

How did the beatles influence society essay

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Never have a band been more influential on an entire generation than the Beatles. Almost overnight they changed the period referred to as the 'sixties' and their impact is still evident today. From this small band emerging out of Liverpool in England, society was changed. Music, culture, clothing, hairstyles and attitudes were all effected.

The Beatles' big journey started in February 1964 when the group appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show (suite101). Following this, the Beatles stormed a new generation with much more than unique music and long hair styles.

John Lennon and Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Richard Starkey (Ringo Starr) were working-class men with no formal music qualifications (Beatles). Nonetheless, they were altering the world.

The group offered the first light relief since the assassination of President Kennedy. They were also a valuable distraction from the depression of the cold war.

The Beatles' inspired millions of American adolescents to take up a musical hobby. As teenagers realised that the guitar could easily be self-taught, garage bands became popular all over the United States. Teenagers were now spending their weekends rehearsing, instead of aimlessly roaming the neighbourhood.

For many, creating music with their peers was just the creative channel they needed. Furthermore, the band members didn't need to have award winning vocals. The Beatles taught the importance, and usefulness, of harmonising (suite101).

To gain a full understanding of how much the Beatle's shaped the following generations' society, it's important to explore lifestyle and music pre-Beatles. 'Rock and Roll' music was already a popular form of music, and had been for around ten years, among American teenagers. It was made fashionable by artists such as Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley (Beatles). Nevertheless, it was still considered a new form of music with abundant potential to progress. The Beatles simply applied this potential.

The way of life in the fifties was gradually changing. The American people were starting to accept the notion of a 'working class hero', popularised by films such as Saturday Night and Sunday Morning and Loneliness of the Long-Distance Runner (Beatles). The Beatles were the definitive musical equivalent of such films' working class protagonists.

The popularity of the Beatles became central to many debates. In 1966, John said that the band had beaten Jesus in popularity (Beatles). He did go on to apologise for the claim, but there was an element of truth in the analysis of the Beatles' effect on society.

One significant impression they had on society was the way in which their music influenced the use of recreational drugs; taking drugs became a fashionable pastime. When the press discovered that the initials to the song Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds was LSD there was chaos (SF Forums). Furthermore, the song Day in the Life was banned by some American radio stations and by the BBC due to supposed drug references. The drug culture among teenagers was indeed growing (Beatles).

Over time, the Beatles began to follow their own individual interests. When in August 1967 their manager Brian Epstein committed suicide, the Beatles decline began. Their film, *Magical Mystery Tour*, was a flop and John's marriage broke down. All four band members began to do work without the others.

In April 1970, Paul McCartney decided to leave the group. When Paul was asked what his plans were once he had split from the band, he replied: " My only plan is to grow up." (Beatles).

Nevertheless, by 1970 the Beatles had already made an enormous impression on society. For example, a radical group who were accountable for bombing three business buildings named themselves " Revolutionary Force 9". This title was imitative of " Revolution Number 9," a medley of noises from the Beatles' *White Album* (Beatles).

This, along with other examples, shows that the Beatles' influence remained even after the band had ended.

The Beatles' memorabilia was and still is endless. Dedicated Beatles collectors focus on the early 1960's licenced memorabilia and also the *Yellow Submarine* items produced in 1968 (Beatlebay). The prices for such memorabilia continues to rise. For example, in 1970 a Beatles metal lunchbox sold for \$20. In 1980 it sold for \$100 and now prices are upwards of \$1000 (Beatlebay).

The Beatles' effect on society could never have been predicted. An extreme example is that the California Charles Manson murders were blamed on

Beatles' music. Their musical style altered the workings of the music industry; the majority of groups now write and perform their own material. This was very unusual in the late fifties and early sixties. The Beatles' references to love have swung the thinking of a whole generation, and may even have helped to end the war in Vietnam. Their use of drugs and their unique approach to life has resulted in some people mistaking their philosophy, perceiving terrorism to be acceptable. Other groups of people have taken the Beatles' words as gospel and have consequently founded new religions (Beatles).

Whatever the reaction to the Beatles is irrelevant; the significance is that people were reacting at all, and therefore were being influenced by the band. The Beatles' influence will likely to endure for years to come as each generation listens to the music that altered the world.

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