

Music of the 1950s

[History](#)



Kayla Curlett Period 5 Music of the 1950's Rock 'n' Roll, Pop, R&B, and Swing are some of the popular genres of music during the decade of the 1950's.

Music during this time period had a major influence on the people. It influenced their clothes, hair, fashion, dance moves, and their independence. Many teenagers during this time used the slogan " Sex, drugs and Rock 'n' Roll. " Some famous artists included Elvis Presley, Ricky Nelson, Fats Domino and Pat Boone. One of the biggest hits about the decade was Don McLean's " The Day the Music Died. "

Classic Pop dominated the charts for the first half of the decade. Classic Pop often used orchestras to back up the vocalists. Pop music often included elements from other styles like urban, dance, rock and much more. However these elements defined pop music. These songs had repeated choruses and catchy hooks. Electric guitars, drums and bass were some of the main instruments used in these songs. Despite the racial problems during the time, there was a sense of equality in Rock 'n' Roll. Chuck Berry was one of the first black Rock 'n' Roll performer that appealed to both audiences.

He combined the sound of Rhythm and Blues with Rock 'n' Roll. The movie, " Blackboard Jungle," gave Rock 'n' Roll a huge audience when Bill Haley and the Comets performed " Rock Around the Clock. " Bill Haley and the Comets practically became famous overnight. Elvis Presley was the king of Rock 'n' Roll. He was said to have the greatest impact on early Rock 'n' Roll. For Elvis Presley, 1956 was a year like no other. In January he became a regional sensation but by the end of the year he had become a national prodigy.

His first two albums were million dollar sellers which included top songs like “ Hound Dog,” “ Love Me Tender,” “ Don’t be Cruel” and “ Heartbreak Hotel. ” He appeared on national television eleven times and appeared in his first movie called “ Love Me Tender. ” Elvis Presley had a unique style that was either loved or hated. He became a cultural icon especially to teenagers. In March of 1958, Elvis was inducted into the army for two years; however, the Memphis Draft Board postponed his leaving so he could finish filming his fourth movie, “ King Creole. Elvis’s famous ducktail hair, crazy dance moves, and popular music make him the legacy that he is today. Another popular Rock ‘ n’ Roll artist of the 1950’s was Buddy Holly. He was described as “ the single and most influential creative force in early Rock ‘ n’ Roll. ” His signature style was his wayfarer glasses. Buddy was first inspired by Elvis Presley but as Buddy became famous his popularity rivaled Elvis Presley’s. In 1952 he recorded the song “ I’ll just pretend” with Bob Montgomery.

Later on he formed his own band, “ The Crickets. ” In 1958, Buddy decided to open up his own recording studio called Prism Records. He earned a huge amount of success in such little time; unfortunately On February 3rd, 1959 he died in a plane crash along with two other Rock ‘ n’ Roll legends Ritchie Valens and J. P. “ The Big Bopper” Richardson. This was considered the first and greatest tragedy that rock ‘ n’ roll has ever suffered. It later became known as “ The Day the Music Died,” in Don McLean’s song “ American Pie. ”

The single “ American Pie” was a number one U. S. hit for four weeks. Although the lyrics to this song may be puzzling, they have a significant meaning. Each verse represents important events that took place during the 1950’s. In the lyrics, “ That music used to make me smile,” represents

the happiness and optimism of the 1950's in America. Buddy Holly was McLean's idol and when Holly died the day the music died became the day innocence and optimism died. American pie and Chevrolet are both references to the 1950's in America.

American pie was a common symbol or an American icon used during that time. A Chevrolet was one of the most common cars during the 50's. The verses " If the Bible tells you so, do you believe in rock ' n' roll, can music save your mortal soul" represent how America was shifting from faith in God to faith in music. " And while the King was looking down, the jester stole his thorny crown," this represents how Bob Dylan stole Elvis Presley's fame and became the number one musician in the hearts' of the fans. And the three men I admire the most, the Father Son and Holy Ghost," McLean is referring to the Father Son and Holy Ghost as Buddy Holly, Richie Valens and the Big Bopper. " They caught the last train for the coast, the day the music died," here McLean is referring to the plane crash that killed three amazing musicians of the 1950's. Some may say that music has no significance to an era, but it does. It is what shapes a culture and the people during a time period. It changes people's thoughts, style, and actions. Even music from past decades has a significant impact on our society today.

Elvis, Pat Boone, and Ricky Nelson were all popular back in their time, yet they are still widely known in the present. With the downturn of quality of music today, there has been an increase in preservation of keeping old school music popular, in hopes to re-shape the minds of young people in our society. It is widely believed that music is a reflection of society and the

people in it, and for that reason, positive and inspirational music of the 50s must be introduced to the young ears of society for decades to come.