

Peace, Love, and War: The Sounds of the Sixties

The decade of the sixties was a time of great upheaval in America. On the international front, America was busy trying to keep peace in various parts of the world, such as Korea and Vietnam, while trying to maintain a peaceful atmosphere with the Soviet Union. At home, the times were no less tumultuous. The threat of nuclear attack reminded people of their mortality. President John F. Kennedy, his younger brother Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King, Jr., were all assassinated during the sixties. The Civil Rights movement was in full bloom, and racial tensions were apparent throughout much of the United States.



The Rolling Stones

Nowhere were these fears and tensions more keenly felt than in the younger generation of Americans. These young people felt lost and struggled for their own identities as they observed the events that were occurring around them. They believed that the social norms and practices of their parents' generation and the generations before them had brought them to this point. Many of the youth in this generation wanted nothing to do with those same norms and standards. They looked, therefore, for ways to avoid the same pitfalls they believed the generations before them had fallen into. In order to do this, they resorted to open rebellion. They staged riots and avoided the draft. They grew their hair long and dressed in "far out" clothes that resembled nothing of their parents' generation. Their music also reflected this rebellion.

Words from many of the songs cried out against the wars that were raging about them and the injustices of society and its expectations for them. Many young people rebelled against the authority figures who they believed were trying to enforce the values and standards that they so desperately wanted to avoid. They wanted to be free to live in their own manner—to choose and do the things that they wanted to do without any hindrances.

Along with The Beatles, several other groups from Great Britain represented some of the feelings of the youth of the sixties. Groups such as The Dave Clark Five and The Rolling Stones became very popular in America, especially The Rolling Stones, whose music and lyrics supported much of the open rebellion that was prevalent in the 1960s. Other musicians who represented the folk-rock faction of the rock scene in the 60s, such as Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and Pete Seeger, spoke out against war and America's involvement in Vietnam. Many of the other groups in the 1960s sang songs that condoned the use of illegal drugs and further heightened the tension between the youth and older generations.

While it would be unfair and incorrect to say that the problem of the use of illegal drugs in America began with rock-and-roll or even specifically with the music of the 1960s, it is apparent that many of the musicians and fans of this style of music believed that music and drugs went together. The popularity of these performing figures and their music gave credence to that lifestyle, even though in later years, many of them fell victim to its ill effects.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mismatched Meanings

Match the definitions on the right with the terms on the left by placing the correct letter on the line of the corresponding term.

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| _____ 1. Korea and Vietnam | A. younger generation resorted to this |
| _____ 2. The Soviet Union | B. John F. Kennedy's younger brother |
| _____ 3. The 60s | C. British group that was very popular in America |
| _____ 4. John F. Kennedy | D. brought racial tensions to the forefront |
| _____ 5. Far out | E. President who was assassinated in the 60s |
| _____ 6. Civil Rights Movement | F. what the youth of the 60s rebelled against |
| _____ 7. Open rebellion | G. what the youth of the 60s wanted |
| _____ 8. Robert Kennedy | H. some youths' name for their clothing |
| _____ 9. Martin Luther King, Jr. | I. popular among some rock musicians and their fans |
| _____ 10. War | J. folk-rock musician of the 60s |
| _____ 11. Authority | K. civil rights leader who was assassinated |
| _____ 12. Freedom | L. songs cried out against this |
| _____ 13. Drugs | M. U.S. tried to keep peace with them |
| _____ 14. The Rolling Stones | N. time of great upheaval |
| _____ 15. Bob Dylan | O. America's involvement in these places angered youth |