

American Girlhood and Boyhood
In the 1950s and Today
(2014)

How does your childhood compare to that of a relative or friend who grew up in the 1950s?

Directions

For girls:

Identify a woman in your life that was a child (elementary school, junior high, or high school) the 1950s.

For boys:

Identify a man in your life that was a child (elementary school, junior high, or high school) the 1950s

Conduct and record an interview with that person:

In person (video)

On the phone (speaker phone, audio recording, other tool)

Via snail mail (you write a letter, they write a letter back)

Via email

Video chat or Skype

Include in your interview these discussion points:

Background information of the interviewee:

Date

Mode of interview [in person] [phone] [mail] [email] [videochat]

Name

Where they live now

When they grew up

Where they grew up

Relationship to you

Describe your family –

Who lived in the home?

Where did the extended family live?

How often did the family eat together, see each other?

Parents and you:

Who did you rely on the most?

Could you talk to your parents?

How would you describe your relationship with your parents?

Discuss how family business was conducted?

Who made the decisions for the family?

Who made the decisions for the children?

How were family situations discussed?

What happened when something went wrong?

(if someone got sick, in trouble, needed money?)

Who did the chores in the family? What were your chores?

What did the family do for fun?

Vacations?

Celebrations?

How were the typical milestones celebrated?

(Such as graduations, birthdays, marriages, the arrival of new babies)

What were the important “coming of age” events then?

Discuss sports and extra curricular activities?

Teams?

Camps?

Music?

Dance lessons?

Was there anything you really wanted to do or have happen that disappointed you?

How did you handle those situations?

Meals –

What were they like? Who was responsible for making meals, cleaning up, shopping, and setting the table?

Technology:

Phones

Television

Transportation

Photography

Gadgets and appliances

Toys:

Games

Dolls

Blocks, building toys

Media related toys

Playing – What was considered fun?

Who did you play with?

Where did you play?

Finances -

Did you earn money?

When were you given money?

Did you save up for anything?

What did you remember or understand about your family's finances?

Fashion –

Can you remember and describe a favorite outfit?

Were there dress codes and restrictions?

Hopes and Dreams -

What did you want to do when you grew up?

Were you encouraged? Who encouraged you?

Who were your heroes? What made them admirable? Who are your heroes today?

What obstacles did you face growing up –what made it hard for you to be successful?

Can you remember other girls/boys who might have had different experiences? What made them that way?

Once you have conducted your interview, make a comparison between that person and yourself. Make sure you answer the same questions.

Present your results visually and with text. The presentation should be:

- Visually appealing – use a Venn diagram or some other visual representation of the comparison of your childhoods – images can enhance the representation
- An accurate account of both your interview and your self-reflection
- Without spelling or punctuation errors
- Clear and precise – you have included text in paragraph form that includes a topic sentence, supporting details and a concluding sentence that all draw from the interview and your reflection.

Extension activity:

Select one or more topics that came up in your interview and research them. (for example, if someone mentions “Duck and Cover”, what does that mean?)