

A Land of Opportunity

Overview

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Overview

This topic can be integrated into unit on post World War II economy in Grade 10.

Lesson plan contents:

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Compelling Question: In what ways, and for whom, was America a land of opportunity in the 1950s?

Introduction

On July 4, 1947, Margaret Rudkin of Fairfield opened a modern commercial bakery in Norwalk and gave it the name of her small bakery, Pepperidge Farm. Rudkin had begun baking bread in 1937 for her son Mark, who had food allergies, and word of her excellent

bread spread quickly. Her husband, a broker on Wall Street, began taking loaves to specialty shops in New York, and the bread was named for her family property in Fairfield, which was named for the Pepperidge tree. Despite having to cut back production during World War II because of rationing, the growing reputation of Pepperidge Farm breads led to the opening of the large commercial bakery in Norwalk and a product line of baked goods, including cookies, crackers, and frozen pastries.

An innovator who kept a keen eye on market changes—she brought back a cookie recipe from Europe that became the foundation of the company's Distinctive Cookies line—Rudkin sold her company to Campbell Soup Company in 1961. In 1963 her illustrated recipe book, the Margaret Rudkin Pepperidge Farm Cookbook, became the first cookbook ever to break onto The New York Times Best Sellers List.

—From: [Pepperidge Farm Opens Bakery](#)

Supporting Questions

Eco 9-12.5 refers to the [Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks](#) .

- What types of economic opportunities were available to Americans post-war? (Eco 9-12.5)
- What was Connecticut's contribution to America's post-war economy? (Eco 9-12.5)
- What role did innovation and technology play in the development of new industries after World War II? (Eco 9-12.5)

Purpose

Students will understand how a Connecticut giant in the food industry—Pepperidge Farm—reflects the growth of consumerism and opportunity in the post-World War II era.

Historical Context

History of the 1950's, Advertising Age

In the U.S., far-reaching advertising trends were established in the cultural and economic environment of the 1950s. Traditional media such as radio, newspapers and magazines remained vital ad conduits

during the early years of the decade, but TV quickly became a cornerstone of many advertisers' national media plans.

Throughout the decade, advertising expenditures increased to unprecedented levels. J. Walter Thompson Co., for example, saw its billings increase from \$78 million in 1945 to \$172 million in 1955 and \$250 million by 1960. Overall, the decade saw gross annual ad industry billings grow from \$1.3 billion in 1950 to \$6 billion in 1960.

Decade of Consumerism

Until about 1953, U.S. advertising and consumerism were catching up. Products such as clothing, refrigerators, automobiles and appliances; unavailable or in short supply during World War II were again plentiful. Pent-up demand for consumer products fueled a steady growth in manufacturing.

Conversely, the latter part of the decade was for consumers a period of acute consumption anxiety. Marketers continued to offer "new and improved" products to maintain high consumer demand. That focused selling technique relied on newly popular methods such as motivational research, demographic targeting and generational marketing.

The postwar years also saw a huge increase in population. From 1945 to 1964, a global "baby boom" occurred, which fueled a housing boom. By the close of the decade, one-third of the U.S. population lived in suburban areas surrounding metropolitan centers, lured by the increase in transportation options and affordable housing for America's new middle class. That, in turn, fueled a need for appliances and other necessities to fill those new homes, and marketers rushed to introduce a vast array of products while manufacturers churned out new appliances, automobiles and consumer electronics. Many advertised products promoted labor-saving automation for increased productivity and leisure time. Heating and cooling products, kitchen and laundry appliances, furniture and decorating accessories, and frozen and prepared foods all promoted time-saving benefits.

Capitalism claimed the technical innovations of wartime and transformed them into labor-saving convenience products. The

aerosol spray can was a by-product of the war's South Pacific "bug bomb." Adding a spray top transformed the "bug bomb" into a dispenser for everything from processed cheese, whipped cream, shaving cream, hairspray and deodorant to furniture polish. Nylon, initially developed for parachutes, replaced expensive silk in stockings. Plastics and Styrofoam found new applications in everything from furniture to insulation.

Advertising Family Values

Advertising during this period reflected a conscious return to traditional family values. In a single generation, lingering memories of the Great Depression and war were replaced by positive futuristic portrayals of the idealized modern family—mother, father, son and daughter—enjoying the comforts of their new home, the convenience of their automobile and added leisure time together. Children were targeted for the first time, as advertising tapped their newfound affluence. Phonographs, records, radios, magazines, clothing and soft drinks, among other products, found a receptive teen audience.

Advertising also portrayed society's upward mobility and prosperity, its technological superiority and its renewed optimism. For example, the necessity of becoming a two-car family was heavily promoted throughout the 1950s—a decade that began with 59% of American families owning a car. Within a few years, many families owned at least one car while many owned several. By the mid-1950s, automobiles surpassed packaged goods and cigarettes as the most heavily advertised products.

Car owners of the mid-1950s began to see their vehicles as extensions of themselves. Ever-changing designs pushed consumers to replace their cars yearly—not for lack of performance, but for lack of style. Automobile design, with its distinctive fins and heavy emphasis on chrome, and advertising reflected the nation's infatuation with new technology, jet planes and the atomic age.

TV's Coming-of-Age

Perhaps the most important factor influencing advertising in the 1950s was the growth of TV and its maturation into a viable ad medium. By 1951, regular live network service reached the West Coast via

microwave transmitters, establishing coast-to-coast national coverage.

As with radio, early TV programming was advertiser-sponsored. Advertising agencies produced TV shows, with networks providing little more than facilities, airtime and occasional guidance. Programming typically promoted the name of the sponsor and not the star: "Hallmark Hall of Fame," "Texaco Star Theater," "Colgate Comedy Hour," "Goodyear TV Playhouse" and "Kraft Television Theater."

Large U.S. agencies such as JWT, McCann-Erickson, Young & Rubicam and Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn benefited from handling major packaged and durable goods advertisers such as Procter & Gamble Co., Bristol-Myers, Westinghouse Electric and Colgate-Palmolive. Likewise, Madison Avenue continued to profit from spiraling TV spending. In 1949, TV spending was \$12.3 million; within two years, it had grown to \$128 million. By 1954, TV had become the leading medium for advertising. Network radio suffered losses as major stars and their audiences moved to TV. By 1960, TV approached 90% household penetration.

Spokespersons became readily identified with the products they represented, as product demonstrations gained significance in this visual medium. Betty Furness, a B-movie actress of the 1930s, became spokeswoman for Westinghouse appliances in 1949 on "Studio One." For 11 years her popularity soared, as did the popularity of Westinghouse refrigerators, stoves and other household appliances.

Demonstrations also helped differentiate similar packaged goods. Notable televised product demonstrations included Band-Aid brand's "Super-Stick" bandages clinging to an egg in boiling water and Remington shaver's peach test in which a razor was used to shave peach fuzz.

Other memorable TV spots included the stop-motion antics of Speedy Alka-Seltzer; Old Gold's dancing cigarette boxes; Dinah Shore singing "See the USA in Your Chevrolet"; newsman John Cameron Swayze's matter-of-fact delivery of "It takes a licking and keeps on ticking" for Timex watches; and animated depictions of the Ajax Pixies, Tony the

Tiger, Hamm's beer bear and beer mavens Bert and Harry Piel.

Picked as one of the best ads of the 20th century by Advertising Age, the TV spot for Anacin pain reliever showed how beneficial and intrusive TV advertising could be. Through slogans, demonstrations, mnemonics and repetition, Anacin positioned itself as the "tension headache" remedy by repeating the phrase "Fast, fast, fast relief" and diagramming an imaginary headache with lightning bolts and hammers. The ad's tactic of repetition drew harsh criticism for agency Ted Bates & Co., yet it increased Anacin's sales.

However, the system of advertiser control over program content and scheduling that evolved in the heyday of radio was not a practice the networks were eager to see exported to TV. As the stakes mounted and the competition between the networks intensified, broadcasters increasingly wanted the authority to remove weak programs and strategically schedule strong ones to maintain viewer numbers during the valuable evening hours.

At first, advertisers were resistant, but the networks had an ally in economics. As the '50s progressed, production costs rose dramatically to the point where many advertisers began to feel the strain. The introduction of color broadcasting in 1953 added to those expenses.

Increasingly programs that had started the decade with a single sponsor retreated to "alternate sponsorships," with one advertiser sponsoring a program one week, another the next. By 1957, Lucky Strike and Richard Hudnut shared "The Hit Parade," and Stopette deodorant and Remington Rand alternated on "What's My Line?"

Ad agencies remained an important part of the process, however. An agency might produce a program and offer it to two different clients on an alternate basis or it might switch sponsors. The Kudner Agency produced "The Texaco Star Theater" for its client, Texaco, for example, but when Texaco decided to withdraw in 1953, Kudner sold the program to another of its clients, General Motors Corp., and it became "The Buick-Berle Show."

—From: [History of the 1950's](#), Advertising Age

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How To

Classroom Setup

Teachers will have students work in groups of three to four. Student will need access to the internet and large poster paper. In addition, students will be taking notes and writing reflections in their journals.

Procedure

Part 1: Have students view three short videos about the economy in post war America:

[The Wonderful World of Capitalism](#)

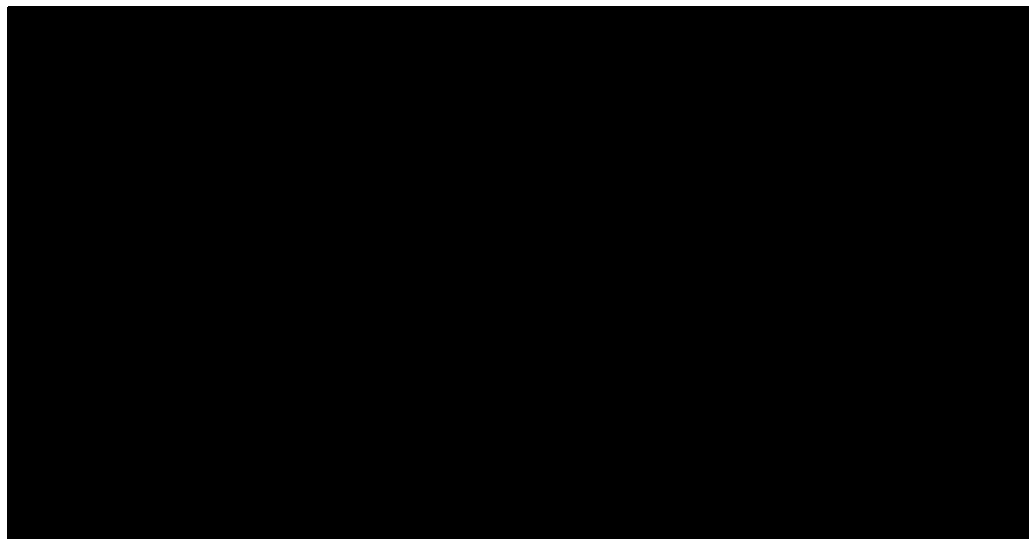


USA Economy in the 1950's

USA economy 1950s

The US Post World War II Boom

US post World War II boom



Have students identify the factors responsible for the growing economy. Their answers can be shared with the class in [anchor charts](#) . Some factors include the rise of disposable income, more production, influence of marketing and TV.

- What opportunities were there for workers?
- What role did consumers play in this economy?
- What was the role of women, as illustrated in these three videos?

Part 2: Now have students watch these videos about Margaret Rudkin's Connecticut company, Pepperidge Farm:

[Women in the Kitchen: It's Strictly Business](#) (Watch to the 24:15 mark)

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Provided by Connecticut Network - CT-N.com

[Margaret Rudkin's Founding of Pepperidge Farm](#), produced by
Pepprridge Farm

Margaret Rudkin's Founding of Pepperidge Farm

- How did Margaret Rudkin's role as businesswoman and CEO differ from the image portrayed in the first three videos?
- How did Rudkin leverage her bread-making skills to build the company and grow her consumer base?

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Related Resources

[1940s War, Cold War and Consumerism](#), Advertising Age, March 2005

[A Broke Connecticut Housewife Finds Pepperidge Farm](#)

CT's Old State House Conversations at Noon Series: [Women in the Kitchen - It's Strictly Business](#)

[Grading the Nutmeg](#), Connecticut Innovates Podcast

[I Ate Every Variety of Pepperidge Farm Cookie](#), Slate

[Margaret Rudkin's Founding of Pepperidge Farm Video](#), Pepperidge Farm Company

[Margaret Fogarty Rudkin](#), Ct Women's Hall of Fame

[Pepperidge Farm, Our Story](#)

[Pepperidge Farm: Healthful Bread Builds a Business](#), CT Explore

[Pepperidge Farm Opens Bakery – Today in History: July 4, CT History](#)

Herships, Sally. "[Crowdfunding Has Created a Whole New Consulting Industry](#)." KUAR. Accessed May 23, 2017

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[The Wonderful World of Capitalism](#), [The Atlantic](#)

[USA Economy](#), [International School History Video](#), [A Broke Connecticut Housewife Finds Pepperidge Farm](#),

[US Post World War II Media Rich Learning Video](#)

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What's Next

Informed Action

Have students review the following sources about women as CEO's today:

[Female CEOs are at record level in 2016, but it's still only 5% \(CNN\)](#)

[Female Fortune 500 CEOs Are Poised to Break This Record in 2017 \(Fortune\)](#)

[Female CEOs are still extremely rare in the US and Europe \(CNBC\)](#)

[Still missing: Female business leaders \(CNN\)](#)

- What are the obstacles for women in leadership positions in business today?
- What changes in the culture today may help bring more women into leadership positions in business?

Then have students read [this article on entrepreneurship today](#).

In addition, have students listen to [this podcast about crowdsourcing startup businesses](#):

Crowdfunding has created a whole new consulting industry

There are experts who will help with the pitch, the video and the PR. But it all costs money.

Play

Students in groups of three or four then consider areas of the economy today that they could target if they were to create a startup.

- What kind of a business would you create?
- How would you attract customers?
- What kinds of workers would you need? How would you promote diversity in your workforce?
- What innovation would you incorporate into the business?
- Who would help to fund your startup?

Design a pitch for your business to share with the class. The presentation should be no more than 3 minutes and can include visuals.