

# Summary: The Boom Years

## Government in the 1950s

After World War II, millions of soldiers returned to the United States. They needed jobs and homes. President Harry Truman wanted the government to help. He created the Fair Deal in 1949. It included laws to create jobs and build houses. The laws tried to help African Americans get equal treatment when they voted and looked for jobs. Congress did not pass many of the laws. The Depression and the War were over and many Americans thought people didn't need the government's help.

In 1952, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President. He was very popular because he was a famous general during World War II. As President he helped end the Korean War in 1953. People liked his warm personality. President Eisenhower approved the Federal-Aid Highway Act in 1956, which gave over \$32 billion to build modern highways. He thought new roads would make it easier to move people and goods around the country. Under Eisenhower's leadership the economy grew. He ran for re-election with the slogan "peace, progress and prosperity."

## Americans at Home

When veterans went back to work they were eager to buy houses and start families. So many new families were started in the 1950s that the country had a baby boom. There were not enough houses. Builders began to build large housing projects. The projects had houses that looked alike and were built very close together.

The economy grew fast. More people had money to spend. They bought cars and household appliances, such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners, and televisions. Television brought news from far away right into their homes. Factories and businesses worked faster to make more products. Medicine also improved. In 1956, Jonas Salk invented a vaccine to protect people from polio.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**prosperity** *noun*, economic success such as earning a good income

**veteran** *noun*, a person who has served in the military

**baby boom** *noun*, increase of babies born after World War II

**vaccine** *noun*, medicine to protect people against a disease

### After You Read

**REVIEW** What made President Eisenhower so popular? Underline three sentences that tell you why Americans liked Eisenhower.

**REVIEW** What was the effect of the baby boom on home building? Circle the sentence that describes the housing problem in the 1950s. Then draw a box around the sentences that tell the solution.