

## Counterculture in the 1960s

### OVERVIEW

#### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How did the counterculture movement of the late 1960s challenge traditional American behaviors and values, and how did the Grateful Dead reflect these changing views of life and society?

#### OVERVIEW

**Note to teacher:** The primary sources used in this lesson contain passing reference to drug use. Teacher discretion advised.



After World War II, The United States entered into a period of enormous economic growth and prosperity that lasted until the early 1970s. While the war was over, the perceived threat of communism resulted in escalated military spending, which led to the development of many new technologies and industries. In addition, the U.S. government continued to invest in social projects such as public schools, housing, highways, welfare, and veterans benefits that stimulated growth. Unions, a major influence in the US labor market following the support of the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration, were able to successfully negotiate fair wages for workers. As a result, millions of Americans gained access to meaningful employment, invested in homes, and stocked them with families and new commodities. After a long period of declining births, the post World War II era saw the birth rate skyrocket and the nation's population rose almost 20 percent. The generation now known as the "Baby Boomer" was born.

There were some, however, who were troubled by the consumption during this "Golden Era of Capitalism." Perhaps the most poignant and detailed critiques came from a group of German scholars collectively known as the Frankfurt School. Having experienced the Holocaust first-hand, Frankfurt School critics like Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer, and Theodor Adorno feared that the consumerist society of the 1950s wasn't liberating people, but rather acting as a means of social control. For them, TV shows, popular music, and the newest dishwasher were nothing more than a way to placate the masses, and keep the average Westerner distracted and uninterested in thinking critically about rampant militarization and a world that was spiralling ever closer to nuclear war.

By the time the Baby Boom generation was coming into adulthood in the mid 1960s, the Frankfurt School's criticisms had begun to garner more attention. Many of the young adult "Boomers" became disenchanted with the types of consumption valued by their parents' generation and began seeking new experiences, experimenting with varied modes of thought and styles of living.

One of the most famous of such experiments culminated at Haight-Ashbury, a district of San Francisco, California. Between 1965 and 1967, young people from across the country arrived to Haight-Ashbury, drawn in by cheap rent and the bohemian reputation of the neighborhood established largely by the various artists of the Beat era. A vibrant counterculture developed, made up of a community of what some would later refer to as “hippies,” people who rejected the pressure to live as workers, earners, and consumers within a singular family unit. During this era, many in Haight-Ashbury embraced the possibilities of nearly anything perceived as outside the mainstream, including communism and communal living, open relationships and sexual liberation, various elements of Eastern religions, and psychotropic drugs such as LSD and peyote. And, of course, music.

Rock and Roll was the primary musical language of Haight-Ashbury, and in the hands of its inhabitants, the music became experimental and careened outside its previous bounds. Free concerts proliferated in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park and on the city’s streets, while venues such as the Matrix and the Fillmore showcased bands that personified the “San Francisco Sound”: Jefferson Airplane. Quicksilver Messenger Service, Big Brother and the Holding Company, and others. The band that came to most represent this moment in Haight-Ashbury, however, was the Grateful Dead.

While the Grateful Dead and their fans maintained some elements of countercultural ideals well into the 1990s, much of the idealism of Haight-Ashbury as a utopian location did not survive the 1960s. Following the publicity of the 1967 “Summer of Love,” thousands flocked to the neighborhood, overrunning the area, and, in the language of the day, “burning out.” American corporations saw the value of “flower power,” and absorbed key elements of the movement for marketing purposes, turning much of it into nothing more than a fashion trend that could be found in stores across America. Record companies too saw opportunity, and some of the San Francisco bands ultimately became the Top-40 artists they were so critical of earlier in their careers. Some suggest that by the time the country embraced the counterculture, it was already over.

In this lesson, students explore the significance of Haight-Ashbury in the 1960s by watching clips from the documentary *Long Strange Trip* and reading journalistic accounts of the hippie movement in that neighborhood. They then debate the significance of the countercultural scene: were hippies trying to change American society, or simply escape it?

## OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this lesson, students will:

### 1. KNOW (KNOWLEDGE):

- The “mainstream” social and cultural environment of the 1960s
- The dominant beliefs and actions of the counterculture of the late 1960s
- The writing of Herbert Marcuse
- The historical significance of San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood
- Journalistic accounts of Haight-Ashbury by Ralph J. Gleason, Tom Wolfe, Joan Didion, Hunter S. Thompson, and Warren Hinckle

### 2. MASTERY OBJECTIVE

- Students will be able to define the idea of “counterculture” and apply it to the present moment by examining journalism, literature, and music of the 1960s.

## ACTIVITIES

### MOTIVATIONAL ACTIVITY

1. Ask students:

- Have you ever heard the term “counterculture” or “countercultural”? What do you think that term means?

2. Ask students to write a 1-sentence definition of the term on a scratch piece of paper.

3. Show **Image 1, Counterculture Definition**. Ask students:

- Was your definition similar to the dictionary definition?
- How was your definition different than the dictionary definition?
- What might it mean to be “opposed to” or “at variance with” a social norm? Can you give an example?
- Can you think of an activity, attitude, or past-time that might be considered “countercultural” today? Why?
- To be against the social norm, you first have to define what the “social norm” is. What do you think some of the “social norms” are today? Where do you see them? How do you experience them?

## PROCEDURE:

1. Tell students that they will be exploring the social norms and countercultural movement of the 1960s. Play **Clip 1, Television Commercials from the 1960s and 1970s** and ask students to take notes on what values they think these commercials promoted. Ask students:

- What kinds of things are being sold in these commercials? What categories of products do they belong to?
- What kinds of audiences do you think these commercials might have been catering to? What different ways do you think they attempted to excite or interest their audiences?
- In what ways are these products being sold? What problems do the commercials suggest they might solve for customers?
- Do you think some of the commercials were catered more to men, and others to women? Why? Did the commercials use different approaches towards male audiences versus female audiences? What might this say about society in the 1960s?
- What sort of values might these commercials be promoting? Why? *(Encourage students to consider if the commercials tell the audience to buy a product, or suggest to their audience that they should be and act a certain way. For instance, are the toy commercials instilling certain gender roles into boys and girls?)*
- What else did you notice about the commercials?

2. Tell students that in the 1950s and 1960s, the United States experienced an economic

boom. For the first time, millions of people could afford their own house, and new technologies allowed a variety of goods to be produced cheaply. While many celebrated this era, others were critical, fearing Americans were becoming mindless workers and consumers incapable of critical thought.

3. Show **Image 2, “Excerpts from One-Dimensional Man.”** Tell students the following quotes come from the book *One-Dimensional Man*, by Herbert Marcuse. Written in 1964, it became one of the most well-known books critiquing mainstream culture in the 1960s. Read the quotes aloud as a class, then ask students:

- What do you think Marcuse means by the word “commodities”? What kind of examples of commodities does he list?
- In the first excerpt, what might Marcuse mean when he writes that “people recognize themselves by their commodities”? Can you think of an example of how someone could be recognized or defined by the things they buy?
- In the second excerpt, Marcuse argues that customers are bound to the producers that make the things they buy. In what way might this be the case? Do you feel a close connection with a particular company or brand? Why?
- In the second excerpt, Marcuse states that products “carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits.” What sorts of attitudes and habits were reinforced by the commercials you watched earlier? What sort of habits might be associated with products today?

In the third excerpt, what might the word “discourse” mean? What does he mean by the “universe of discourse?” (*Note: “Discourse” is defined as, “written or spoken communication or debate.”*)

- How might consumerist society limit or control what people talk about or what they do on a daily basis, leading to “One-Dimensional Thought”? What might companies want their customers thinking about, and what might they not want their customers thinking about?
- To resist “One-Dimensional Thought,” Marcuse recommends a “great refusal.” How might one refuse consumer culture?

4. Play **Clip 2, Introducing Haight-Ashbury**. Ask students:

- What was appealing to the “Hippies” about the neighborhood of Haight-Ashbury?
- The journalist describing Haight-Ashbury in the clip claims that the neighborhood attracted young people “seeking something new and significant for themselves.” What might have these young people hoped to find?
- What might daily life have been like for the young people who relocated to the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood? Would you want to live in that kind of environment? Why or why not?
- How can moving to Haight-Ashbury be seen as its own “great refusal”? What might have these people have been refusing?

5. Play **Clip 3, Introducing the Grateful Dead**. Ask students:

- What was the Grateful Dead’s daily life like when they lived in Haight-Ashbury? Do you think this was typical of others who lived there?
- What might have Jerry Garcia meant when he said at the beginning of the clip, “We’d all like to be able to live an uncluttered life, a simple life, a good life?” How might that statement have been a critique of the mainstream society of the 1960s?
- How does the Grateful Dead’s living situation differ from what was presented in the commercials? Do you think their lifestyle was common at the time? What might make their lifestyle “countercultural”?

6. Divide students into groups of five, and pass out **Handout 1 - Journalists Describe the Haight-Ashbury Scene**. Ask students to complete the instructions on the handout, and then report to the class the discussion they had and the conclusions they made as a group.

## SUMMARY ACTIVITY

### 1. Ask students:

- Based on what you read and watched today, can you summarize the philosophy of the Hippies and new young people in Haight-Ashbury? How could it be considered countercultural?
- What were the goals of the Hippie movement? How were those goals achieved? How were they frustrated?
- Do you think the Hippie movement brought about any change in American society or culture? If so, what sort of change? If not, how come?
- Do you see any contradictions within the varied goals of the people drawn to San Francisco?

### 2. Display **Image 2, Excerpts from One-Dimensional Man** again. Direct students' attention to the first excerpt, and ask the class:

- Today, what sort of products might have Marcuse criticized? Would it still be cars, television sets, houses, and kitchen equipment, or would it be something else? What products today might Marcuse say people “find their soul” in?
- What would a “great refusal” look like today? Is it possible to be countercultural in today's society? What risks would it entail, and what benefits? Would it still look something like the Haight-Ashbury Hippie scene? Why or why not?
- Do you see any contradictions within the varied goals of the people drawn to San Francisco?

## EXTENSION ACTIVITY

1. Interview a fellow student who you think exemplifies today's “counterculture,” and ask them about their beliefs and opinions of society.
2. Interview a member of your family that was either a teen or adult in the late 1960s. What memories do they have of that time? Did they know about the hippies in Haight-Ashbury? Do they remember having an opinion of the hippies at that time? Has that opinion changed today?
3. Read Jia Tolentino's New Yorker article “Outdoor Voices Blurs the Lines Between Working Out and Everything Else” (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/03/18/outdoor-voices-blurs-the-lines-between-working-out-and-everything-else>). Write an essay discussing the ways Tolentino's account of Outdoor Voices compares and contrasts with Marcuse's critique of society in the 1960s. Has much changed in consumerism since the 1960s?
4. Listen to music from bands that constructed the “San Francisco sound.” Summarize what you see as the defining characteristics of this style of music, and consider the ways those musical characteristics might represent the attitudes among the hippies in Haight-Ashbury. Bands could include the Grateful Dead, the Jefferson Airplane, Country Joe and the Fish, and Quicksilver Messenger Service.



## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (K-12)*

Reading 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Reading 2: Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

Craft and Structure 6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas 9: Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity 10: Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing (K-12) (Extension Activities only)*

Text Types and Purposes 1: Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

Production and Distribution of Writing 4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge 9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Language (K-12)*

Language 1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

Language 2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

Language 3: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

Vocabulary Acquisition and Use 5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in a word meaning.

### *College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Speaking and Listening (K-12)*

Comprehension & Collaboration 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Comprehension & Collaboration 2: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Comprehension & Collaboration 3: Evaluate a speaker's point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

Presentation of Knowledge 4: Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

## **NATIONAL CURRICULUM STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES – NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NCSS)**

Theme 1: Culture

Theme 2: Time, Continuity, and Change

Theme 3: People, Place, and Environments

Theme 4: Individual Development and Identity

Theme 5: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions

Theme 6: Power, Authority, and Governance

Theme 7: Production, Distributions, and Consumption

Theme 10: Civic Ideals and Practices



## NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR MUSIC EDUCATION – NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION (NAFME)

### *Core Music Standard: Responding*

Interpret: Support interpretations of musical works that reflect creators' and/or performers' expressive intent.

Evaluate: Support evaluations of musical works and performances based on analysis, interpretation, and established criteria.

### *Core Music Standard: Connecting*

Connecting 11: Relate musical ideas and works to varied contexts and daily life to deepen understanding.

## RESOURCES

### VIDEO RESOURCES

- Television Commercials of the 1960s and 1970s
- *Long Strange Trip* - Introducing Haight-Ashbury
- *Long Strange Trip* - Introducing the Grateful Dead

### HANDOUTS

- Handout 1 - Journalists Describe the Haight-Ashbury Scene

# Lesson Materials



## **Image 1, Counterculture Definition**

**Counterculture: A way of life and set of attitudes opposed to or at variance with the prevailing social norm.**

## Image 2, Excerpts from *One-Dimensional Man*

“[Today] people recognize themselves by their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment.”

“The means of mass transportation and communication, the commodities of lodging, food, and clothing, the irresistible output of the entertainment and information industries carry with them prescribed attitudes and habits. . . which bind the consumers more or less pleasantly to the producers.”

“Thus emerges a pattern of one-dimensional thought and behavior in which ideas, aspirations, and objectives that. . . transcend the established universe of discourse and action are either repelled or reduced to terms of this universe.”

## Handout 1 - Journalists Describe the Haight-Ashbury Scene

### Activity Instructions:

1. Give each person in the group a single page from the handout to read.
2. After reading the handout, each person should address the following questions on a scratch piece of paper:
  - Whose account of the Haight-Ashbury scene did you read? What is the authors background?
  - How does the author describe the hippies of Haight-Ashbury? According to the writer, who were the hippies and what did they value?
  - Do you find the author's account complimentary towards the hippies, or critical? What evidence can you provide that leads you to this conclusion?
  - According to the writer, what was the cause of the Hippie phenomenon?
3. Reform as a group, and debate the following question, using the account you read to support your case:

Were the young people who moved to Haight Ashbury in 1966-1968 interested in making life in America better, or was their goal to remove themselves from American society? Do you think that their efforts were successful?

## Handout 1 - Journalists Describe the Haight-Ashbury Scene

### Ralph J. Gleason, “The Flower Children” (*Encyclopedia Britannica Yearbook*, 1968)

Ralph J. Gleason was an eminent music and cultural critic, perhaps most famously known for co-founding *Rolling Stone* magazine. Gleason began his career in journalism at Columbia University, as the editor of the student newspaper *The Spectator*. He then went on to co-found the first Jazz magazine in America, *Jazz Spectator*.

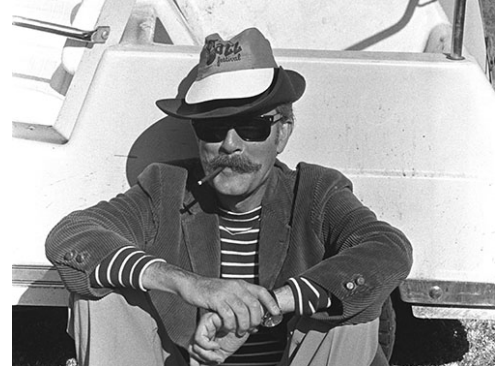


Photo: Baron Wolman

After serving in World War II, Gleason moved to San Francisco and became a syndicated music and culture writer with *The San Francisco Chronicle*, where he documented the Jazz and later Hippie scene in the city. Gleason served as the editor of the radical political magazine *Ramparts*, before leaving in protest after fellow editor Warren Hinckle’s critical account of the Hippie movement was published. He went on to co-found *Rolling Stone* with Jann Wenner. In addition to his writing, Gleason produced a television series focused on Jazz, and was a Jazz disc jockey at two San Francisco Radio Stations.

### Excerpt

Hippies are first of all young people. Generally they are young people in their teens or early 20s living out a rejection of material wealth and Puritan ethic [...]

In contrast to the Elders of the Tribe, the hippies regard fun and enjoyment as laudable, even as a goal. Dancing has returned with the hippie and dance halls, which all but vanished from the American scene after World War II, have reappeared. In San Francisco, where the hippie movement began and which is still the capital of hippiedom, hundreds and sometimes thousands of hippies dance each week at the various ballrooms or at outdoor functions.

Almost all hippies are white and this is significant. They are the children of the “haves” who are rejecting the values and rewards of the society—the same values and rewards that Negroes are struggling to obtain. In the course of their rejection, they have created a new way of looking at things and a new context in which to live.

One of the remarkable aspects of the hippie movement—in contrast to the beatniks—is its tremendous surge of energy. Early in 1967, a group of hippies... leased an abandoned movie house on Haight Street, raised about \$60,000, and spent it to transform the rococo interior into a marvelously utilitarian “environmental theater”. . . Other groups of hippies have organized day camps, schools, and communes in the adjacent countryside, living in groups of 10 or 20 on farms and, in one case, operating a huge ranch in the Valley of the Moon as a six-day school with a volunteer factory. When the city of San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors refused to come to the aid of the Flower Children who had flocked into the city during the summer school recess, the hippies organized themselves into work details, swept the streets, expanded the Digger free food and free store operations, started a hip switchboard telephone exchange to locate runaways and lost friends and to put people in contact with needed services.

## Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, (1968)

Along with writers Joan Didion and Hunter S. Thompson, Tom Wolfe is considered one of the founders of “New Journalism.” Considered unconventional in the 1960s and 1970s, “New Journalism” prioritized a more personal writing style inspired by fiction, and demanded a journalist’s complete immersion into the story they were writing about.

Wolfe began his career as a journalist at a small newspaper in Massachussetts, before moving on to larger publications such as *The Washington Post*, *The New York Herald Tribune*, and *Esquire*. He soon gained a reputation for critiquing the hypocracies and extravagancies of Post-War America, and providing insight into the social significance of American popular culture.

In 1968, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* was published, the first of many works of fiction and nonfiction Wolfe would write. The book chronicles Wolfe’s experiences with the Merry Pranksters, a group founded by author Ken Kesey that toured the country in a bus. The Merry Prankster’s philosophy and lifestyle would later become a primary source of inspiration for the hippie movement. The title of the book refers to one of the Merry Prankster’s most well-known activities: holding “Acid Test” parties in San Francisco, which featured psychedelic lights, music, and Kool-aid dosed with the hallucinatory drug LSD.



Photo: Everett Collection

### Excerpt:

All eyes were on Kesey and his group, known as the Merry Pranksters. Thousands of kids were moving into San Francisco for a life based on LSD and the psychedelic thing. Thing was the major abstract word in Haight-Ashbury. It could mean anything, isms, life styles, habits, leanings, causes, sexual organs; thing and freak; freak referred to styles and obsessions, as in “Stewart Brand is an Indian freak” or “the zodiac—that’s her freak,” or just to heads in costume. It wasn’t a negative word. Anyway, just a couple of weeks before, the heads had held their first big “be-in” in Golden Gate Park, at the foot of the hill leading up into Haight Ashbury, in mock observation of the day LSD became illegal in California. This was a gathering of all the tribes, all the communal groups. All the freaks came and did their thing. A head named Michael Bowen started it, and thousands of them piled in, in high costume, ringing bells, chanting, dancing ecstatically, blowing their minds one and another and making their favorite satiric gestures to the cops, handing them flowers, burying the bastards in tender fruity pedals of love. Oh Christ, Tom, the thing was fantastic, a freaking mind-blower; thousands of high-loving heads out there messing up the minds of the cops and everyone else in a fiesta of love and euphoria....



## Joan Didion, “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” (1967)

One of the most celebrated American writers history, Joan Didion began her career as a journalist for *Vogue* after winning an essay contest organized by the magazine. In addition to a series of essays written for various magazines, Didion has also authored novels, screenplays, and memoirs. With Tom Wolfe and Hunter S. Thompson, she is considered one of the principle writers of the “New Journalism” style.



Photo: Ted Streshinsky

In 1967, Didion’s essay “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” was published in *The Saturday Evening Post*. The essay, which would later be included in her first book of essays under the same title, became one of Didion’s most well-read pieces. The honesty and insight expressed in the article, coupled with a shocking ending in which Didion witnesses a 5-year old girl high on LSD, makes “Slouching Towards Bethlehem” a seminal account of the Haight-Ashbury scene, and one of the finest examples of “New Journalism” to be published.

### Excerpt

We were seeing something important [in Haight-Ashbury]. We were seeing the desperate attempt of a handful of pathetically unequipped children to create a community in a social vacuum. Once we had seen these children, we could no longer overlook the vacuum, no longer pretend that the society’s atomization could be reversed. At some point between 1945 and 1967, we had somehow neglected to tell these children the rules of the game we happened to be playing. Maybe we had stopped believing in the rules ourselves, maybe we were having a failure of nerve about the game. Or maybe there were just too few people around to do the telling. These were children who grew up cut loose from the web of cousins and great-aunts and family doctors and lifelong neighbors who had traditionally suggested and enforced the society’s values. They are children who have moved around a lot, San Jose, Chula Vista, here. They are less in rebellion against the society than ignorant of it, able only to feed back certain of its most publicized self-doubts, Vietnam, diet pills, the Bomb.

They feed back exactly what is given them. Because they do not believe in words—words are for “typeheads,” Chester Anderson tells them, and a thought which needs words is just another ego trip—their only proficient vocabulary is in the society’s platitudes. As it happens, I am still committed to the idea that the ability to think for oneself depends upon one’s mastery of the language, and I am not optimistic about children who will settle for saying, to indicate that their mother and father do not live together, that they come from “a broken home.” They are 14, 15, 16 years old, younger all the time, an army of children waiting to be given the words.

## Hunter S. Thompson, “The ‘Hashbury’ is The Capital of the Hippies” (*The New York Times*, 1967)

Hunter S. Thompson is one of the most well-known journalists chronicling American counterculture in the 1960s-1990s. Part of the tradition of “New Journalism,” Thompson took the concept a step further, creating “Gonzo Journalism,” which does away with an objective perspective almost entirely, and focuses on the journalist’s unique perspective.

Thompson began his career as a journalist after joining the United States Air Force, where he covered sports on the Air Force Base newspaper. He then worked for a variety of small newspapers, and gained notoriety after publishing the article “The Kentucky Derby Is Decadent and Depraved” in a small publication edited by Warren Hinckle. The article was hailed as being “a breakthrough of journalism.” From there he began writing for larger publications such as *Rolling Stone*, and authored dozens of books, perhaps most famously *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*.

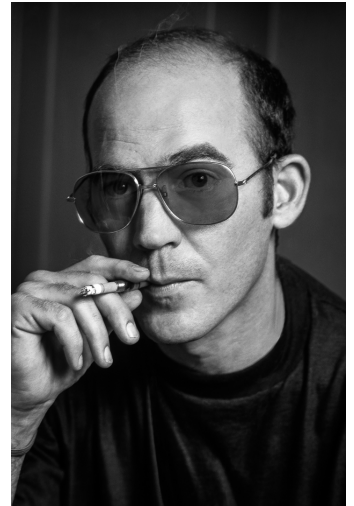


Photo: Lynn Goldsmith

### Excerpt

There is no shortage of documentation for the thesis that the current Haight-Ashbury scene is only the orgiastic tip of a great psychedelic iceberg that is already drifting in the sea lanes of the Great Society. Submerged and uncountable is the mass of intelligent, capable heads who want nothing so much as peaceful anonymity. In a nervous society where a man’s image is frequently more important than his reality, the only people who can afford to advertise their drug menus are those with nothing to lose.

And these—for the moment, at least—are the young lotus-eaters, the barefoot mystics and hairy freaks of the Haight-Ashbury—all those primitive Christians, peaceful nay-sayers and half-deluded “flower children” who refuse to participate in a society which looks to them like a mean, calculated and sol-destroying hoax.

As recently as two years ago, many of the best and brightest of them were passionately involved in the realities of political, social, and economic life in America. But the scene has changed since then and political activism is going out of style. The thrust is no longer for “change” or “progress” or “revolution,” but merely to escape, to live on the far perimeter of a world that might have been—perhaps should have been—and strike a bargain for survival on purely personal terms.

The flourishing hippie scene is a matter of desperate concern to the political activists. They see a whole generation of rebels drifting off to a drugged limbo, ready to accept almost anything as long as it comes with enough “soma.”

## Warren Hinckle, “The Social History of the Hippies” (*Ramparts Magazine*, 1967)

Warren Hinckle is best known for publishing *Ramparts*, a radical political magazine for liberal Roman Catholics. Under Hinckle, the magazine became known for its depth of reporting and unapologetic cover stories. In 1967, it published photographs of Vietnamese children injured by American bombs, a story which would go on to convince Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to make a stand against the war. Like the magazine itself, Hinckle was flamboyant, known for wearing a large eye patch (he lost an eye in an accident), and owning a pet monkey, that would perch on his shoulder. As a co-founder of *Scanlan's Monthly*, he published Hunter S. Thompson's coverage of the Kentucky Derby, which catapulted Thompson's writing career.

In March 1967, he wrote a cover story on the hippie movement for *Ramparts*. Hinckle's account led to Ralph J. Gleason to resign in protest, and go on to found *Rolling Stone*.



Photo: Fred R. Conrad

### Excerpt

Hippies are many things, but most prominently the bearded and beaded inhabitants of the Haight-Ashbury, a little psychedelic city-state edging Golden Gate Park. There, in a daily street-fair atmosphere, up-wards of 15,000 unbounded girls and boys interact in a tribal, love-seeking, free-swinging, acid-based type of society where, if you are a hippie and you have a dime, you can put it in a parking meter and lie down in the street for an hour's suntan (30 minutes for a nickel) and most drivers will be careful not to run you over.

Speaking, sometimes all at once, inside the Sierra cabin were many voices of conscience and vision of the Haight-Ashbury—belonging to men who, except for their Raggedy Andy hair, paisley shirts and pre-mod western Levi jackets, sounded for all the world like Young Republicans. They talked about reducing governmental controls, the sanctity of the individual, the need for equality among men. They talked, very seriously, about the kind of society they wanted to live in, and the fact that if they wanted an ideal world they would have to go out and make it for themselves, because nobody, least of all the government, was going to do it for them. The Utopian sentiments of these hippies were not to be put down lightly.

Hippies have a clear vision of the ideal community—a psychedelic community, to be sure—where everyone is turned on and beautiful and loving and happy and floating free. But it is a vision that, despite the Alice in Wonderland phraseology hippies usually breathlessly employ to describe it, necessarily embodies a radical political philosophy: communal life, drastic restriction of private property, rejection of violence, creativity before consumption, freedom before authority, de-emphasis of government and traditional forms of leadership. Despite a disturbing tendency to quietism, all hippies ipso facto have a political posture.