

## Lesson 48

## 1970's Culture

## A. The "Me Generation"

<sup>1</sup>Baby Boomers (people born between WWII and 1964) had been instrumental in the protests and counter-revolution of the 1960s. <sup>2</sup>In the United States and Europe they were the most privileged generation in the history of the world, growing up in a time of huge economic gains and government assistance in housing and education. <sup>3</sup>By the mid-1970s, in spite of their good fortune, many American Baby Boomers had become disillusioned (embittered, disenchanted). <sup>4</sup>The assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, the political scandals of the Nixon administration, the unsatisfying end of the Vietnam War, the Iranian hostage crisis, and the worsening economy were among many things that cast doubt among Boomers in the future of America. <sup>5</sup>As a result, many Boomers began to look inward to find ways to achieve personal happiness and self-fulfillment rather than try to change the whole of society.

<sup>6</sup>In 1976, the writer Tom Wolfe coined (invented) a new term for Boomers with this attitude—"The Me Generation." <sup>7</sup>He said that many young 1960s radicals had abandoned their ideals to focus on "remaking, remodeling, elevating, and polishing one's very self ... and observing, studying, and doting on it (Me!)" <sup>8</sup>Examples of the inward-looking culture of the day showed up in many ways in the 1970s. <sup>9</sup>Yoga, jogging, fad diets, and therapy sessions became popular as many Boomers, now in their thirties, focused on trends to extend their physical and mental health. <sup>10</sup>"Earth Shoes" were designed to promote a natural and healthier way of walking and fit in nicely with the environmental movement. <sup>11</sup>A magazine called *Self* started publication in 1979. <sup>12</sup>Its title highlighted the focus of Boomers in that decade. <sup>13</sup>The editor of that magazine proclaimed in the first issue that, "Self will be a guide to the vitality we need to do all the things we want to do."

<sup>14</sup>Fashions of the 1970s reflected an effort to call attention to oneself. <sup>15</sup>Clothing such as designer jeans, with clearly marked manufacturers'



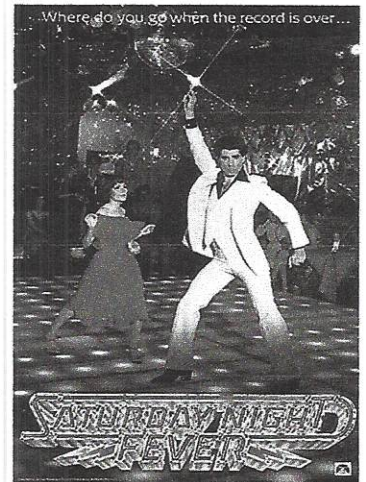
labels, were worn. <sup>16</sup>The widening of shirt collars, ties, and lower pant legs ("bell bottoms") called for attention as did tall platform shoes worn by both men and women to boost their height. <sup>17</sup>Shunning the gray business suit of an earlier era, men wore "leisure suits"—polyester outfits consisting of a jacket, vest, and pants in citrus or pastel colors.

<sup>18</sup>Self-expression in hair was important. <sup>19</sup>Men grew mustaches and long, bushy sideburns. <sup>20</sup>Wide chain necklaces drooped into V-neck shirts with exposed chest hair. <sup>21</sup>Many African Americans grew out their hair in a large, ball-shaped style called the "Afro." <sup>22</sup>"Big hair" was also a fashion trend of women, especially long "feathered" hairstyles. <sup>23</sup>In 1979, a musical called *Hair* became a stage play and a movie theater hit.

## B. Music and Fads

<sup>24</sup>Nightclubs with dance floors which flashed lights that kept time to loud music became popular places for Boomers in the 70s. <sup>25</sup>Music played at these nightclubs was labeled "disco" (which came from the shortened French name for the club—discotheque). <sup>26</sup>Disco music emphasized a steady drumbeat, electronic instruments, and strong vocals. <sup>27</sup>A mirrored disco ball overhead reflected light. <sup>28</sup>The music was meant for dancing and "The Hustle" and "The Bump" became favorite dance styles. <sup>29</sup>The Bee Gees, KC and the Sunshine Band, and Donna Summer were examples of popular disco bands. <sup>30</sup>The disco movie *Saturday Night Fever*, released in 1977, was a huge success.

<sup>31</sup>Some music was now produced on tapes, rather than on vinyl records, and was played with devices called eight-track players. <sup>32</sup>This technology was short-lived. <sup>33</sup>By the late 1970s, music was being played on smaller cassette tape players. <sup>34</sup>Some disco listeners may have worn the popular "mood ring." <sup>35</sup>This was a temperature-



sensitive ring that purported (claimed) to indicate a person's inner feelings by changing colors when worn. <sup>36</sup>There were people in the Me Generation who also owned a "pet rock." <sup>37</sup>This was a perfectly normal rock that came with instructions on how to treat it like "the perfect pet"—it wouldn't eat, make noise, or need to be potty trained. <sup>38</sup>This 1975 fad earned the inventor more than four million dollars in sales.

<sup>39</sup>Artists in the 1970s tried to stay away from traditional forms of art. <sup>40</sup>They were highly individualistic and did not want to be lumped together into any one style. <sup>41</sup>Some created "land art"—large pieces of natural material placed on Earth's landscape. <sup>42</sup>Others tried "performance art"—using their own bodies as a canvas or for an artistic expression. <sup>43</sup>"String art" involved arranging colored thread between raised points to form abstract geometric patterns or designs.

<sup>44</sup>Maybe the ultimate fad of the decade was "streaking"—people running naked at public events. <sup>45</sup>It was especially popular on college campuses and at sporting events. <sup>46</sup>The high point of this fad was when a streaker ran across the stage at the televised Academy Awards show in 1974. <sup>47</sup>That year song writer Ray Stevens performed *The Streak*, a novelty song about a man who is "always making the news wearing just his tennis shoes." <sup>48</sup>The song, amazingly, reached number one on the music charts.

### C. Feminism

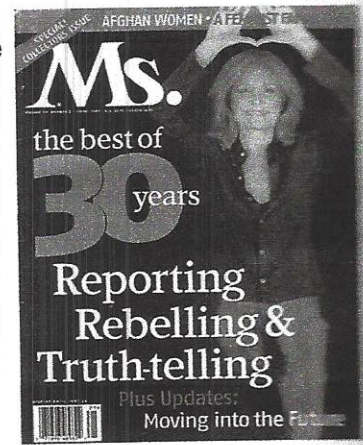
<sup>49</sup>In 1970, a New York attorney, civil rights activist, and feminist, Bella Abzug, was elected as a U.S. Representative in Congress and famously declared "A woman's place is in the House." <sup>50</sup>A new wave of activity for women's rights was underway. <sup>51</sup>The next year one of the most popular songs was called *I Am Woman*. <sup>52</sup>"I am woman, hear me roar," sang the artist Helen Reddy. <sup>53</sup>In 1972, a new magazine devoted to women's issues, called *Ms.*, was founded by feminist Gloria Steinem. <sup>54</sup>"Ms." was a new title used by women who did not necessarily want to be judged as to whether they were married (Mrs.) or single (Miss). <sup>55</sup>Female American tennis star Billie Jean King defeated a senior male challenger, Bobby Riggs, in a televised "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match in 1973 that did much to popularize women in sport.

<sup>56</sup>In 1971, the New England Free Press published a book by a dozen women who had met to have an open discussion about women's health

issues. <sup>57</sup>*Our Bodies, Ourselves* soon became a bestseller. <sup>58</sup>Abortion (the early termination of a pregnancy) was an issue discussed in the book. <sup>59</sup>Two years later, a hugely important case was heard by the Supreme Court. <sup>60</sup>The Court ruled in *Roe v. Wade* (1973) that state laws prohibiting abortion in the first three months of a pregnancy were unconstitutional. <sup>61</sup>Over the next decades, the country would be deeply divided over whether a woman's rights included the right to abort a pregnancy. <sup>62</sup>Those in favor of a woman's right to make this decision called themselves "pro-choice," and those who believed the rights of the unborn fetus trumped (surpassed) the rights of the mother to decide called themselves "pro-life."

<sup>63</sup>More and more, women were standing up for themselves in the workplace, in politics, and in society. <sup>64</sup>The term "sexual harassment" (the pressuring, intimidating, or coercion of someone regarding their gender) became part of the American vocabulary in the early 1970s. <sup>65</sup>Businesses, schools, and other institutions were urged to prevent this form of discrimination. <sup>66</sup>Politicians also created laws to close the "gender pay gap" when it was clearly shown that female workers were often paid less than their male counterparts for the same jobs. <sup>67</sup>In the late 1970s, the phrase "glass ceiling" was being used to describe "the unseen, but too commonly impenetrable barrier that kept many minorities and women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements."

<sup>68</sup>The idea of divorce became less taboo (a topic or practice forbidden by society) in the 1970s. <sup>69</sup>The divorce rate soared during the decade, especially after a 1974 book called *The Courage to Divorce* encouraged individuals to put their own happiness above that of their spouses and children. <sup>70</sup>*Kramer vs. Kramer*, a movie about divorce and its effect on children, was one of the most watched films of 1979.



This issue of *Ms.* magazine featured a photo of the founder, Gloria Steinem.

Fun Fact Feature

In 1979, an era of women's rights, a voting rights activist from the 1800s was honored as the first American woman to be recognized in a special way. How was Susan B. Anthony honored?

1. What was the nickname given to the Baby Boomers living in the 1970s?
  - a. The Hustle
  - b. Age of Aquarius
  - c. Ms.
  - d. Me Generation

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What 1970s magazine was a prime example of the focus of Americans in the 1970s?
  - a. *The Streak*
  - b. *Saturday Night Fever*
  - c. *Self*
  - d. *Time*

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Which body feature did men and women of the 1970s often use to creatively express themselves?
  - a. shoulders
  - b. toes
  - c. hair
  - d. arms

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

4. What was a popular form of dance music in the 1970s?
  - a. swing
  - b. disco
  - c. rap
  - d. mood music

Which sentences best support the answer?

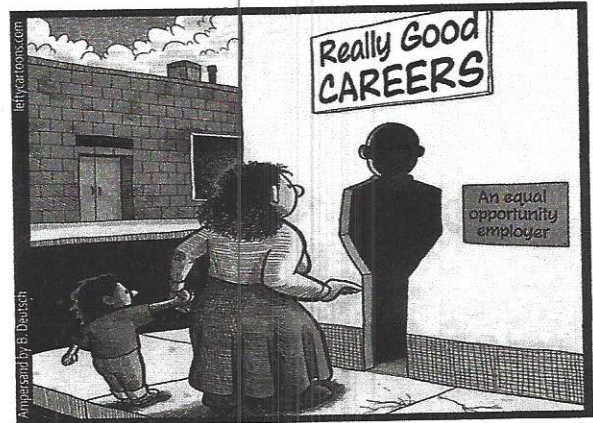
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5. What were schools of art often called in the 1970s?
  - a. Hudson River
  - b. Ashcan
  - c. Disco
  - d. none of the above

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. The 1970s political cartoon below is making a point about which issue?



- a. education opportunities
- b. women's employment opportunities
- c. abortion
- d. child care

Explain the message of the cartoonist.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

7. Name three phrases that came into the American lexicon (vocabulary used by a culture) in the 1970s that are related to the women's rights movement.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. *Roe v. Wade* (1973) was a Supreme Court decision about what issue?
- a. abortion
  - b. education
  - c. sports
  - d. music

Which sentence best supports the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem are Americans known as pioneers in which field?
- a. women's rights
  - b. art
  - c. music
  - d. sports

Which sentences best support the answer?

\_\_\_\_\_

### Written Response Question

10. List five ways that the women's rights movement accomplished its goals in the 1970s.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

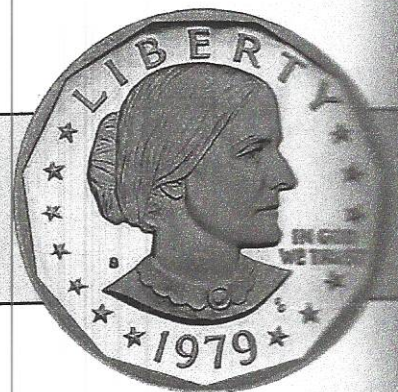
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5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

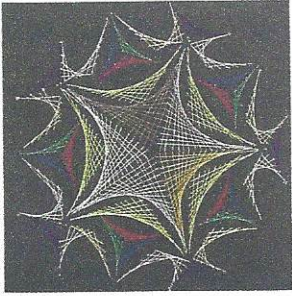
#### Fun Fact Finale

Susan B. Anthony was the first woman to be honored by having her likeness appear on a circulating United States coin. President Jimmy Carter signed the Susan b. Anthony Dollar Coin Act into law.



### Bonus Activity Culture of the 1970s

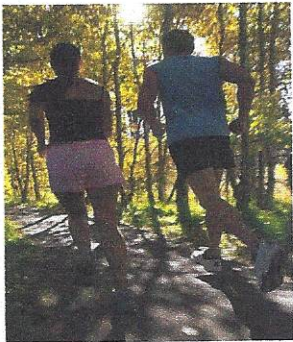
Review Lesson 48, then give a name to each image shown below from the culture of the '70s.



1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



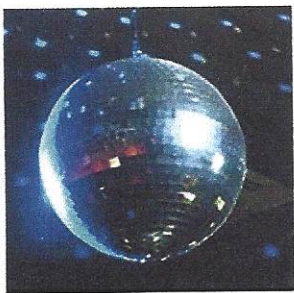
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



6. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



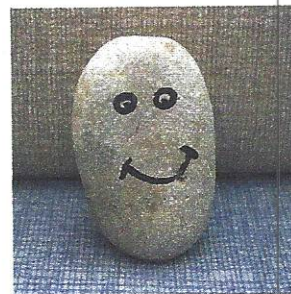
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



7. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



4. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Bonus Activity 1960s and 1970s

Review Lessons 41-48. Write the events from the choice box in the Venn diagram according to the times in which they occurred.

Watergate	Vietnam War	JFK assassination	disco music
Ford pardons Nixon	Great Society	President Nixon	Title IX
anti-war protests	Woodstock concert	women's rights movement	
U.S. Moon landing	Iran hostage crisis	"I have a dream" speech	

