

## AN AFFLUENT SOCIETY - 1950's

### **DIRECTIONS:**

On a separate piece of paper, respond to the questions below using the websites provided. Write out your answers using complete sentences. Organize your paper by writing the bold titles to divide up your responses.

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**“How the Suburbs Changed America”** - <http://www.pbs.org/fmc/segments/progseg9.htm>

Read the website above. It is a transcript by historian Kenneth Jackson who interviewed Ben Wattenberg's experiences related to suburbs. Use it to answer questions 1 – 2.

1. *What did returning veterans want for their families?*
2. *What social values facilitated suburban development after World War II?*
3. *What were some limitations to the GI Bill?* <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2010/11/gi-bill.aspx>

**Population by Residence and Race: 1950 – 1970** - <http://edsitement.neh.gov/sites/edsitement.neh.gov/files/worksheets/suburbia-worksheet.pdf>

Analyze the chart found in the website above and answer questions 1 – 4.

1. *How does the central city population change from 1950 to 1970?*

1950:

1970:

2. *How does the suburban (outside central city) population change?*

1950:

1970:

3. *Now look at the White and African-American populations; how do those two populations differ in rates of growth in the center city and the suburban areas during those two decades?*

White: 1950

1970

Change:

Black: 1950

1970

Change:

White: 1950

1970

Change:

Black: 1950

1970

Change:

Review the practices of federal policies, focusing on data between "1930's-1940's: Federal housing programs spur suburb growth" and "1950's-1960's: Economy and housing boom, then respond to question

#4 [http://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_About/002\\_06\\_a-godeeper.htm](http://www.pbs.org/race/000_About/002_06_a-godeeper.htm)

4. *Would you agree that suburbanization hardened racial divisions in American life between 1950-1970? Explain.*

## **Automobile in American Life and Society** - <http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/>

Examine the sections of the exhibit below—environment, race, or gender. As you read, carefully examine the accompanying images (larger versions with captions appear when you click on the image). Answer questions 1 – 5 listed below.

- Environment: Martin Melosi, [The Automobile Shapes the City: Suburban Communities](#)
  - Race: Thomas Sugrue, [Building the Motor Metropolis: Automobiles, Highways, and Sprawl](#)
  - Gender: Margaret Walsh, [Gender and Automobility: Consumerism and the Great Economic Boom](#)  
(skip first two paragraphs)
1. *What is the effect of the automobile on the city? On the suburb? How did the automobile alter the American landscape?*
  2. *What is the role of government (local, state, and federal) in developing suburban communities?*
  3. *In old and new communities (center city and suburb), how did family life change?*
  4. *What was liberating about the new suburban region?*
  5. *What sorts of problems were created and for whom?*

### **Suburban Growth:**

The construction of suburbs increased dramatically after WWII. This process was enabled by many factors including affordable loans provided through the GI bill to returning veterans and an increase in wages due to the American GNP (gross national product) doubling between 1946 and 1960.

Levittown – Read and analyze the websites below. Write a brief paragraph describing Levittown.  
<http://ushistoryscene.com/article/levittown/>

California – became the most prominent symbol of the postwar suburban boom. Read about the Lakewood development by analyzing the website below. Write a brief paragraph describing Lakewood's growth and importance.  
<http://www.colapublib.org/history/lakewood/>