Unit 9 Glossary (Post WWII and 1950’s)

**Baby Boom**- After the end of World War II, birth rates across the world spiked. The explosion of new infants became known as the baby boom. During the boom, an estimated 77 million babies were born in the United States alone at a rate of baby was born every 7 seconds. The large increase in population produced a substantial rise in demand for consumer goods, stimulating the post-war economy. A person who was born between 1946 and 1964 is considered a baby boomer. The baby boomer generation makes up a substantial portion of the North American population. Representing nearly 20% of the American public, baby boomers have a significant impact on the economy. As a result, baby boomers are often the focus of marketing campaigns and business plans.

**Bracero Program**- Named from the Spanish term *bracero*, meaning "manual laborer". Initiated in 1942, it was a series of laws and diplomatic agreements, initiated by an exchange of diplomatic notes between the U.S. and Mexico for the importation of temporary contract laborers from Mexico to the United States. President Franklin D. Roosevelt met with Mexican president Manuel Avila Camacho in Monterrey, Mexico to discuss Mexico as part of the Allies in WWII and the Bracero Program. After the expiration of the initial agreement in 1947, the program was continued in agriculture under a variety of laws and administrative agreements until its formal end in 1964.

**Cold War (1945-1989)**- Following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as superpowers. The two unions of states faced off in an arms race which lasted nearly 50 years. Instead of fighting a military war they used diplomacy and nerves to compete for resources, markets, and political strength in a world economy. The threat of nuclear attack prompted private citizens to build bomb shelters and worry about nuclear disaster. The Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 created an atmosphere of fear as President John F. Kennedy warned Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev that an attack launched from Cuba on the United States would be considered an attack from the Soviet Union, and that the United States would respond accordingly. In 1963 Kennedy secured a nuclear test-ban treaty with the Soviets and direct communication between the White House and the Kremlin ensured that national leaders could communicate in times of crisis. In 1972 President Richard M. Nixon strove to slow the arms race through the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) which froze the number of long-range nuclear missiles for a period of five years. Both nations continued to work on defense systems. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan initiated the Strategic Defense Initiative (“Star Wars”), a strategy based in advanced technology aimed at outpacing Soviet defense. The Cold War escalated as arms negotiations with the Soviets ceased in late 1983 and the Soviets boycotted the Olympic Games in Los Angeles in 1984. By the late 1980s the United States and Soviets had deployed more than 16,000 nuclear warheads. A combination of factors including the rise of pro-democracy movements in Eastern Europe and China and the overthrow of communist governments in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania thawed the Cold War. The Berlin Wall tumbled in 1989 and the two Germanys united in October 1990 after 45 years of political and military separation. The USSR dissolved during the tenure of Mikhail Gorbachev as his policies of glasnost and perestroika worked to undermine communism. The Commonwealth of Independent States created 15 new governments which adopted free-market economics. This disunion of the USSR removed the Soviet threat which drove U.S. foreign relations for more than 40 years. Not only did former Soviet nations struggle with adopting western-style capitalism and politics, but western European nations were forced to develop strategies to cope with refugees and challenges to their stable economies posed by their weaker neighbors. The United States also reassessed its foreign policy as a result of the end of the Cold War.

**Consumerism**- Unlike previous Americans, those in the 1950s lived in a time when consumer values dominated the American economy and culture. The "good life" was defined in economic terms and the dynamic economy provided more leisure and income. Above all, Americans were confident the good life was permanent and they enjoyed flashy cars, and televisions. In some ways mass marketing and consumerism brought about a material conformity.

**Fair Deal**- President Harry S. Truman’s domestic agenda and proposals from 1945 to 1953. The Fair Deal was a continuation of FDR’s New Deal but also created major initiatives such as aid to education, universal health insurance, Fair Employment Practices Commission, and the repeal of the Taft-Hartley Act. All of these were voted down. Other less controversial items were passed. The Fair Deal was considered a success.

**GI Bill**- In 1944 Congress passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, known as the GI Bill. Part of the strategy to avoid economic downturn after World War II, the GI Bill allotted funds to send former soldiers to school. In the ten years after the war, more than eight million veterans went to school at government expense. Most sought vocational and technical training, but many also attended colleges and universities. In addition, the act allowed the Veteran’s Administration to guarantee $16 billion in loans to veterans so they could purchase homes, farms, or small businesses. The bill did contribute to economic stability after the war.

**Mass Media**- The means of communication that reach large numbers of people in a short time such as through television, newspapers, magazines, and radio. In the 1950’s television was considered the greatest impact on society and redefined mass media.

**McCarthyism**- During the Cold War, Americans viewed the Soviets as a threat to national security and cultural survival. The fear of communism increased throughout the 1950s as Americans became sensitized to the threat through publicized investigations of critics of the government. Extreme opposition to communism gained the name “McCarthyism” from the efforts of Joseph R. McCarthy, a senator from Wisconsin elected in 1947. In 1950 he announced that communists worked in the State Department. He and his followers worked to identify known communists and accused others based on association. McCarthyism resulted in the ruin of many public figures who were unable to find work because they were blacklisted. Employers refused to hire those suspected of communist activities because McCarthy’s tactic of guilt by association made the employee suspect. In 1954 through 35 days of televised hearings before a Senate investigating committee, McCarthy failed to substantiate his claims of communist collusion and lost favor with the Senate, and with the American public.

**Migration**- From urban to rural areas resulting in demographic shifts and environmental effects; the opposite of what happened during the early twentieth century. (See Suburbs)

**Rock and Roll**- Rock and roll is a popular style of music with roots in rhythm-and-blues, jazz, country and folk music started in the 1950’s. Early musicians included Little Richard, Chuck Berry, Elvis Presley, Buddy Holly, and Jerry Lee Lewis.

**Sputnik I/1957**- The year 1957 marked the start of the space race between the United States and the Soviet Union On October 4, the Soviets launched the world’s first space satellite, called Sputnik, and one month later launched Sputnik II, which carried a dog into space. The Communist success caused U.S. military and political leaders concern because it appeared to narrow the gap between the “backward” Soviet Union and the United States. Scientists quickly developed a small satellite and launched it in early 1958. The education system in the United States also came under scrutiny. The National Defense and Education Act, passed in 1958, authorized $887 million for loans and grants to improve science, mathematics, and language education.

**Suburbs**- Postwar affluence redefined the “American Dream” of an egalitarian society and material prosperity and gave millions of Americans the chance to have a house on their own land. Automobiles were quickly being produced again and purchased allowing the American public access to their own transportation. The Interstate Highway Act authorized the construction of thousands of miles of high-speed roads that made getting to work easier and faster if further away. Racial fears, affordable housing free of rent, and the desire to leave decaying and dirty cities were all factors that prompted many white Americans to flee to suburbia. Soon, shopping centers and fast food restaurants added to the convenience to suburban life. Thousands migrated to suburbia.

**U-2 Incident**- During the Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower on May 1, 1960, a United States U-2 spy plane was shot down over the airspace of the Soviet Union (under the leadership of Nikita Khrushchev). At first the U.S. government denied the plane’s purpose and mission. Later, the U.S. was forced to admit its role as a covert surveillance aircraft when the Soviet government produced its intact remains and surviving pilot, Francis Gary Powers, as well as photos of military bases in the Soviet Union (Russia) taken by Powers. Coming roughly two weeks before the scheduled opening of an East–West summit in Paris, the incident was considered a great embarrassment to the United Statesand prompted a marked deterioration in its relations with the Soviet Union. Powers was convicted of espionage and sentenced to three years of imprisonment plus seven years of hard labor, but he was released on February 10, 1962 during a prisoner-exchange with Soviet officer Rudolf Abel.