Chapter 22

Section 2  The Affluent Society
Chapter Objectives

Section 2: The Affluent Society

- Explain the reasons for and the effects of the nation’s economic boom.
- Describe changes to the American family that took place during the 1950s.
Guide to Reading

Main Idea

The postwar economic boom brought great changes to society, including the ways many Americans worked and lived.

Key Terms and Names

• John Kenneth Galbraith
• white-collar
• blue-collar
• multinational corporation
• franchise
• David Riesman
• Levittown
• baby boom
• Jonas Salk
American Abundance

• In 1958 economist John Kenneth Galbraith published *The Affluent Society*, in which he claimed that the United States and some other industrialized nations had created an “economy of abundance.”

• New business techniques and improved technology had produced a standard of living never before thought possible.
American Abundance (cont.)

- As the mechanization of farms and factories increased, many Americans began working in **white-collar** jobs, such as sales and management.

- In 1956, for the first time, white-collar workers outnumbered **blue-collar** workers—people who perform physical labor in industry.

- White-collar employees generally worked for large corporations, some of which expanded into overseas corporations.
American Abundance (cont.)

- Multinational corporations were located close to important raw materials and used cheaper labor forces, making them more competitive.

- The 1950s also had an increase in franchises, in which a person owns and operates one or several stores of a chain operation.

- Cooperate leaders wanted employees who could conform to company standards.
American Abundance (cont.)

• In the 1950s book *The Lonely Crowd*, sociologist David Riesman argued that the “inner-directed” man was giving way to the “other-directed” man, with concerns regarding company approval outweighing personal values.

• The rise in luxury products led to the growth of more sophisticated advertising.

• The advertising industry became the fastest-growing industry in the United States, using new marketing techniques to sell products.
American Abundance (cont.)

- **Levittown**, New York, one of the country’s earliest suburbs, was a mass-produced residential community spearheaded by Bill Levitt.

- Between 1947 and 1951, other Levittown-type communities were built all over the United States.

- The suburbs came to symbolize the American dream, while others saw it as another example of American conformity.
What evidence supported John Kenneth Galbraith’s idea of an “economy of abundance?”

Between 1940 and 1955, personal income for many American’s almost tripled. Americans produced more than they could use, and there was a huge increase in the number of homeowners.
The 1950s Family

• The 1950s changed the American family as families grew larger and women entered the workforce.↓

• The period between 1945 and 1961 is known as the baby boom, in which more than 65 million children were born in the United States.↓

• Many young couples had delayed marriage until after the war and were now ready to marry and begin a family.
The 1950s Family (cont.)

- Other factors in this boom were the GI benefits that encouraged the growth of families, and television and magazines promoting pregnancy and large families.

- In the 1950s, although many women were expected to remain at home, the number of women who held jobs outside the home increased.
Why did the American birthrate explode after World War II?

Many young couples had delayed marriage until after the war and were now ready to marry and begin a family. Other factors in this boom were the GI benefits that encouraged the growth of families, and television and magazines promoting pregnancy and large families.
Technological Breakthroughs

- In 1946 scientists working for the United States Army developed one of the earliest computers. 
- It was called ENIAC (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer), and it made military calculations.
- Later, a newer model called UNIVAC (Universal Automatic Computer) could handle business data and led to the computer revolution.
In the 1950s, there were many medical breakthroughs such as the development of antibiotics; new drugs for arthritis, diabetes, cancer, and heart disease; and advances in surgical techniques.

Polio epidemics swept the nation in the 1940s and 1950s.

Jonas Salk developed an injectable vaccine that prevented polio.
Technological Breakthroughs (cont.)

- New cases of polio declined dramatically. American scientist Albert Sabin later developed an oral vaccine for polio, causing the threat of polio to disappear in the United States.
Technological Breakthroughs (cont.)

• The Soviet Union launched the world’s first space satellite, Sputnik, in October 1957.

• The United States launched its own satellite in January 1958.

• American engineers were making commercial planes smoother and faster.
Why did American families in the 1950s have increased free time?

The computer and improvements in communication and transportation systems allowed many Americans to work more quickly and efficiently.
Checking for Understanding

Define  Match the terms on the right with their definitions on the left.

**B** 1. jobs in the manual labor field, particularly those requiring protective clothing

**D** 2. the right or license to market a company’s goods or services in an area, such as a store of a chain operation

**E** 3. a marked rise in birthrate, such as occurred in the United States following World War II

**A** 4. jobs in fields not requiring work clothes or protective clothing, such as sales

**C** 5. large corporations with overseas investments

A. white-collar
B. blue-collar
C. multi-national corporation
D. franchise
E. baby boom
Describe how and why the suburbs became popular places to live.

Government programs made homeownership more affordable and improved construction made houses cheaper. Some people wanted to escape urban problems or increase their standard of living.
Continuity and Change  How was the affluent society of the United States in the 1950s different from previous decades?

All segments of American society showed measurable economic improvement.
Interpreting  What caused the advertising industry to boom in the 1950s?

Increased product mass production generated new emphasis on higher sales of consumer goods.
MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS

REPORTED CASES OF POLIO IN ILLINOIS

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Directions: Answer the following question based on the chart.

The impact of the polio vaccine is reflected in the data for Illinois. What do you think happened to the number of reported cases during the 1960s?

F They rose early in the decade and then fell.

G They continued to decline.

H They continued to rise.

J They remained the same.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, polio victim, with Fala and Ruthie Bie in Hyde Park, New York. This is one of two known photographs of FDR in a wheelchair.

—Photo by Margaret Suckley