1950s society: A giant collaborative class chart

Essential Question:

The postwar era witnessed tremendous economic growth and rising social contentment and conformity. Yet in the midst of such increasing affluence and comfortable domesticity, social critics expressed a growing sense of unease with American culture in the 1950s.

Assess the validity of the above statement and explain how the decade of the 1950s laid the groundwork for the social and political turbulence of the 1960s.

Directions: Using your group’s assigned documents, fill in the chart below. Be sure to cite your document in parentheses. When you are done, read over the entire chart and then write a group thesis statement at the bottom.

EVIDENCE OF ECONOMIC GROWTH/INCREASING AFFLUENCE

Group A:
Document 5- Brand names becoming important to Americans; advertising

Group B:
Doc. 13- people were controlled by business and consumerism, need for new products, Materialism is taking over people's lives, people "have no souls"

Group C:
A few documents show evidence of a thriving entertainment industry such as movies. Doc 16 & 17

Group D:
Document 20: US is willing to spend money on space study even if it fails.
Document 22: "We are currently wealthy, fat, comfortable and complacent." Show Business, Advertising, rise in TV and other media.

Group E:
o no docs relating to economics

Group F:
Document 28
- Panic over the movie industries potential communist ties was a major concern because movies were such a popular pastime and because more people could afford it, making it an impactful economic influence

EVIDENCE OF SOCIAL CONTENTMENT/CONFORMITY

Group A:
Document 2- conformity, everyone talking about the same thing
Document 3- Pressure on children to conform and be like the crowd/ be popular
Document 7- Women feel trapped by culture, emphasis on being homemakers/ mothers, not working outside the home
Document 8- women being presented with new opportunities, but still not common for them to work outside the home (evidenced by the fact it was in a magazine)

Group B:
Doc. 11- taking blue-collar jobs, because all that was available, what everyone else was doing
Doc. 12- teens got into things because they were popular, conforming with the pressures of society

Group C:
Teenagers were seen as a group that was rebellious and failed to conform. Things like unwanted pregnancies were seen as undesirable rebellious actions of teenagers. Society demands conformity. Doc 15 & 16 & 17 & 18 & 19

Group D:
Document 20: People feel that US reputation really matters.
Document 22: People buying radios and TVs just because others are.
Document 21/23: Rise in education

Group E:
Blacks are assimilating into the mainstream American culture and giving up their own. (27)
Black and white children can legally go to the same school now and blacks can sit anywhere in the bus (in Montgomery at least) (24, 26)

Group F:
Document 28 and 29
- Mickey Mantle's was covered up in an effort to preserve his public appearance
- HUAC hearings
- anti-communism
- Reagan doesn't want to get rid of political parties because of policies but if they threatened the country they would be ended

EVIDENCE THAT SOCIAL CRITICS EXPRESSED A GROWING SENSE OF UNEASE WITH AMERICA

Group A:
Document 4-Evidence social critics expressed a growing sense of unease
Document 6- Uneasiness, people all competing for the same thing, machines that make life easier becoming more common
Document 9- People don't have much control over their lives, don't invest in one place

Group B:
Doc. 11- (catcher in the rye) doesn't want anything to do with society and by being handicap no one will want anything to do with him
Doc. 12- people are concerned with growing crime rate, categorized teens as the lost generation
Group C:
The society was uneasy with teenage unwillingness to conform. Doc 18

Group D:
Document 22: TV is being used to distract and isolate us.
Document 23: A lot of books took on this idea of the "typical" American child.

Group E:
● Resistance to segregation in schools, buses, etc. (24, 26)
● blacks resisting cultural assimilation into white society (27)
● Many blacks didn't vote in elections because they saw the candidates as the same. If they didn't support Black rights, who won didn't matter to them. (25)

Group F:
Document 28
● Social unease because of fear of communism
● Needed to cover up Mickey Mantle's scandal to preserve the his revered public image, and limited flaws available for social critics to pick at.


Group A:
Document 1- Eisenhower states there will be problems, our duty to prevent/take care of the problems

Group B:
Doc. 10- broke free from the norm and introduced a new style of art, anti-conformist
Doc. 12- the "night life" transformed teens into doing things like drugs because they believed it was the social norm. Adult concern grew
Doc. 14- people expressed their freedom through their culture and believed they had a right to do what they pleased/believed

Group C:
The generation split could lay the groundwork for future ideological struggles politically between young adults and their seniors.

Group D:
Because Americans were conforming to each other through books and television, their views on many social issues were affected because people were so obsessed with being the same. Racism became more evident in American culture because blacks seemed so much more different once the white population became so similar.

Group E:

- Rosa parks starts Montgomery bus boycott (26)
- Civil rights movement begins and grows (25, 26)
- Blacks now have the legal rights for things like unsegregated schools, just need it to actually be done. Need to make sure the law is put into practice and followed by everyone. (24)

Group F:

Document 28

- Fyolo of being accused of communism and push for conformity would spark rebellion in coming years

THESIS STATEMENTS:

Group A:
While the media portrayed the 1950's in the US as prosperous and thriving and made it seem as though the nation had reached a plateau of permanent prosperity, there was actually an underlying uneasiness in the nation as evidenced by rebellion from society, especially from young people, and the growing Civil Rights
movement.

Group B: During the 1950’s and 60’s literature and film in America were

Group C: In the post war era, Americans were uneasy on any signs of nonconformity, Any American teenagers that refused to conform to 1950’s ideal were alienated and viewed as rebellious degenerates.

Group D: Conformity and jingoism of the 50s led to a turbulent and radical generation of the 60s racism and dissent because of conformity in media, television, books, and education.

Group E:

Cultural discontent and unrest among African Americans

Group F:
Although the 1950s experienced unprecedented economic growth and social conformity by a majority, a growing sense of disillusionment with their stifling culture alienated those who dissented, paving the way for a dissatisfied new generation that led to the turbulent era of the 1960s.

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<th>Evidence of Social Contentment &amp; Conformity</th>
<th>Evidence that social critics expressed a growing sense of unease with American culture</th>
<th>Evidence that 1950s laid the groundwork for the social and political turbulence of the 1960s</th>
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