

Brief comparison of pop culture 60s vs 90s



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In comparing the sixties and the nineties, my first thought was how much popular culture has changed since then and how different society is today. The strange thing is, the more I tried to differentiate between them, the more similarities I found. Both the sixties and the nineties were about youth, creativity, free-thinking, and expression. With the nineties coming to a close and the popularity of anything “retro,” I decided to compare the fashions, people, music, and issues that defined pop culture in the 1960’s and its influence on pop culture in the 1990’s.

In the 1960’s, society was changing by the minute and fashion was “anything goes”. In the early sixties, Jackie Kennedy influenced fashion with her elegant, stylish outfits and her trademark pillbox hat. In the late sixties, the “mod look” was popularized by go-go boots and mini-skirts, while bellbottom jeans, tie-dye shirts, long skirts and peasant dresses were worn by the hippie culture. Glance through any fashion catalog or magazine in the nineties and you will see models wearing the same fashions popularized in the late sixties. This illustrates how the 60’s contributed to today’s fashions. In the sixties, people in television, film and movies became the new socially elite and their influence had a profound impact on fashion, attitudes, and social values. In the nineties, supermodels and sports figures have joined this group. The fascination the public has with celebrities is perhaps more prominent now than it was in the sixties and their influence is found in all aspects of pop culture in the nineties.

As fashion in the 60’s influenced fashion in the 90’s, the spirit of music in the 60’s is present in the music of the 90’s. Many of the artists popular in the sixties are still major forces in music today. There is no one genre of music

that can define either decade. After the appearance of the Beatles and the British invasion in the early sixties, music changed and everything before it was all but swept away. There was surf music from the Beach Boys; folk music from Bob Dylan; R; B influenced music from Motown and the Rolling Stones; and psychedelic music from Jefferson Airplane and the Doors. In the nineties, many new types of music evolved. These include rap music and hip-hop which came from urban dissatisfaction and unrest, while underground alternative rock became mainstream. In 1969, the Woodstock music festival embodied the spirit of peace and love. It was repeated in 1994 and 1999, but unfortunately, the festival in 1999 ended in violence, marring the essence of the original Woodstock.

Racial tensions, civil rights disturbances, and deeply divided opinions over the American presence in the Vietnam war, all served to give the sixties a radical edge. People were passionate about what they believed in and were willing to give their lives, if necessary, to the cause. Young people became increasingly opposed to the Vietnam war and had a tendency to express their opinions more violently than Martin Luther King, Jr., who preached non-violence while leading the civil rights movement. The idea of free love and the feminist movement was popularized by the widespread acceptance of the birth control pill. People in the sixties were intolerant of a government that lied to and misled them. By contrast, people in the nineties are not as passionate about social issues as they were in the sixties. Most people support issues based on what is popular and politically correct. In the nineties, it seems most people are more passionate about obtaining wealth, power and prestige and would rather look the other way when our president

lies. The civil rights movement has been superseded with the fight for gay and lesbian rights. The AIDS epidemic has advocates supporting safe sex rather than the free love attitude that was present in the sixties.

Of course, it is impossible to characterize the 60's and the 90's so simplistically and in just a few paragraphs. Each was unique in its way. As a "baby boomer" born in 1961, the sixties to me are a decade of memories. I was too young to understand, much less appreciate the significance of the events that influenced my