

UNIT 7 The American Dream
Postwar Era 1945 to 1960

A STEIN WOOD
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



The Beat Movement

WITH
JIM SOTO



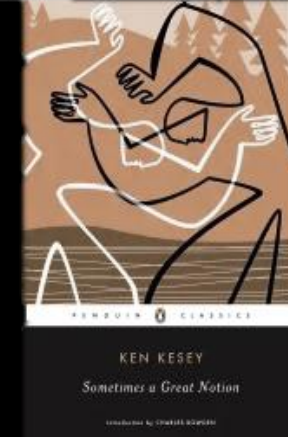
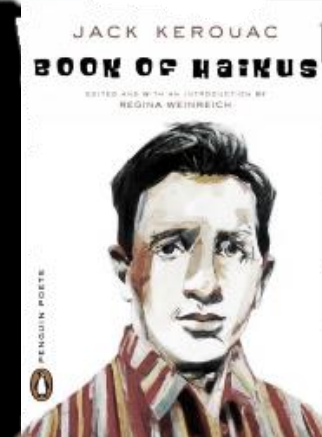
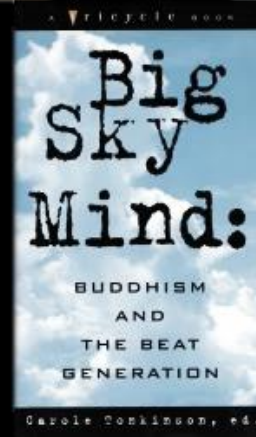
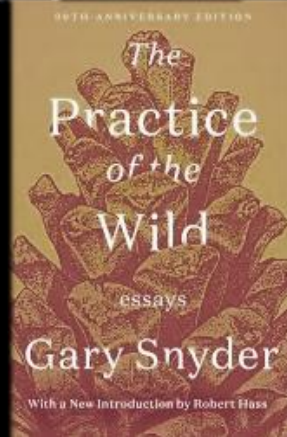
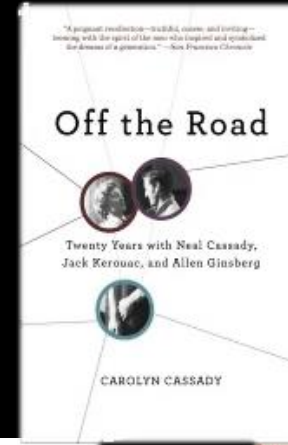
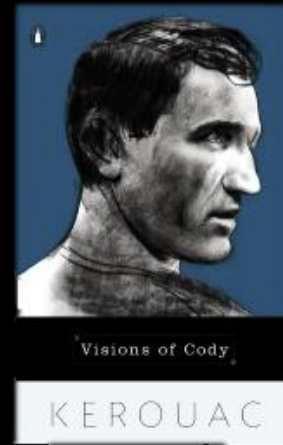
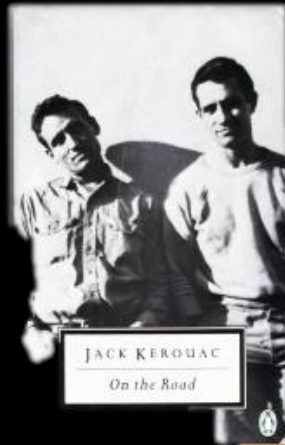
In response to the conformist and materialistic values of American society in the post-World War II era, the **Beat Movement**, also known as the **Beat Generation**, emerged as a literary and cultural movement in the 1950s in the United States.

REJECTING MAINSTREAM CULTURE

The Beat writers rejected mainstream culture and sought to create a new, more authentic way of living and writing. Today, the Beat Movement continues to influence art, literature, and culture around the world.

The Beat Movement was primarily a literary movement, centered around a group of writers who included Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs.





They rejected the traditional literary forms of the time and instead focused on free-form, spontaneous writing that expressed their personal experiences and emotions. Their work often addressed themes of alienation, rebellion, and spirituality.



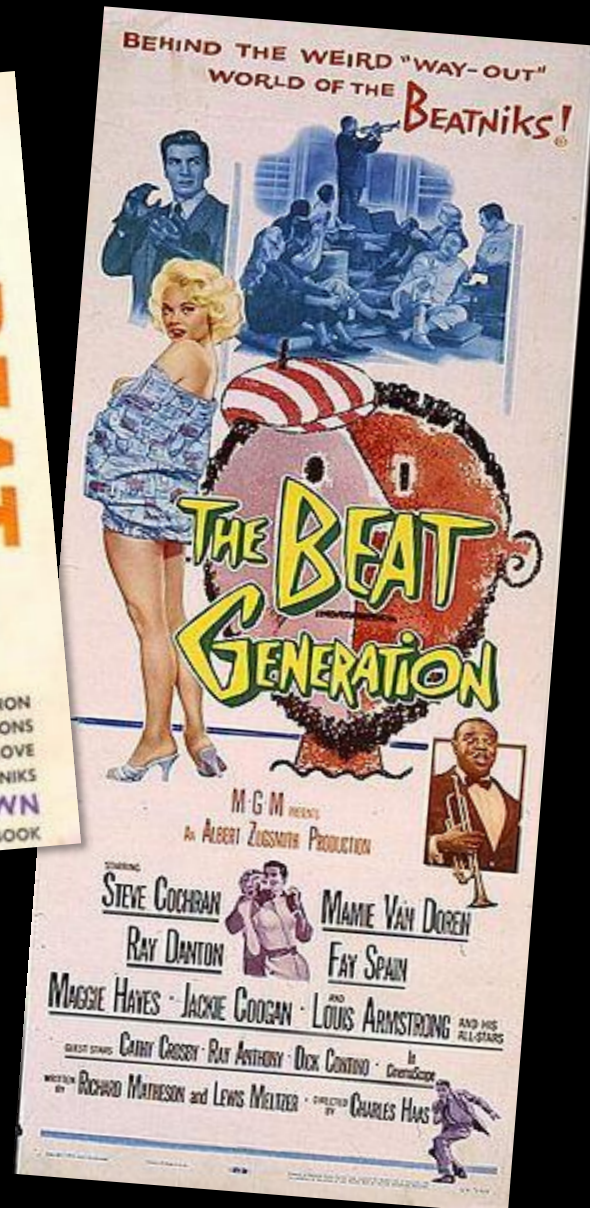
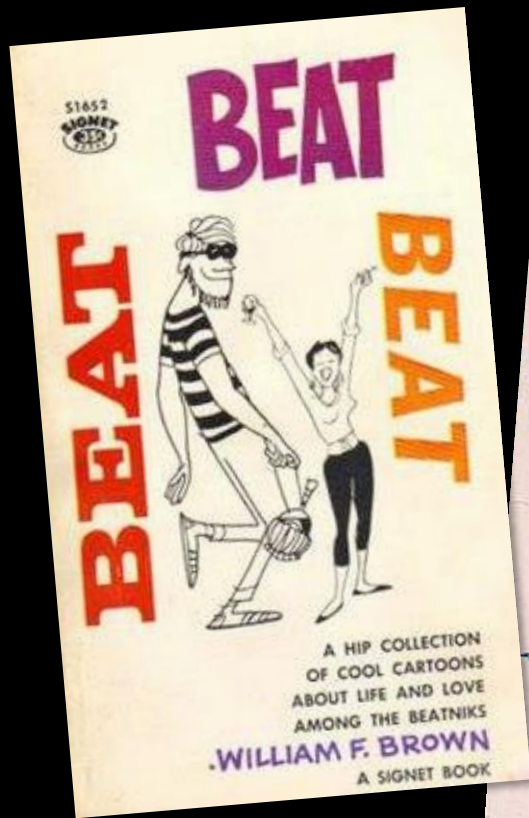
The movement was also a cultural movement, with its followers rejecting mainstream culture and values. The Beats embraced alternative lifestyles and experimented with drugs, sexuality, and spirituality. They were critical of the conformity and consumerism of post-war America and sought to create a more authentic and meaningful way of life. Sounds familiar?



MUSICAL INFLUENCE

One of the major influences on Beat writers like Kerouac was music. Kerouac found the energy and excitement of **bebop jazz** to be particularly inspiring. Indeed, the frenetic, improvisational, scattered structure of bebop music can be found threaded through Kerouac's writing, which often echoes the loose and nontraditional structure of the music. Bop musicians like Charlie Parker, Thelonious Monk, and Dizzy Gillespie are mentioned in several Kerouac pieces.

MEDIA PORTRAYAL



From the end of 1958 through 1960, popular magazines, newspapers, TV shows, and even comic strips bombarded Americans with images of the Beat Generation. But these images weren't so much of writers like Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation's leading lights. These images were of the **beatniks**, the bohemian lifestyle highlighted by "Howl" and On the Road.



The years between 1957 and 1960 marked the acceptance of beatnik dissent and the emergence of a fad: a cultural protest transformed into a commodity.

There was fashion: loose sweaters, leotards, tight black pants, berets, and sunglasses were all the rage. There were spaces: coffee houses, cellar nightclubs, and espresso shops opened to meet the new demand. New York City even had a “Rent-A-Beatnik” service, where you could order a poetry-reading/music-playing cool cat or cool chick for your event; sandals and bongos were available options.

The popular cultural responses to the beatniks ran from denunciation to tolerance to imitation.

LEGACY



Beat Movement can be seen in many aspects of contemporary culture. Its influence can be seen in music, film, and literature, as well as in the countercultural movements of the 1960s and beyond. It also paved the way for the emergence of other countercultural movements, such as the **hippie movement** of the late 1960s. The values and ideas of the Beats, such as freedom, individualism, and spirituality, continue to inspire people today that prioritize their individualism over anything else.

ASSESSMENT

1. What was the Beat Movement a response to?
 - a. The Civil Rights Movement
 - b. The Vietnam War
 - c. The conformist and materialistic values of American society in the post War era
 - d. The feminist movement

2. Who were some of the most prominent writers associated with the Beat Movement?
 - a. Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald
 - b. John Steinbeck and Toni Morrison
 - c. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs
 - d. Maya Angelou and Langston Hughes

3. What literary style did the Beat writers favor?

- a. Traditional literary forms
- b. Free-form, spontaneous writing that expressed personal experiences and emotions
- c. Experimental poetry
- d. Gothic literature

4. What were some common themes addressed in Beat literature?

- a. Romance, adventure, and mystery
- b. Religion, politics, and history
- c. Alienation, rebellion, and spirituality
- d. Science fiction and fantasy

5. What were the Beats critical of?
 - a. The government
 - b. The Civil Rights Movement
 - c. The conformity and consumerism of postwar America
 - d. The feminist movement

6. What countercultural movement did the Beat Movement pave the way for?
 - a. The feminist movement
 - b. The Civil Rights Movement
 - c. The hippie movement of the 1960s
 - d. The environmental movement

7. What values and ideas did the Beat Movement embrace?
 - a. Conformity and consumerism
 - b. Freedom, individualism, and spirituality
 - c. Materialism and capitalism
 - d. Religion and tradition

8. How did the Beats experiment with alternative lifestyles?
 - a. By becoming vegetarians
 - b. By experimenting with drugs and sexuality
 - c. By becoming religious fundamentalists
 - d. By becoming conservative politicians

9. What is the legacy of the Beat Movement?

- a. Its influence can be seen in music, film, and literature, as well as in the countercultural movements of the 1960s and beyond
- b. Its influence can be seen in the mainstream culture of postwar America
- c. Its ideas and values have been forgotten
- d. Its writers are no longer read or appreciated

10. How do the ideas of the Beat Movement continue to inspire people today?

- a. By encouraging conformity and consumerism
- b. By promoting conservatism and traditionalism
- c. By encouraging alternative lifestyles and challenging mainstream values
- d. By promoting conformity and acceptance of mainstream values



Jim Soto © 2023