

History of elvis the american icon history essay



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America has thousands of idols that have influenced and shaped society to what it is today. Between the late nineteenth century and the 1970s, America began to develop into one nation with the influence of many people throughout the years. One man that had a large influence on the American society during his time was Elvis Presley, otherwise known as "The King." Presley was a man that had many affects on the people and he also played his part during politics. Elvis Presley influenced millions of people across America during his life and transformed music by his unique style of rock. His influence shaped America politically, culturally, and gave a new idea to the overall history of the United States, especially at his prime during the fifties and sixties.

Elvis Presley was born on January 8, 1935 to Vernon Presley and Gladys Smith in Mississippi. Presley's career began when he was in the fifth grade, singing at a talent show. "He climbed onto the stage and sang 'Old Sheep,' a tearjerker about a boy and his dog. In this, his first public performance, he placed fifth." [1] From then on Presley knew he had a feel for music. His parents ended up buying him a guitar shortly after the talent show. The Presley family was church family, which is another reason Elvis began to have the music spirit, but instead of singing the hymns that were going on in church, Elvis would listen to the people sing and get a feel of how to play his guitar to the music. As Elvis grew older, the love for music began to grow. He really wanted to become a singer. In 1953, Elvis walked into Sun Records, owned by Sam Phillips, with four dollars, a guitar, and a few songs of his own. [2] After recording his song, Elvis was called back to the studio ten months later and from then on the "King" was born. Presley's fame

continued throughout his life and he inspired millions of people in the United States until the day he died.

Surprisingly, Elvis was involved with politics at some point in his life.

Although Elvis was barely a little boy when World War II began, he was drafted into the military during his younger years. Elvis was in his singing career at the time of entering the military, so by him entering the draft definitely had an effect on his fans. Elvis was not fazed by the fact of going into the army. No matter what, he still wanted to go. " I'll do whatever they tell me," he said, " and I won't be asking no special favors." [3] This quote gives an idea about how Elvis cared for his country and was willing to sacrifice himself in order to protect America by joining the military. Music was not the only thing that mattered in his eyes. By being drafted into the military, Presley not only served his country, but he also earned American's respect across the country. He served two years in the military and was sent home in March of 1960 to continue his career and inspiring Americans.

At one point in his life, Presley was able to meet the President of the United States, Richard M. Nixon. The meeting took place in on December 21, 1970. Not only did Elvis hand write a letter to the President, but he also wanted to serve as an agent for the President, which was very ironic. In his letter, he explains, " Sir [meaning President Nixon], I can and I will be of any service that I can to help the country out... I can and will do you good if I were made a Federal Agent at large, and I will help by doing it my way through my communication with people of all ages." [4] The funny thing about this letter was that it was written on a napkin from an airplane, but Elvis ended up getting a response from President Nixon himself and was invited to visit him

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in the White House. Elvis was credited by President Nixon, in which he made him an honorary undercover officer for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs at the Federal Bureau of Investigation.[5]Elvis wanted to help the American society in the fight against drugs during his time, which is significant to his impact on America. It shows that not only did Elvis care about his fans and music, but he also wanted to help with social issues in the society and he did so by writing a letter to President Nixon.

Besides politics, “ The King” also had a majority of his impact involve around society as a whole when it comes to his music. Presley invented a new style of rock and roll at his prime, attracting millions of people, young and old. Most of his music inspired many young teens growing up in America in the fifties and sixties. From “ Jailhouse Rock” to the “ Heartbreak Hotel,” Elvis introduced a brand new style of rock, allowing teens to have a new style. He inspired many kids and teens during his time to consider becoming singers themselves. If Elvis can do it, why could not they? In America, kids began to show off their talents, they began to grab their instruments, and started doing their thing in living rooms, basements, or anywhere they could start.

[6]The fact that Presley’s influence attracted the youth population into becoming artists of their own is why “ The King” was known as the “ The King.” Not only did he just revolutionize the rock and roll culture, but he shaped the style to what it became years later, after he began his career. Obviously, Elvis influenced many to live their dream and begin to start their own music, just like he did as a young boy. Besides Presley’s hits, seventy to eighty percent of songs were by new artists that were never heard of before.

[7]Seventy to eighty percent of songs shows the rise of new artists beginning

to form as Elvis began to show the American Dream to young men and women.

During his time, Elvis Presley was a perfect example of living the American Dream. Growing up in a small town in Tennessee, he grew up into living a life with money, cars, girls, and the love from fans and the love of music. Presley had an overall impact on the society of America. He shaped rock to what it is today. He was a social idol throughout his life, especially during the fifties and sixties where he was at his prime. Elvis had fluid hips and a sneer that propelled him to success and being the most influential man in rock and roll. [8]Teenagers wanted values of their own. Presley's music was one of a kind. Elvis created the song " Jailhouse Rock," which was released in 1957 by Sun Records.[9]We all know beginning with the guitar solo strumming the main beat, " Dunn Dunn..." This song became a classic hit in the late 1950s and it obviously had a kick that made everyone want to get up on their feet and dance. This was his new style, which created a style for teenagers. " Let's rock, everybody, let's rock. Everybody in the whole cell block, was dancin' to the jailhouse rock." [10]Of course, this song was a part of the movie Jailhouse Rock in 1957 starring Elvis, but, as said before, teens wanted something to dance to and Elvis gave them that with this song, along with many other hits. A softer side of Elvis is shown by his 1961 hit " Can't Help Falling in Love," produced by RCA Records.[11]This song, obviously about love, was another one of Elvis's classics.

Elvis helped teenagers develop a culture of their own. Teenagers of this time could be also considered the " baby boomers." The baby boom occurred after World War II, when soldiers returned home to their wives and

girlfriends. At this time the baby rate began to incline, thus this was the baby boom era. Elvis came to be known in the fifties, which most of the babies from post-World War II, were at the early stages of their teen years. During the 1950s and 60s, teenagers wanted their own style of music, not the type that their parents would listen to; Jazz, Blues. It was the 1950s and the Jazz Age was in the twenties. Elvis had his own style, from the way he dressed, to his flashy hairstyle, to his unique voice in every song he created; Elvis was a social idol for teenagers. They wanted music to dance to and Elvis gave teenagers the music they wanted to hear.[12]Elvis did this in his own unique way and he did not even know it.

Elvis was an inspiration for all, and is still an inspiration thirty three years later after his death in 1977. He was an idol for many through his music and his overall character. He shaped American society politically, as seen by being part of the military and wanting to be a Federal Agent against drugs, and socially by giving the American teen culture a new style to participate in.