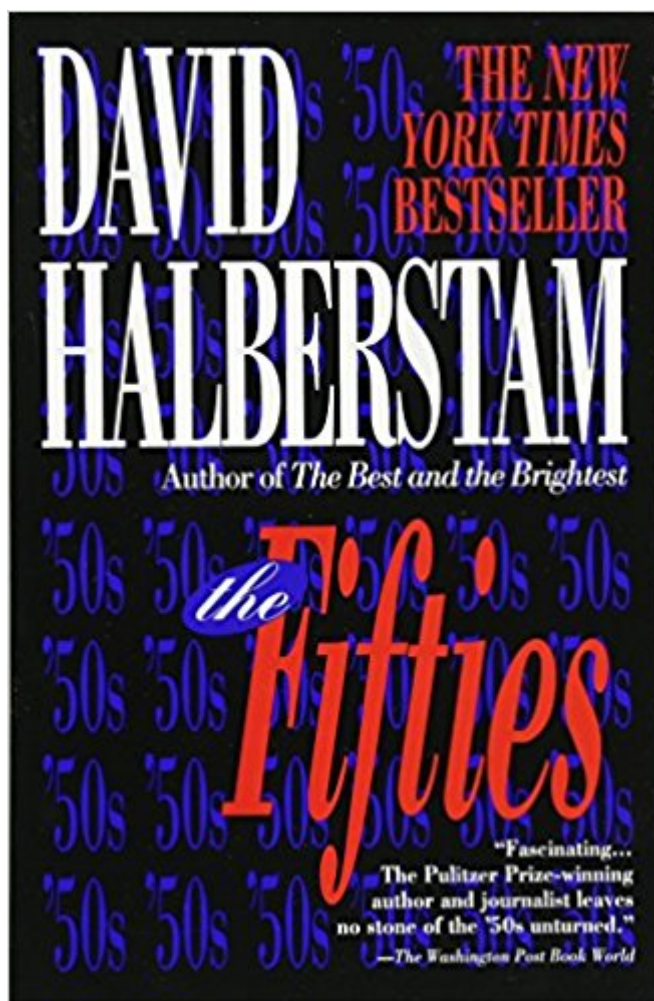


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The Fifties



Synopsis

The Fifties is a sweeping social, political, economic, and cultural history of the ten years that Halberstam regards as seminal in determining what our nation is today. Halberstam offers portraits of not only the titans of the age: Eisenhower Dulles, Oppenheimer, MacArthur, Hoover, and Nixon, but also of Harley Earl, who put fins on cars; Dick and Mac McDonald and Ray Kroc, who mass-produced the American hamburger; Kemmons Wilson, who placed his Holiday Inns along the nation's roadsides; U-2 pilot Gary Francis Powers; Grace Metalious, who wrote Peyton Place; and "Goody" Pincus, who led the team that invented the Pill. A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"In retrospect," writes David Halberstam, "the pace of the fifties seemed slower, almost languid. Social ferment, however, was beginning just beneath this placid surface." He shows how the United States began to emerge from the long shadow of FDR's 12-year presidency, with the military-industrial complex and the Beat movement simultaneously growing strong. Television brought not only situation comedies but controversial congressional hearings into millions of living rooms. While Alfred Kinsey was studying people's sex lives, Gregory Pincus and other researchers began work on a pill that would forever alter the course of American reproductive practices. Halberstam takes on these social upheavals and more, charting a course that is as easy to navigate as it is wide-ranging.

The Fifties were more than just a mid-point decade in a century; they were to be the crucible in

which the rest of the 20th century was forged. Halberstam (The Next Century , LJ 1/92) here touches every thread in the warp and woof of the national fabric. This is the true drama of history: President Truman's firing of General Douglas MacArthur, the Eisenhower years, Senator Joe McCarthy's red-baiting, the early U.S. involvement in Indochina, the H-bomb, the purging of atomic scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the Supreme Court ordering the integration of schools, troops in Little Rock to enforce it, the Montgomery bus boycott, the rise of Martin Luther King, Russia's sputnik launch, and Castro's revolutionary Cuba. Halberstam also explores major social and cultural changes--the advent of national television, fast-food restaurants, the flight to the suburbs, huge cars with fins, the phenomenon of Elvis Presley, the contraceptive pill, and much more. A superb book; recommended for all libraries. Previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 2/1/93.- Chet Hagan, Berks Cty. P.L. System, Pa. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It's a useful to trip down an epochal memory lane for someone like me, who lived from age 8 to 18 during the decade. The names are familiar, but now have more meaning than I appreciated as a kid. But Halberstam needed an editor to flesh out the many abrupt introductions of names and places. It's as if he expected readers already to know a lot about the subject at hand.

I was born in 1954 and have vague memories of the decade, but especially of how the values and mores of the fifties fell by and fueled the dynamic changes that took place in the sixties. I am very knowledgeable about the sixties, but had only a cursory knowledge of the preceding era. After reading this book, which I could barely put down, I now know how significant the events that took place in the fifties set the stage for the massive shift in social changes in the sixties. I read this after Halberstam's "The Best and the Brightest," which was informative but densely written. This reads so much better! If you came of age in the sixties, I highly recommend this to help you get an understanding of how the stage was set in the fifties. This was a very enjoyable and interesting book. It deserves all five stars!

Since I was born in 1955 I thought it would be interesting to read about the decade I was born into. 700 some odd pages later I was amazed the 50s were such developmental years in the area of the military, housing, the arts, the auto industry, and in a thousand other ways. This is a great book if you're interested in a decade that's pretty well skipped over when it comes to discussing American history. The book starts at the end of WWII and shows how the war and its aftermath had such an

effect on the 50s, and how the 50's effected the 60's. Great reading, especially if you want to know about the beginnings of Holiday Inn and McDonalds, as well as serious topics as McCarthyism.

This is an excellent history of the political and social world of the 1950's USA. Halberstam writes in detail about all of the people and events that made up the 1950's. From the Rosenbergs to McCarthy to Nixon and Eisenhower and all the rest in between. Also the rise of Rock N Roll and TV is well chronicled. As is the start of McDonalds and Holiday Inn. Also the start of desegregation with detailed accounts of Rosa Parks, Little Rock and Martin Luther King. If you ever wanted to know what and who made America tick during this time this book is for you.

I was born in the fifties and had a primitive understanding of the people and events that shaped the world I live in today....until reading "The Fifties" written by David Halberstam, an author , known for his work on the Vietnam War, politics, history, the Civil Rights Movement, business, media, American culture, and later, sports journalism. The book begins during the Harry Truman, Wendell Wilkie campaign for president and ends with the dawning of a new political era brought about by the power of television during the John Kennedy, Richard Nixon campaign of 1960. In between those pages is an account of the Fifties worthy of any history book.

This is the history, the events, the people, politics, science, movies, music and battles for the survival of government by the people for the people that wowed me as a child growing up in Greece and formed my dreams of coming to America to get my PhD in Nuclear Physics at Los Alamos. Many of the people involved in the Manhattan project were still alive and I was lucky enough to know them personally and listen to their accounts of the 40s and 50s first hand. But they seemed as disconnected anecdotes, as if they existed in a haze of knowledge without a central theme. Halberstam has done a magnificent job in relating the history of this uniquely American experience in a superb way , that even a physicist could understand it. It helped me know and understand my friends and myself much more thoroughly and I regret not having read it 40 years ago. I strongly recommend it to the millions of my countrymen who, like me, have difficulty appreciating what America has offered the world, particularly in the confusing times we live in today. In my humble opinion, this is a MUST read!

For anyone living through the fifties or a history buff, this book is for you. Expertly researched and written Halberstam takes the reader on a thorough and complete tour of how the fifties shaped

history and the lives of Americans and the world. Written in essay form this book covers the inauguration of industries such as fast food, motel, the race for space, the computer; the evolution of the automobile; the politics of the decade including Truman, McArthur, McCarthy, Eisenhower, Korea; race relations, the pill, Kinsey, Hefner and Peyton Place. How this decade formed and shaped the way for the rest of the century. Great reading.

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