! Lego (made of plastic instead of wood) was available, along with Thunderbird toys (based on the children's programme at the time), Skalextric, Spirographs and Actionman. The way people shopped for food also started to change, with the arrival of supermarkets; now you could buy all of your food in one place! Holidays also changed as people started to spend more of their money on 'luxuries' like this. People still enjoyed going on holiday in Britain, but increasingly Travel Agents offered 'package holidays' that enabled people to go abroad, and these became more and more popular.

The Sixties also saw some very significant events. The Civil Rights movement was growing and the United States of America was at war with Vietnam. The Cold War and the threat of 'Soviet Spies' was a continued concern. Queen Elizabeth and her husband Prince Philip made their first state visit to West Germany, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War. In 1966, Britain won the football World Cup, and in 1969, Apollo 11 was the first spaceflight that landed astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin on the moon! One of the most influential bands of all time, The Beatles, were enjoying success with hits such as 'She Loves You' and 'A Hard Day's Night', sparking Beatlemania (the huge fan base following the band) across the globe.

Fashions continued to change too, as the 'Swinging Sixties' meant a time of freedom to use the way you dressed to express yourself (especially for the younger generations). Miniskirts, flared trousers and bright colours and patterns, along with Doc Marten boots marked another shift from the dull colours and uniforms of wartime

Teacher's Notes

Part 1:

Starter Source:

1. Show the class the photograph on a whiteboard/or as printed copy. Photograph called: 'Carnaby Street, London,' Catalogue ref: INF 14/147

Show the pupils the photograph for five seconds and ask them to spot as many things as they can see. Once the five seconds is up, ask pupils to share their ideas; write down their responses on the whiteboard for everyone to see.

Now explain to the pupils that you're going to show them the photograph again, but this time you want them to see if there's anything they missed spotting the first time around. Add any additional answers to the whiteboard; you could use a different colour to distinguish between their observations the first time around.

Explain to the pupils that they are now going to use their observations to help them make some inferences about the document and what it can reveal.

Discuss the following questions:

- When do you think this photograph was taken? Why do you think this?
- Where has it been taken? How can you tell?
- What does the photo reveal about peoples' lives at this time? E.g. fashion, transport, shopping etc.
- How would you describe the atmosphere in the photograph? Would you like to be there? Why/ why not?

Explain to the pupils that this photograph shows a famous street – Carnaby Street – and it was taken in 1969. Carnaby Street was an exciting place in the 1960s; it was seen as the 'fashion centre' of London, where the famous and sophisticated shopped and socialised. It reflected the idea of the 'Swinging Sixties', a time of hope, excitement and more freedom for people to dress and behave as they wanted.

2. Now show the second source, a poster to the class on a whiteboard/or as printed copy: 'Keep our Secrets Secret, 1960s', Catalogue ref: INF 13/293/10

Divide the class into small groups/pairs and ask pupils to discuss their answers to the following questions, before reporting back to the class.

- What can you see in this photograph? What do you think is happening?
- Who do you think these people might be?
- Does this photograph look like it was also taken during the 1960s? Why/ why not?
- Look at the printed writing below the photograph. Can you see who has produced this poster? What is the message about how people should behave?
- What does this photograph tell us about life at this time?
- How would you describe the atmosphere in this photograph and how does it compare with the first photo?

Teacher's Notes

Explain to the pupils that this photograph was 'staged' (actors posed for the photograph to be taken), so that it could be used in a government poster about security. The 1960s, as well as being a decade of excitement, changing fashion and music, was also a time of conflict and The Cold War. This was a 'war of information' that had been taking place between the Western World (United States of America, Britain and their allies) and the Communist countries of Eastern Europe (the Soviet Union and allies), following the tensions that arose at the end of the Second World War.

Both sides were engaged in a race to develop the best weapons and nuclear bombs (The Arms Race), and to be the first nation to send a man into space (The Space Race). Each side kept closely guarded secrets and information, to prevent their opponent from gaining the upper hand. The British Government launched information campaigns to warn ordinary people about the country's security and the threat of Spies from the Soviet Union. This poster is an example of this type of information.

Part 2:

How can we use these 4 documents to find out about life during 1960s Britain?

1. Use this document, 'Children playing outside houses, 1960s', Catalogue Ref: COAL 80/2063/1. Show the class the document on a whiteboard/or as printed copy.

Ask pupils to work in small groups and answer the following questions:

- What can you see in this photograph?
 - What are the children doing?
 - What similarities and differences can you see between children's play in the 1960s and how you play today?
 - Look carefully at the street in the photograph. What else does this photograph reveal about life in the 1960s?
2. Use this source, 'Thunderbird 3, from Thunderbirds Television Series', Catalogue ref: BT 52/8095.

This is taken from records belonging to the Board of Trade. When people had ideas for designs (e.g. clothes, toys), they had to submit their design to this Board to be registered. This prevented others from copying or stealing the design. The photograph/ illustration of the design would be accompanied by a form of registration. Today people register their designs with the Intellectual Property Office.

Show the poster on a whiteboard/or as printed copy. Discuss the following questions:

- What can you see in this source?
- What does the writing under each photograph say?
- What do you think the photographs are showing? Do you recognise this?
- What type of source do you think this might be? Why do you think this?
- What does this source reveal about life in the 1960s?

Teacher's Notes

3. Use this source entitled 'Larder Contents, 1964', Catalogue Ref: HO 287/1496 (28)

This source is taken from Home Office records relating to the Great Train Robbery of 1963, and shows the larder in the criminals' hideout at Leatherslade Farm! It's a really interesting source for discussing food and shopping habits during the 1960s.

Introduce this source as a 'Mystery' document to the pupils and display on the whiteboard. Ask the pupils to spend 60 seconds looking at the document in pairs and chatting about what they can see. Ask them to share their findings and run through the following questions:

- What can they see in the photograph?
- Where do they think this photograph was taken? Ask them to explain their ideas.
- Is there anything in the photograph that looks similar to things we might use/ buy today?
- What can this photograph tell us about life in the 1960s?

4. Use this poster entitled 'British Railways Scarborough Poster, 1960', Catalogue ref: AN 14/186.

Divide the class into small groups/pairs. Show the class the poster on a whiteboard/or as printed copy. Discuss the following questions:

- What type of source is this?
- What is being advertised?
- How does the poster encourage people to 'travel by train'?
- How persuasive do you find this poster? Explain your answer.
- What does this poster reveal about life for people in the 1960s?
- How could we find out more about where people went on holiday in the 1960s?

Plenary:

Discussion question

- Look again at ALL SOURCES [for parts 1 & 2]
- Which one would you choose to put into an exhibition about life in the 1960s? Pupils explain why they've chosen a specific source.

Teacher's Notes

Creative activities:

1. Design a toy activity

Pupils design their own toy for a child today, remembering to complete the accompanying form of registration for their design! Here is the form that was used for the toy design for Thunderbird 3.

2. Design a fashion advert

Pupils could research Sixties fashion and choose a specific trend or item to advertise. How can they make it appeal to the teenagers of The Sixties? Encourage them to look back at the photograph of Carnaby Street for inspiration!

3. Design a menu for a sixties dinner party

The Sixties saw the growing popularity of the dinner party; an opportunity for friends to get together and socialise at someone's house over a tasty meal! Pupils could research Sixties food and prepare their own menu for a dinner party during this decade, including a Starter, Main Course and a Dessert. There could be a vote for the winning menu, and pupils could even attempt to make the meal for teachers in the school!

Carnaby Street, London

Catalogue ref: INF14/147



Keep our Secrets Secret, 1960's

Catalogue ref: INF 13/293/10



somebody isn't using his intelligence ...

KEEP OUR SECRETS SECRET

Children playing outside houses, 1960's

Catalogue ref: COAL 80/2063/1



Thunderbird 3, from Thunderbirds Television Series

Catalogue ref: BT 52/8095

918623



SIDE VIEW



SIDE VIEW



FRONT END



REAR END

Larder Contents, 1964

Catalogue ref: HO 287/1496 (28)



28

British Railways Scarborough Poster, 1960

Catalogue ref: AN 14/186



BOOKLET FROM PUBLICITY DEPARTMENT, SCARBOROUGH

TRAVEL BY TRAIN

Services and fares from
Stations and Agencies



Thunderbird 3, from Thunderbirds Television Series Design Register

Catalogue ref: BT 52/8095

Registered Design No. 918623

Date of Application 15th October, 1964

Date as of which design registered 15th October, 1964.

Certificate of registration issued 16 NOV 1964

Article in respect of which design is registered a Model craft

Name and address of proprietor

A. P. Films Limited,
a British Company,
Stirling Road,
Slough,
Buckinghamshire.

Address for service

c/o Haseltine, Lake & Co.,
28 Southampton Buildings,
Chancery Lane,
London, W.C.2.

19 AUG 1969

27 AUG 1974

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