

Post modern and contemporary period in the united states essay



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The 1960s-1970s, the Peace Movement, the Hippie Movement, the Antiwar Movement, the Protest Movement, the Civil Rights Movement, the Postmodern and Contemporary period; These names, periods, epochs, eras, and movements all have different meanings, however they refer to the same time in history and the emotions related to it. For these purposes it will simply be called the Postmodern and Contemporary period in the United States. This epoch was one of peace, individualism, spiritualism, unity, change, progress, mass harmonic assemblies, war, death, destruction, discontent, fear, hope, expression, free speech, questioning, and development of the arts.

The emotions of the period are now trapped in the literature and art we see today. In the Postmodern and Contemporary period of the United States, the previous and current diplomatic and military relations with other nations as well as domestic peace movements of the time generated an anti-war and pro-peace sentiment as we see in the literature and art of the period. The Vietnam War was a major instigator for many of these ideas at the time. The foreign policy of the United States at the time was called by many critics as, “ Vietnam

Syndrome” and showed contempt and unwillingness to be over-involved in an “ unwinnable and morally dubious war” (Mullin).

To many of the supporters of the Vietnam war at home watching the protesters on T. V. , the protesters looked bizarre, due to the media’s biased reporting methods. “ Focusing in on the bushiest beards, the longest hair,

the grubbiest bellbottoms and sandals. Despite this public face of protest, opposition to the war was spreading rapidly” (Fighting the war at home).

The supporters claimed that the United States had no business to intercede in a country with a corrupt and unpopular dictatorship such as North Vietnam.

Many poets and artists who were also critical of governmental activity in Vietnam picked up on the mass political views of the people at the time, and incorporated it into their pieces of literature and art. This “propaganda” against the war in Vietnam furthered the cause, and encouraged others to join and break through the walls of ternary. The Hippie movement shows the sentiment of the people in the United States at the time. The Hippie movement is commonly misunderstood and seen only as generation of rock and roll and drugs, however if you look deeper, you will see that the youth of the time “shared a commitment to political change” (Culture of Protest). To change the political agenda of the United States government, the youth had to first change the culture of the people.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a hippie as “a young person associated with a subculture which advocated peace and free love and adopted an unconventional appearance.” One could argue that instead of a “subculture” hippies were associated with a “counterculture”, because the majority of people in the United States supported peace and free love and adopted an untraditional appearance.

This “untraditional” appearance was never more exploited than through the coverage on Woodstock. Woodstock was one of the most memorable and <https://assignbuster.com/post-modern-and-contemporary-period-in-the-united-states-essay/>

revolutionary highpoints of the over the United States, and even the United Kingdom. In the “ Culture of Protest: Woodstock”, the author criticizes how “ press coverage.

.. often overlooked the real reason for the gathering: the music” and that the attendants of Woodstock were gathered for a musical commemoration of “ peace, and love, the watchwords of the counter culture. ” Woodstock brought music and the hippie movement together. It howed the peace, love, and anti-war sentiment of the nation through music and unity. Music was influenced by the domestic culture of the period and the foreign relations of the United States.

Bob Dylan was one of the musicians that contributed to the success of Woodstock. Many see Bob Dylan as a “ central figure in the folk movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s” (Bob Dylan). Bob Dylan was known for his protest songs, and his lyrics that were “ shaped by the amorphous concerns of the counter culture. ” Bob Dylan idolized another protest poet, Woody Guthrie, who inspired Dylan to create many rotest songs he is famous for today.

As Anthony Scaduto writes, Bob Dylan’s songs created a “ feeling of hopelessness and helplessness a feeling that the world was screwed up and that we should hate the people responsible for it. ” Many people liked changes Dylan was going through at this time. He started feeling that instead of searching for answers to the old problems, “ one must turn one’s back on the problems, rejecting easy formulas and easy solutions, search deep inside oneself instead” (Scaduto). A hit song of his, “ Blowin’ in the Wind”, “ pointed the finger” at the tribulations of our society (Scaduto).

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Due to the use of vague metaphors throughout the poem such as “ the answer my friend is blowin’ in the wind”, one can translate the poem to mean almost anything, and people most certainly did.

“ Blowin’ in the Wind” became an “ understated song [that] summed up the passions of the time. ” (Shelton). The song became a “ civil rights anthem”, “ anti war anthem”, and “ counterculture song of praise” (Shelton). In the poem, Dylan asks “ How many road must a man walk down before you can call him a man? ” This metaphor asks what it will take for a man (particularly an African American man) to be treated equally as everyone else.

Dylan continues this antiracism theme by asking “ how many years can some people exist before they’re allowed to be free? ” This is referring to slavery, although not in the United States any longer, in some places in the world it still exists. Dylan exemplifies the peace theme by asking “ how many seas must a white dove sail before she sleeps in the sand? ” The “ white dove” is an archetype for peace, and the sleeping in the sand symbolizes the goal of the dove (peace), so Dylan is asking what it will take to achieve peace.

Dylan illustrates the anti-war theme by asking “ how many times must the cannon balls fly before they’re forever banned? ” Cannon balls are an archetype for war and violence, and to “ ban” them would mean there would be no more war. Dylan turns to the evils that war causes and the troubles of society by inquiring “ how many times can a man turn his head pretending he just doesn’t see? ” Dylan leaves the end of the question open to interpretation, but many believe the quote to mean “ how many times can

someone choose to disregard the violence, poverty, racism, death, etc. that befall our society and not assist in preventing it? “

Dylan asks something similar to this a few verses down, he writes “ how many ears as the previous quote we discussed. Lastly, Dylan asks “ how many deaths will it take till he knows that too many people have died”.

This is possibly the most concrete criticism of the Vietnam war we see throughout the whole poem, Dylan asks how many people have to die until the government realizes that it's time to leave Vietnam. “ Blowin' in the wind” questioned many problems with the world at the time, but Dylan also wrote poems about progress and helping the mass population reach their goal. The Times they are A-Changin'” was one of such poems, and was hailed as a sum up of the 1960's sentiment. As Shelton says, “ The Times they are A-Changin'” was a “ prophetic voice trumpeting a changing order”. As a result of this poem, Dylan was praised as a “ spokesman for the rebellious young” (Scaduto). “ The Times they are A- Changin'” warned the critics, writers, politicians, and parents “ not to stand in the flood waters of change that were engulfing the world.

” This progressive attitude has been seen throughout Dylan's works and especially in “ The Times they are A- Changin'”.

Dylan warns “ writers and critics who prophesize with your pen”, “ senators, congressmen please head the call”, and “ mothers and fathers throughout the land” many of whom were against the counterculture and growing peace movement with it. Dylan tells these anti supporters to “ admit that the waters around you have grown and accept that soon you'll be drenched to
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the bone". The "waters" Dylan is referring to symbolize change and the way that change is spreading throughout the nation. "You better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone", Dylan uses a simile inside of a metaphor trying to say that if you don't accept change, you won't prosper in the new era that is sweeping the nation.

"Don't stand in the doorway, don't block up the hall for he who gets hurt will be he who has stalled." By this, Dylan is saying telling the people against the progressive movement not to get in the way of change or they will get hurt. Although this poem is not specific, it acknowledges that "the times they are a-changin'." Unlike Dylan's poems that are vague and pose questions, other poets of the time were specific and gave answers. One of whom, John Lennon, wanted world peace and wanted a unified world against any hate or death.

One of Lennon's songs, Imagine, was directed at anti supporters of the peace movement as well.

"Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy if you try, no hell below us, above us only sky." Lennon describes a world with no religion, a major cause of war and death. "Imagine there's no countries, it isn't hard to do, nothing to kill or die for, and no religion too." Lennon proposes no countries, or sectionalism/ differences, and again no religion to cause death and killing.

"No need for greed or hunger, a brotherhood of man." Lennon suggests there be no hunger or greed, and a unity of people working together and loving each other.

Another of Lennon's songs, " Give Peace a Chance", talks about divisions in society, religion, peace, and the mass culture of the United States. " This-ism, that-ism, ism, ism, ism" this repetition shows how there are too many divisions between people in society, and this causes wars and arguments. Lennon uses " ministers", " bishops", and " rabbis" to talk about religion and the differences it makes between people.

Lennon goes on to talk about " regulations, integrations, mediations, United Nations" and peaceful actions. Lennon says something briefly about the Civil Rights