

Louisiana Gumbo Lesson Resource

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WINGS, CHROME, AND TAILFINS: AUTOMOBILES OF THE 1950S

Subject: Social Studies

Grade Level: 8, 11

Overview

The 1950s was the era of the dream car! With the restraints of war and the depression gone, big engines and flashy tailfins took the American public by storm.

Explore images of the 1950s to discover how automobiles changed the American lifestyle.

Approximate Duration: 1 or 2 50-minute class periods

Content Standards:

- **History: Time, Continuity, and Change** Students develop a sense of historical time and historical perspective as they study the history of their community, state, nation, and world.

Benchmarks:

- **H-1A-M4** analyzing historical data using primary and secondary sources;

Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs):

- **Historical Thinking Skills**

Grade 8

67. Analyze given source material to identify opinion, propaganda, or bias (H-1A-M4)

Interdisciplinary Connections:

- **English/Language Arts : Standard 1** Students read, comprehend, and respond to a range of materials, using a variety of strategies for different purposes.

Educational Technology Standards:

- Determine when technology is useful and select the appropriate tool(s) and technology resources to address a variety of tasks and problems.

Objectives:

Students will

- Students will demonstrate their understanding of the causes and effects of change over time.
- Use reading comprehension skills and available technology to locate, select, and synthesize information from digital images to acquire and communicate knowledge about events, ideas, and issues related to history.
- Demonstrate historical perspective by participating in a class discussion of events that shaped American and Louisiana history.
- Analyze cartoons, photographs, posters, and other visual medium to identify opinion, propaganda, or bias.

Lesson Materials and Resources

Depending on how the teacher formats the lesson, one or more of the following items may be used:

- [Observation Form](#)
- [Essay Rubric](#)
- [Oral Presentation Rubric](#)
- [Poster Rubric](#)
- [Multimedia Storyboard](#)
- Nifty Fifties Photographs for the Ages Note-taking Guide

Technology Tools and Materials:

Hardware: Computers, 1 per student or set of partners (Can be executed with 1 classroom presentation computer); Internet access

Software: Browser software

Websites:

LOUISiana Digital Library, <http://louisdl.louislibraries.org>

Sample Collections

[Louisiana State Museum Jazz Collection](#)

[The American Missionary Association and the Promise of a Multicultural America: 1839-1954](#)

[Historic Photographs of Southwest Louisiana](#)

[Louisiana Historical Photographs Collection of the State Library](#)

[Millspaugh Photograph Collection](#)

[Natchitoches Chamber of Commerce Collection](#)

[Robert S. Maestri Collection](#)

Car Tunes <http://local.aaca.org/junior/cartunes/mp3/1950.htm>

Procedure

Set the stage for the lesson by preparing a PowerPoint slideshow of vintage and contemporary automobiles. You might want to use the Car Tunes website

(<http://local.aaca.org/junior/cartunes/mp3/1950.htm>) to insert a 1950s-era song about automobiles.

1. Introduce the concept of change. Provide examples of how advances in communication and transportation produce rapid changes to the American way of life (ex: typewriter v. computer).
2. Ask students to use the Ridin' in My Car Browsing Guide to investigate how automobiles changed the 1950s lifestyle.
3. Ask students to select one of the Nifty Things to Do projects on the bottom of the from the Ridin' in My Car Browsing Guide.
4. Distribute the appropriate rubrics and provide adequate time for research, collaboration, and production.
5. Use the **Observation Form** to record anecdotal information about peer collaboration.
6. Student Presentations
7. **Debrief.** Use student presentations to discuss the significance of automobiles to the 1950s lifestyle.

8. **Extension.** Ask students to create a visual display (multimedia presentation, poster, collage, etc.) that illustrates the significance of automobiles or other types of transportation to our contemporary world.
9. **Extension.** Ask students to investigate the impact modern communication technology has had/will have on the need for and/or mode of transportation in our contemporary world and in the future.

Assessment Procedures:

Ridin' in My Car Browsing Guide

Appropriate Rubrics from Materials section of this lesson

Short stories, journal entries, multimedia presentations

Accommodations/Modifications:

Accommodations/Modifications Built Into the Lesson

- Cooperative grouping
- Small class segments
- Whole class debriefing sessions
- Pre-teach vocabulary words
- Extensions/Explorations can be modified for individual needs
- Debriefing provides systematic feedback

The 1950s was the era of the dream car! With the restraints of war and the depression gone, big engines and flashy tailfins took the American public by storm. Explore images of the 1950s to discover the how automobiles changed the American lifestyle.

What was life like in the 1950s?

Browse these Internet sites about the 1950s and search for images of people and their automobiles. What can you learn about life in the 1950s from these images?

Record your thoughts on another sheet of paper. (Hint: These are some things to think about—clothes, cars, hairstyles, houses, roads, stores, advertisements, activities.)

Research Links

[Franck-Bertacci Collection of 1950s Photos](#)
[State Library of Louisiana's Historical Photograph Collection](#)

How did automobiles shape the lifestyle of the 1950s?

In the 1950s, the automobile produced dramatic changes in the way Americans worked and played. Investigate these Internet sites to find out how automobiles changed life for Americans. Some topics to investigate include where Americans lived, how and where they ate, the structure of family life, industry and jobs, and the youth/teens living during the decade of the '50s. Record your thoughts on another sheet of paper.

Research Links:

Automobile in American Life and Society
http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Design/Gartman/D_Overview/D_Overview4.htm

Some Nifty Things To Do!

1. Write a short story, set in the 1950s, based on what you learned from your research. See **Essay Rubric** for guidelines.
2. Prepare a multimedia production explaining how the automobile changed life during the 1950s.
3. Produce a visual display in which you compare and contrast life in the 1950s with life in the 21st century. See **Poster Rubric for guidelines**.
4. Choose your 1950s dream car. Imagine you could go back in time to the 1950s and spend one day driving your '50s dream car. Where would you like to go, and what would you like to do? Write a journal entry describing your dream car and your day adventure. See **Essay Rubric** for guidelines.