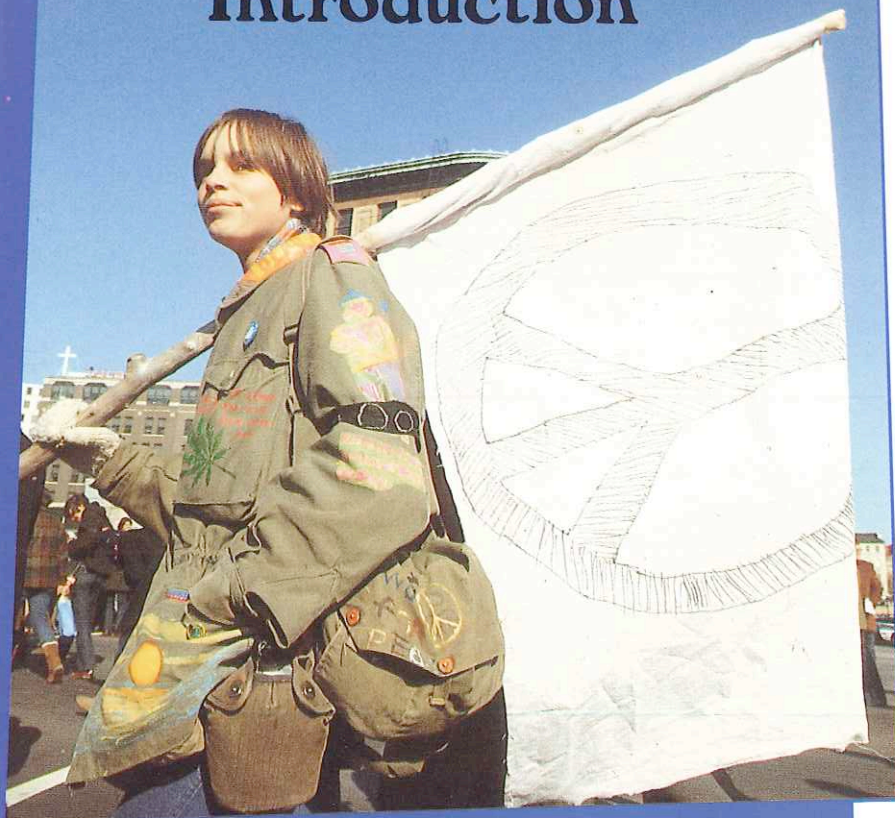


Introduction



The period between 1960 and 1969 was the time of a teenage explosion. Young people were constantly in the news, whether through miniskirt fashions, pop groups such as the Beatles, hippy communes or student demonstrations. Even the adult world started to change in response. People spoke of a youth revolution. And it affected everything from music and clothes to sex, politics and religion.

The events bewildered many people at the time. What was going on? Looking back it is clear that several different factors lay behind the changes. For one thing, there was simply a very large number of teenagers in the world. After the Second World War (1939-45), millions of ex-servicemen and their wives had decided to start up families, creating a 'baby boom'. By the early sixties those boom babies had reached their teens.

Above A long-haired youth demonstrates against the Vietnam War during a huge protest march on Washington DC, November 1969.

As their parents prospered, the sixties teenagers found themselves with more money to spend. Youth clothing and music industries sprang up quickly to feed their interests. With plenty of jobs around, teenagers generally felt less need to fight for their survival in society than earlier generations had done. They had more time and leisure to question their parents' values and to explore different ways of life.

There were other explanations too. Teenagers in the sixties grew up with the real threat of a nuclear war as the background to their lives. It seemed possible that the world might come to an end before they came to be adults. This had two results. One was the desire to enjoy life immediately rather than wait for an uncertain future. The other was to turn decisively against warfare as a solution to problems.

Below A teenage girl in the sixties. For many young women, miniskirts and long, loose hair symbolized new freedoms. Girls were permitted to treat their bodies with greater frankness than in earlier decades.



Above An atomic test, photographed from above, at Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. Threat of nuclear war created anxiety, especially in the early sixties.

In the early sixties the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) won wide support among young people in Britain. Later, when the United States became heavily involved in the Vietnam War (1959-73), thousands of young Americans refused to go and fight. There were demonstrations against the war throughout the western world. Student riots were widespread. Around 1968 it seemed as if the younger generation was in open revolt against the older.

So much has been written about the events that it is easy to forget the whole picture. Millions of teenagers still respected their parents, went to school, worried about exams, and met their first girlfriend or boyfriend. Most of them probably hoped to find a place in society sooner or later, and very few 'dropped out' completely. Nevertheless, attitudes and lifestyles did undergo a real transformation. The sixties were years of challenge and constant change.