

Text 1

Unrest widened during the 1960s with America's involvement in the Vietnam War, a costly and unsuccessful attempt to crush insurrection in North Vietnam and to prevent it from spreading to the South. Thanks in part to extensive, semi-independent media coverage of the war, public awareness of its daily horrors and casualties grew and students protested against being drafted for military service.

Text 2

Martin Luther King was a moderate, a Baptist minister who preached non-violence, while Malcolm X was more radical, a member of the black Muslim organisation, The Nation of Islam, who attempted to forge a separatist black consciousness with its own revised religious mythology.

Both were assassinated during the 1960s, and for many their deaths signalled the end of hope in complete equality between blacks and whites in the US.

Text 3

1961 saw the election of John F. Kennedy, who became a figure of great symbolic importance to the nation, especially after his assassination in 1963. It was Kennedy who presided over America's aborted invasion of Cuba, at the Bay of Pigs, and the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis (the installation of Soviet nuclear missiles on the island), which for a brief moment brought the world close to nuclear war.

Text 4

In recent years a new wave of underground musical innovation has been propelled by Internet filesharing, netlabels and social networking sites and by powerful but inexpensive sound processing software, leading to a huge proliferation of musical genres and new groups and artists making and selling CDs and promoting their works through Internet distribution and Myspace pages.

Text 5

The 1950s and 1960s brought with it an explosion of American-led popular culture among Britain's youth which alienated them from their parents. Teenage rebellion was embodied in the rise of subcultures such as the mods and rockers, who had different musical loyalties and dress codes. The 1960s was a time of experimentation in all fields, especially in the arts.

Text 6

Perhaps the most significant social transformation of the post-war period in Britain, as elsewhere in Europe, was the emergence of women as a major force in the workplace.

A decline of the traditional sources of male employment in the manufacturing industry was accompanied by expansion of administration, service and consumer industries which provided jobs to which women were often better socially adapted than men.

Text 7

Tony Blair's modernised Labour government took office in 1997 winning a massive majority in Parliament. It was the first Labour government in Britain since 1979.

However, so-called New Labour was no longer committed to the nationalisation of industries and its old socialist principles of full employment and state-funded services.

Under the leadership of Blair, the privatisation that had begun under the Thatcher government continued and Labour's political orientation both in domestic and foreign policy shifted increasingly towards the right.

Text 8

On the international front, in 1982, in the midst of a major recession at home, the government sent English troops to "rescue" the Falkland Islands (off the coast of Argentina) from occupation by Argentina, who had laid claim to sovereignty over them. With the support of the right-wing tabloid press, the Falklands War helped Thatcher to consolidate her popularity and gain a second term in office, arousing nationalistic feeling and nostalgia for the days of the British Empire.

Text 9

By the late 1960s the general trend in western countries was towards economic decline due to lack of domestic investment and high rates of inflation. By the 1970s the situation was becoming critical, mainly thanks to the world-wide recession which followed the Oil Crisis of 1973, and there were numerous strikes organised by industrial trade unions in support of bigger pay rises.

In a global economy which tended increasingly towards free market liberalism, the dream of the welfare state was proving too costly to maintain.

Text 10

Whether as a result of political instability or economic hardship, successive waves of immigrants came to Britain in search of better prospects, particularly following the 1948 Act of Parliament giving automatic British citizenship to all Commonwealth members. Racial discrimination and segregation, endorsed by the native British population, provoked resentments which eventually boiled over in the 1981 riots in Brixton, London.

Text 11

The coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953, broadcast on national television, attempted to conserve in the minds of the public the image of Britain as a great imperial power. But in reality the years after World War II were to mark a period of rapid decolonisation and the disintegration of the British Empire, beginning with India, which was partitioned into two independent nations, India and Pakistan, in 1947, thanks to the efforts of figures such as the anti-colonialist leader Jawaharlal Nehru.

Text 12

After World War II cinema in Europe was reborn from the rubble of its destroyed cities. At the forefront of this renaissance was the Italian director Roberto Rossellini. Rossellini was a pioneer of a new kind of cinema, later called neo-realism, which was much closer to the texture and feeling of real life, as it was being lived in the shadow of war and its aftermath, than the escapism of major studios.

Text 13

At the end of World War II much of Europe was in ruins. An agreement had already been drawn up between the allied powers, particularly the US and USSR, to determine the eventual control of liberated territories. The countries of Eastern Europe occupied by the Soviet Red Army remained under Soviet communist influence, while Western Europe fell under the economic and political influence of the US, who provided extensive financial aid for the rebuilding and modernisation of their economies (the Marshall Plan).