

# The arts and the 1960s essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Artists](#)



A complex and unclear question throughout the late 20th century and today is did the arts change history or do the arts reflect the changes that are taking place in society? It is a difficult question to answer since art and music have become so increasingly popular over the past 50 years. Also, for this question, no one's opinion was exactly one and the same.

Music and the arts had such a widespread influence on our nation over such a small period of time; it seemed as if it was sometimes hard to comprehend. Art in general became such a talked about subject during the post-WWII years and especially during the American involvement of Vietnam. During these years, and for many to come, art shaped our society in a way that the American people have never seen before. Art gave the American people a great form of expression starting in the 1950s and still plays a major role in our country today. Art had a major influence on the United States during the post-WWII years and that is the reason art changed American history. Some of the most popular music of the 20th century in the United States was during the late 1960s and the early 1970s during the Vietnam War. Songs like " give peace a chance", " Get up stand up", " where have all the flowers gone? ", " what's going on? ", and " Ohio" became very popular new pop songs that reflected the views of the American people toward their government and the dislike of the involvement of the Vietnam War.

These songs and others played a huge part in influencing the American people in way never before. 1960s art was influenced by the desire to move into a modern age or future which the space race seemed to show. Major works by influential artists like Alexander Calder and Helen Frankenthaler

showed a desire to escape from the status quo. Artists wanted to inspire the viewer to leap into something new and experience art in their own way.

I mean, isn't that what being an artist is all about? A new artist who appeared was Andy Warhol, a leading name in pop art. Other forms evolving during this time were assemblage art, optical art, kinetic abstraction, and pop art. Music has consistently been influenced by the trends of its time; reflecting politics, economics, and our life style. The baby boomer generation lived during a time when war had a powerful impact on everyone's life. Demonstrations, organizations, speeches, freedom chants, and drugs helped ease the pain of knowing that American soldiers were losing their lives in the Vietnam War.

Drugs became, perhaps, one of the most influential variables apparent in the music of the 1960s. The popularity and promotion of recreational drug use by musicians greatly influenced use of drugs and the perception of acceptability of drug use among the youth of the period. When the Beatles, once known as clean-cut, innocent youths, started publicly acknowledging using LSD, many fans followed.

Since the Beatles were the most popular group of people during that time, they had a great influence upon their fans and supporters, and there were a lot. These different genres of music from the 1960s impacted society in distinctive ways. Folk music brought politics into a new light to young Americans (which were mostly categorized in the baby boom generation). Along the same lines, counterculture music exposed society to new thoughts and experiences. Rock music also shocked humanity with new, harsh lyrics

and wild instrumentation. Without this wide range of music, our culture would have a very different history than it does today. My point is music during the post-World War II and Vietnam War age did not just have an effect upon the time it was released and popular.

That music has had such an influence on our current society and on other current musicians that have not forgotten and embraced music from 50 years ago. The arts of the 1950s 1960s, and 1970s definitely changed and shaped our society and culture during those years and for the many to come. It's hard to argue that the arts just reflected the times and the changes in society because the arts during that time were a definite part of history.

You cannot simply talk about the conflict in Vietnam (The Cold War), drug culture, and civil rights groups without including that music and art played an important role in forming and shaping history just as much as those events did.