

Summary: Building New Communities

Life in the 1950s

Near the end of World War II, Congress passed the GI Bill to help veterans pay for college and career training. It also gave them low-cost loans to buy houses. Hundreds of thousands of war veterans returned to California, and by 1950, California had the second highest population in the country.

Other people, such as African Americans from Texas and the South, also moved to California. Immigrants from Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries also arrived. From Asia came Japanese, Koreans, and Filipinos.

Newcomers found work on farms and in the oil, aviation, and movie industries. Some started small businesses. Spanish-speaking immigrants in some cities settled in Spanish neighborhoods called barrios. People could not always live where they wanted because of discrimination.

The population quickly increased. More places to live were needed, and orchards and fields near cities were turned into suburbs. Developers quickly and cheaply built homes for many who had never owned a home before.

Transportation and Entertainment

The new suburbs had few businesses, so people in suburbs needed a way to get to work in the city. California did not build train tracks but freeways. More people bought cars. Gases and chemicals from cars and factories polluted parts of California. Smog became a problem in Los Angeles with its heavy traffic and warm weather.

In the 1950s, television became the popular new entertainment. People could watch in their homes. By 1960, 87% of U.S. households had television. The popularity of television helped the movie industry, as movie studios made shorter movies for TV and produced television shows. Hollywood and Burbank became centers of the television industry on the West Coast. Walt Disney was one of the first people in the film industry to make cartoons for television. In 1954, *The Wonderful World of Disney* began to air on Sunday evenings. In 1955, Disney opened a theme park in Anaheim. Today, millions visit Disneyland and other theme parks in California each year.



Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

suburb *noun*, a community built near a city

barrio *noun* (Spanish), a neighborhood

pollution *noun*, anything that makes air, water, or soil unclean

smog *noun*, a mixture of smoke and fog



After You Read

REVIEW Why did suburbs develop in the 1950s?

Circle the sentences that tell why suburbs were built.

REVIEW What new forms of entertainment became popular in the 1950s?

Highlight the sentences that describe the types of entertainment that became popular in the 1950s.