



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1983 Volume IV: America in the Sixties: Culture and Counter-Culture

What do they want? Critical Perspectives on the 1960's in the United States

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.04.01
by Karen Wolff

The 1960's started off with the spirit of hope and prosperity. Great wealth and vast growth in the industrial sector of the United States gave the nation a general sense of security and prosperity. Our affluent society was setting standards for the whole world. American technology was being exported with American money. We were leaders in technological development and investments throughout the world. Multinational corporations were transforming our economy and our sense of importance. Many more Americans were experiencing a new sense of economic advancement into the middle classes and into white collar employment.

However, within these developments the seeds of criticism and change soon took root. People from many different sectors of the society were challenging the system from their perspectives. People were looking below the surface of affluence and found a growing contradiction between a vast accumulation of wealth and persistent poverty; between a greater security and a growing sense of alienation and restlessness. In this unit I want to explore the nature of these criticisms and the people who were making them because the challenges that they presented have influenced the values and cultures of the American people today.

I have chosen to explore the ideas of five movements: the Civil Rights Movement, the student radicals of SDS, the Women's Movement, the cultural radicals and LSD, and Vietnam protest. Clearly the information on each one of them alone could be a unit. Thus, my focus will be on giving students a feeling for these criticisms of America and the people who made them. I have chosen to present the ideas of each group through analyzing documents that I believe reflect significant perspectives. These readings will be supplemented with other readings, lectures and a traditional textbook in American History. Students will be asked to understand how people's perspectives grow out of their life experiences.

(Recommended for Grades 11 and 12 American Studies, Politics, Debating, and The 60's)

Key Words

Sixties American History Civil Rights Unrest Women

<https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu>

©2019 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University

For terms of use visit <https://teachersinstitute.yale.edu/terms>