



## READER'S GUIDE

Popular culture—as we know it—was born in America, though historians disagree as to exactly when. Was it in 1893, when magazine publishers used new technologies to cut the costs of their magazines to a dime and sell hundreds of thousands of copies? Or was it in 1905, when the invention of the nickelodeon brought low-cost films to people all across the nation? Or was it back in 1886, when Richard Sears and Alvah Roebuck sent out their first catalog, which allowed people from all over to choose from among hundreds and then thousands of the same goods?

No matter the exact date, by the turn of the twentieth century, American magazine publishers, retailers, moviemakers, and other entertainers were bringing their goods before larger numbers of Americans than ever before. These magazines, movies, advertisements, shopping experiences, sports teams, and more were what we know as “popular culture,” because they could be enjoyed firsthand by masses of Americans.

The story of America as revealed by its popular culture is complex and fascinating. Readers of *Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms: Pop Culture of 20th-Century America* will discover, for example, that the comedic forms first developed by vaudeville comedians at the turn of the century lived on in film, radio, and finally television. They will learn that black musicians created the musical forms that are most distinctly American: blues and jazz. And they will realize that popular culture

reacted to things like war and economic depressions in ways that were surprising and unexpected. The study of popular culture has a great deal to teach the student who is interested in how people use entertainment and consumption to make sense of their lives and shape their experience.

*Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms* gathers together essays that reflect the variety, diversity, and excitement of American popular culture of the twentieth century. This collection focuses more on events, fads, programs, performances, and products than on biographies of people, which are well documented in other sources. Even so, brief biographies of notables are sprinkled throughout. With approximately 750 essays on individual topics and dozens of overviews of pop culture trends, *Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms* covers a great deal of American popular culture, though not nearly enough. There are hundreds more people, bands, TV programs, films, and products that were worthy of mention but were left out due to space consideration. Our advisory board of media specialists, however, helped assure that the most prominent and studied subjects were included.

Have you ever wondered how the Slinky was invented, what Velveeta cheese is made of, or what people danced to before rock and roll? Those answers are in *Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms*, along with many others. It is our hope that this collection will bring both information and pleasure to all students of American culture.

## Organization

*Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms* is arranged chronologically by decade over five volumes (two decades per volume). The approximately 750 entries are grouped into nine topic sections: Commerce, Fashion, Film and Theater, Food and Drink, Music, Print Culture, Sports and Games, TV and Radio, and The Way We Lived (though not all topics appear in every decade). Many subjects can easily appear in several different decades, so those essays are placed in either the decade in which the product was invented or the fad initiated, or in the decade in which the subject was most prominent or popular. In addition, several of the essays could have appeared under different topics (such as a book that was made into a movie), so those essays appear under the topic where it was best known. Users should make frequent use of the index or the two additional tables of con-

tents (arranged alphabetically by entry name and by topic category) to locate an entry.

Essays range in length from 150 to 1000 words, with the majority averaging less than 500 words. Every essay aims to describe the topic and analyze the topic's contribution to popular culture. Each essay lists additional sources on the topic, including books, magazine or journal articles, and Web sites. Whenever possible, references to books are geared to younger readers. The editors have personally visited every Web site mentioned and believe that these sites contain content that will assist the reader in understanding the subject. Due to the nature of the World Wide Web, it is possible that not all Web links will still function at the time of publication.

*Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms* also provides these features:

- A timeline that highlights key historic and pop culture events of the twentieth century
- A general overview of each decade
- A multipaged "At a Glance" box that breaks down "What We Said," "What We Read," "What We Watched," "What We Listened To," and "Who We Knew"
- An overview of each topic section in each decade
- More than 300 photos and illustrations
- Extensive use of cross references (pointing to decade, topic, and volume)

## Acknowledgments

This collection simply could not have been created without the diligent efforts and true professionalism of some of the best writers we know: Timothy Berg, Charles Coletta, Rob Edelman, Tina Gianoulis, Justin Gustainis, Audrey Kupferberg, Edward Moran, Chris Routledge, and Bob Schnakenberg. Also worthy of mention are the contributions of Jill Gregg Clever, Sheldon Goldfarb, Karl Rahder, Steven Schneider, and Robert Sickels.

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This book is dedicated to our children, Conrad and Louisa, who provided valuable insights into the entries on Pokémon and Beanie Babies, and who will soon be old enough to find this book in their school libraries. Happy reading, kids!

### **Comments and Suggestions**

We welcome your comments on *Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms*. Please send correspondence to: Editors, *Bowling, Beatniks, and Bell-Bottoms*, U•X•L, 27500 Drake Rd., Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535; call toll-free: 800-877-4253; fax to 248-414-5043; or send e-mail via [www.gale.com](http://www.gale.com).

—Sara Pendergast and Tom Pendergast, Editors

