

# Doris kearns goodwin's childhood in the 1950s essay

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Doris Kearns was born in 1947 after the Second World War. She grew up in Brooklyn, in the age when American teenagers were experiencing a major behavioral change. Indeed, most young girls and boys were undergoing a new phase in their lives marked by rebellion and immorality. Parents, on the other hand, did not understand why their children's behavior had changed all over a sudden.

In fact, most of them were so astounded by this change that they resorted to the use of severe corporal punishment in a bid to try and change their children's behavior. Despite all the changes in Doris Kearns' neighborhood, Doris Kearns life was very different from that of her peers. It was difficult to compare her with any of her friends in the fifties as she was completely different person (King, 2004). The aim of this paper is to elaborate on how different Doris' life was from her peers in the fifties. Through her childhood, her teenage years and eventually career life, Doris Kearns' character came out as unique in comparison to other girls of her age.

Right from her birth, everything about Doris Kearns was different from other girls her age. She was born to an Irish father Michael and an American mother Helen. For most part of her childhood, Doris Kearns attended the Catholic Church as were her parents. This was, however, not the usual way of life for most girls of her age. In the fifties, Catholicism was relatively a new denomination in America. Majority of the people at that time were Protestants. This made life very difficult for young Doris Kearns as most of her friends and schoolmates were Protestants. In her memoir, Doris Kearns described her neighborhood as a peaceful and calm place; in fact, she

compared it with heaven. Goodwin states, " Our street...was common land - our playground, our park, our community" (55).

In her memoir, Goodwin described her school life as an exciting one—it was her only way to make friends and playmates. Unlike many girls of her age, Doris enjoyed school life—she says, " I threw myself into high school affairs with unprecedented zeal...". (Goodwin 235). Further, Goodwin states that her interest in reading was shaped by her mother's influence. Her mother encouraged the girl to enjoy whatever she was reading, and from that time onwards, she developed a knack for reading. In fact, she was a hardworker in class that she always topped her class. Her father, on the other hand, introduced her to the world of baseball. He would occasionally take her to the stadium when the Dodgers were playing. He also made sure that she knew the whole root of the Dodgers players. While she was totally preoccupied with her school activities most of her peers were getting caught up in the new frenzy of rock and roll. Indeed, life for her only changed when she lost her mother after a long illness, and her father became an alcoholic (Foner, 2011).

The name " teen-age" was coined in the fifties immediately after World War 2. During this age, the young girls and boys had found themselves in between two generations—that of new families made after the war and their respective younger ones. No one paid attention to the needs and feelings of these teenagers. The adults were too preoccupied with rebuilding their lives after the war whereas the media did not air any shows that targeted the teenagers (Alter, 2012). As a reaction to this blackout, the teenagers started

to behave in a rebellious manner. They began listening to dirty music by other teenagers—songs about war, sex, parties, cars and much more to validate their existence.

As these events were taking place, the life of Doris Kearns went on as usual. Her church life, school and her passion for the Dodgers went on unperturbed. Besides spending most of her time on class work, Doris Kearns was also a member of the several social clubs in her school. In 1964, she graduated from Colby College with a bachelor's degree in Arts—this was a no mean feat for a girl in that era. In fact, she would later be honored with a Woodrow Wilson fellowship to pursue a PhD in Harvard University. As a matter of fact, her life was marked by academic excellence making it difficult for her to get time for fun activities like other girls her age enjoyed (Tindall and Davis, 2011).

From her young life to adulthood, Doris Kearns' life was very different from that of her peers. To begin with, she was born and raised in the Catholic faith which was new to most people in the fifties. Being an ardent fan of the Dodgers she was also not considered as girl-like. After losing her mother and the addiction of her father to alcohol, Doris' childhood was prematurely halted. In addition, Doris never got the time to enjoy her youth as she was completely occupied with pursuing her education.

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