Chapter 1

The Times They Are A-Changin'

In This Chapter

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The 1960s were a time of change, but just as importantly, they were a time of hope. Despite all the turmoil (the decade was certainly turbulent), everyday people thought that they could change the world. Activists are still around today, but in no decade since the '60s (and early '70s) were people so committed to putting themselves on the front line, sometimes even in physical danger, for what they believed. The '60s were also a fun, wild kind of time, ripe with individuality. Musicians, fashion designers, artists, and writers all experimented with creating new kinds of art and human expression. And young people experimented with new ways to live, breaking away from their parents' lifestyles, which they believed were conformist, materialistic, and often stifling.

Television also came into its own in this decade — no longer was it just a novelty that people used in order to watch Milton Berle once a week, but it reflected some of the social changes that were rapidly taking place. Most importantly, for good or bad, TV brought the news right into peoples' living rooms. American citizens saw it all — the civil rights movement, dogs and policemen attacking peaceful protesters, inaugurations and assassinations, a walk on the moon, war (and antiwar protests), and the hippie lifestyle. As a result, almost every American was affected by what was going on in society. And even today, Americans (and not only the baby boomers who lived through the '60s) are affected by the events of the decade.

Surveying the Political Landscape

REMEMBER

When most folks hear the phrase "the 1960s," they immediately think of hippies, war protestors, and other images of rebellion and experimentation, and for good reason. But these connotations don't completely reflect the decade. Even amidst civil rights demonstrations, antiwar protests, new fashions, new music, and changing lifestyles, many people still went to work each day, returned to their homes each night, raised children, and lived altogether conventional lives.

Comparing the political landscape of the presidential administrations versus these mental images can also appear strange, as the presidential bookends of the decade were Dwight Eisenhower, the general who led the Allied invasion of Normandy to end World War II in 1945, and his conservative vice president, Richard Nixon. In between these two Republican administrations, however, the United States went through eight hopeful, inspiring, terrifying, and violent years under the leadership of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson.

✔ **Dwight "Ike" Eisenhower (1953–61):** January 1, 1960, was ushered in under President Eisenhower's administration, which many observers saw as a bland, white-bread administration that concentrated on maintaining the U.S. prosperity and presenting a strong challenge to the growth of Communism worldwide. Ike seemed like the elderly father seeking to guide and care for his children.

✔ **John F. Kennedy (1961–63):** John F. Kennedy was the youngest man ever to be elected to the office, and Americans saw his presidency as the beginning of a new era. In his inaugural address, he asked the country to join him in helping the United States reach its potential. Kennedy asked Americans to help end poverty in Appalachia and discrimination against blacks in the South, to create new allies overseas by participating in the Peace Corps, and to land a man on the moon by the end of the decade. The civil rights movement (see the "Viewing Issues in Black and White" section, later in this chapter) and the violence that often met it pushed Kennedy to address the issues and call on Congress to pass legislation to ensure civil rights for all Americans.

Kennedy's administration also saw the country through some difficult times. The cold war heated up as Eisenhower's plan to overthrow Castro in Cuba led to the Cuban Missile Crisis, when the United States and the Soviet Union came very close to a nuclear war. Though the incident passed, the cold war continued, and the United States started down that painful path that became the Vietnam War. You can read about these events and the rest of the Kennedy years in Chapter 2.

✔ **Lyndon B. Johnson (1963–69):** Following President Kennedy's assassination in 1963, his domestic and international agendas were left to his vice president and successor, Lyndon Johnson. Johnson vowed to push Kennedy's agenda, especially in the area of civil rights, but he also

expanded Kennedy's vision by pressing his Great Society programs, using his political prowess (some called them strong-armed tactics) to initiate the War on Poverty; to create a Medicare program for the elderly; to support funding for education, housing, and jobs; and to pass civil rights and voting rights legislation.

Johnson also inherited an increasingly complicated mess in Vietnam that would force him into a no-win position — a war that he couldn't afford to lose but couldn't win. This undeclared war had two devastating effects on his administration. The funds necessary for the war sapped funds from his Great Society programs, and an expanded military draft resulted in antiwar protests, which eventually eroded Johnson's reputation and credibility. In 1968, he announced that he wouldn't run for a second full term as president. Chapter 3 covers Johnson.

✔ **Richard Nixon (1969–74):** Amidst the disarray in the Democratic Party, and with the support of the *silent majority* (Americans who were uncomfortable with the turbulent changes taking place in the nation), Nixon was elected in 1968 on the promise that he could bring peace with honor and restore law and order to the country. However, the Vietnam War didn't end until 1973, and the antiwar protests continued (on and off) until then.

Nixon's administration changed the world in both negative and positive ways. The Watergate scandal eroded whatever faith the American public still had in their elected officials. But Nixon's foreign policy genius also had a lasting impact — in 1972, he opened relations with mainland Communist China. (See Chapter 4 for more on Nixon's road to the White House and his tenure as president in the '60s.)

Viewing Issues in Black and White

REMEMBER

The civil rights movement of the 1960s had lasting effects on American society. Although many African Americans still face racism, the situation has changed considerably since the '60s. But change didn't come without struggle. The decade saw peaceful protests that often turned violent, murders of civil rights workers and innocent victims, as well as urban rioting and destruction. Although race relations in the United States have a long way to go, significant progress has already been made.

Setting the stage

HISTORIC ROOTS

The struggle for freedom and equality for African Americans dates back to the very beginnings of U.S. history. Even though the end of the Civil War in 1865 brought the *promise* of freedom for those people held in bondage, the attainment of true freedom and equality was fleeting at best. For a while after the Civil War, the North forced the southern states to stop the blatant

discrimination, yet when Reconstruction ended, southern states began passing Jim Crow Laws, designed to prevent blacks from voting and keep them segregated from whites in schools and other public and private facilities. In northern states, although segregation wasn't legally mandated as it was in the South, it still existed, in the form of racially segregated neighborhoods and the prejudice blacks faced.

In the face of continued oppression through the first half of the 20th century, African Americans formed organizations to help press for equality and assist rural blacks to adjust to the urban environment. This push for equality gained tremendous momentum in 1954, when the nation's highest court ruled that segregation was illegal. Soon after, a seamstress named Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger in Montgomery, Alabama. This simple act began the yearlong Montgomery Bus Boycott (which gained blacks the right to equality in public facilities) and also brought Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. (one of the boycott's leaders) to national prominence. In Chapter 5, we cover the Montgomery Bus Boycott, along with other individuals, organizations, and events (including Supreme Court rulings, the integration of previous segregated schools in the South, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957) that provided a foundation for the civil rights movement in the 1960s.

Pushing for change

Encouraged by the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott, and with the help of strong leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Abernathy, and others, students organized nonviolent protests. Throughout the South, students organized sit-ins to integrate lunch counters, freedom rides to integrate bus terminals, and protest marches and demonstrations to insist on equal access to public facilities. The Ku Klux Klan, law enforcement officials, and ordinary citizens often met these peaceful protests with violence. Although life for southern blacks was always dangerous, many in white America began to become aware of the level of violence for the first time, especially after four girls were killed in a church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963.

Even President Kennedy was appalled by the violence, compelling him to propose comprehensive civil rights legislation. To press for support for the civil rights bill, civil rights organizations joined together to coordinate a huge march on Washington, D.C., where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I have a dream" speech. (For more information, head to Chapter 6, where you can read all about King and the civil rights movement in the first half of the decade.)

In 1964, civil rights organizations held Freedom Summer, an all-out voter registration drive in Mississippi. This peaceful demonstration was again met with violence as three civil rights workers were killed. Responding to this violence, as well as the fear that blacks would become more militant, President Johnson pushed for passage of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964, which enforced equal voter registration and prohibited discrimination in all public facilities.

Even after the civil rights bill passed, the protests continued. In 1965, a march from Selma, Alabama, to the state capital of Montgomery was met with police and Klan violence and therefore again awakened the nation. The Voting Rights Act, which put teeth into the 15th and 19th Amendments, passed as a result — see Chapter 7.

Getting radical

Despite the progress made, American society still had inequalities, especially regarding education, economic disparity, and substandard housing. Furthermore, the gains made by the civil rights movement raised blacks' expectations, and they became impatient with nonviolent protest. The mid- to late '60s were marked by more strident protests, at times culminating in urban riots such as the Watts Riots in Los Angeles. The rise of black militants, such as the Black Panthers, was a direct response to the slow progress in the movement. Many blacks were no longer willing to passively resist police violence and wait for white America to give them their rights. They were willing to fight, violently if necessary, to take their rightful place in their country, as we discuss in Chapter 7.

Fighting the War in Vietnam — At Home and Abroad

Another event that profoundly affected life in the 1960s was the Vietnam War. The United States first got involved in the conflict because the French were allies during World War II. Perhaps more importantly, because of the cold war with the Soviet Union, the United States had a vested interest in keeping Vietnam anti-Communist. Therefore, after the Vietnamese drove the French out of Southeast Asia, Vietnam was divided. The United States, fearing a Communist takeover from the north, offered its support to the South Vietnamese nationalist government of Ngo Dinh Diem. However, Diem wasn't an especially popular leader. He was inflexible, his administration was corrupt, and he alienated many peasants, who were attracted to North Vietnam's leader Ho Chi Minh, a man whose ideals and programs were more attractive to the ordinary Vietnamese people.

As a result, South Vietnam increasingly depended on U.S. support to shore up Diem's government. At first this support was mainly money and a few military advisors, but as Diem faced more challenges to his authority, he requested more assistance, placing the United States on the path into the quagmire. The first sizeable increase was in 1961, when President Kennedy sent 8,000 advisors, including the elite Green Berets, to train and assist the South Vietnamese military.

By 1964 some Americans began to be concerned about the growing U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Therefore, in his campaign speech, President Johnson reassured Americans that he wouldn't send "American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do" for themselves.

Wading in chin deep

Although in 1964 Johnson ran for president promising peace, he believed he was compelled to keep a strong military presence in Vietnam in order to keep Communism from taking over Southeast Asia. This strategy, which continued the dominant cold war thinking, included sending ships into the Tonkin Gulf to gather intelligence and training and supporting the South Vietnamese. These events, which we discuss in Chapter 8, were pivotal in drawing the United States much deeper into the conflict.

In August 1964, a minor (and much disputed) confrontation occurred in the Tonkin Gulf. Given sketchy information, especially about the American and South Vietnamese role in provoking the incident, Congress enacted the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, which gave the president the power to respond to aggression however he felt was necessary. This resolution provided all the justification that Johnson needed to escalate the conflict in Vietnam. Then the U.S. role shifted from being advisors to actual combatants, and the number of troops began to increase exponentially up through 1968.

As the war in Vietnam escalated in the mid-1960s, students organized antiwar protests at home. Disaffected college students weren't the only ones who rallied. Clergymen, parents, executives, and senior citizens — a cross-section of American citizens — protested against the war that they believed was unjust and couldn't be won. The war undermined President Johnson's Great Society plans, and the dissention over it actually caused Johnson to withdraw from the presidential race of 1968. For more on the antiwar movement, see Chapter 9.

By 1967, insurgency was increasing in South Vietnam, and to take advantage of it, the North Vietnamese designed an offensive during the Tet (Lunar New Year) holiday in January 1968. Hoping to force an end to U.S. bombing missions, the North Vietnamese offered to negotiate if the United States stopped bombing — however, at the same time, they planned diversionary actions to allow them to start an offensive against South Vietnamese cities. Attacks took South Vietnamese and U.S. troops by surprise. They even pulled off a successful raid on the new American embassy in Saigon. For the full story of the Tet Offensive, turn to Chapters 8 and 10.

One of the largest impacts of the Tet Offensive was on the American public. With scenes of the conflict on TV almost every night, citizens watched the war in their living rooms and were dismayed with what they saw. Increasing dissatisfaction with the racial disparities within the ranks (blacks made up a

disproportionately large portion of the combat soldiers, and consequently suffered more deaths and wounds) as well as the elimination of student draft deferments gave a poignant focus for many, helping to expand the antiwar movement. The antiwar movement not only affected the people at home but also caused a growing cynicism among the troops in Vietnam.

Beginning the slow withdrawal

Nixon was elected president on the expectation and hope that he could end the war. Using an approach called *Vietnamization,* he began to shift more of the responsibility for fighting the war to the South Vietnamese while seeking a negotiated settlement that was favorable to U.S. interests. (We discuss these Vietnamization efforts in Chapter 10.) However, the quick end wasn't meant to be. In fact, Nixon actually widened the war into Laos and Cambodia, hoping to eliminate sanctuaries for the North Vietnamese in order to place greater pressure on the North Vietnamese to agree to U.S. terms. However, the greatest effect of this move was to intensify the antiwar sentiment at home.

Although Nixon continued to reduce the number of troops and press for negotiations, the war wasn't officially over until 1973, with the fall of Saigon coming two years later. The United States lost not only the war but also the faith of many of its citizens in their government.

Fighting for Equality

REMEMBER

Encouraged by the successes of the civil rights movement, other groups were motivated to look at their lives and work to improve them. Students pressed for free speech, and women campaigned for equal opportunities. In addition, farmworkers staged strikes and boycotts to press for better wages and working conditions, American Indians fought to reclaim their independence, and gays and lesbians worked for acceptance in American society. At the same time, however, those who preferred the good-old days also made their positions known (and had a lot of popular support) during the '60s. You can get the whole scoop on the latter four groups in Chapter 13, but we give you the basic rundown here.

Joining the student movement

University students were no longer content to accept whatever the authorities decreed — especially concerning nonacademic matters. For example, in Berkeley, students demanded the right to voice and promote their political

opinions, in defiance of the administration (which was allegedly motivated by their ties to local business as well as the military-industrial complex). Because of the administration's overreaction, simple protests escalated into full-scale conflict, culminating in the protesters' occupation of Sproul Hall for three days. Eventually, with the faculty's support, the Berkeley free speech movement (FSM) achieved its goals, but by then the activist students had found another cause — protesting the Vietnam War.

With Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Berkeley students organized antiwar protests all over the United States. Although they didn't end the war, they made the American public more aware of what was going on in Southeast Asia and effectively forced President Johnson from office. In what was probably the fiercest antiwar protest, they demonstrated at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago (see Chapter 9). For more on the FSM, the SDS, and the ins and outs of the student movement, see Chapter 11.

Changing society's views of women

One of the groups whose protests had perhaps the farthest-reaching effect was the women's movement. In the early 1960s, most middle-class white women catered to their husbands and cared for their children, believing that domesticity was the path to their ultimate fulfillment. However, with the publication of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, many women began re-examining their lives and considered whether life offered more than just being housewives. Chapter 12 chronicles how the women's movement started and progressed throughout the decade.

In 1966, a group of women formed the National Organization for Women (NOW) to fight for employment opportunities and equal pay. However, the organization's focus broadened to include fighting for reproductive rights, promoting quality child-care options, opposing racism and sexism, and promoting legislation to help control domestic violence. Feminism also took a radical turn toward the end of the decade, when women objected to being looked at as sex objects, and some even decided that men were unnecessary for a satisfying life, turning to lesbianism as a viable lifestyle.

Fighting for Latino rights

Hispanics also demanded their rights. Cesar Chavez organized farmworkers to demand the right to unionize in order to get a living wage and decent

working conditions. Using the nonviolent tactics promoted by Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr., they coordinated strikes, protest marches, and a nationwide boycott on grapes, which called America's attention to the plight of farmworkers.

Rallying around American Indian issues

American Indians also rebelled against their ill treatment. Their land had been stolen, their heritage had been debased, and instead of being respected as the first Americans, they were marginalized, forced to live on the worst lands, with inferior school systems and almost no social support. To call attention to their needs, they protested with the occupation of Alcatraz Island in the San Francisco Bay from 1969 through 1971. Russell Means, who participated in the occupation of Alcatraz, founded the American Indian Movement (AIM), which continues to advocate for American Indians to this day.

Sowing the seeds for gay pride

Homosexuals also advocated for their rights during the '60s, both peacefully and militantly. Because of the women's movement as well as Alfred Kinsey's book, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male,* the public became more aware of gays and lesbians in American society, but it took the Stonewall Riots in 1969 (when the police raided a gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village and the community retaliated) to mobilize the gay rights movement. Today, gay pride parades (oftentimes to mark the anniversary of the Stonewall Riots) take place in cities all over the United States, and gays and lesbians are recognized (if not always accepted) throughout America.

Giving voice to the silent majority

Of course, some people wanted to go back to the good-old days, when men were men, women were women, and society didn't have any shades of gray (or black or brown). The segregationists had their spokesmen, most notably Governor George Wallace of Alabama, and Bull Connor, the racist police chief of Birmingham.

Conservatives, led by intellectuals such as William F. Buckley, pragmatists, such as Barry Goldwater, and rabid right-wingers, such as Robert Welch and the John Birch Society, were also vocally opposed to government social programs,

such as Johnson's Great Society. Frustrated by the civil rights movement, social programs, and the antiwar protests, the conservatives finally made their voices be heard in 1968, when Nixon and his vice president, Spiro Agnew, became the spokesmen of the "silent majority."

Living a New Way

Culturally, the '60s were also a decade of change. Hippies not only questioned conventionality but also acted out a different lifestyle, rejecting their parents' middle-class lifestyle. Fashions took daring new directions, as women's skirts became shorter, men's hair became longer, and everyone's clothes became more flamboyant. The '60s also saw an explosion of music styles, embracing folk, rock, surf, soul, and protest music. New movements emerged in the arts, and movies, theater, books, comedy, and television began to reflect the changes in society.

Creating a youth counterculture

Young people challenged everything — marriage and family, sexuality, the relevance of their education, patriotism, the evils of drugs — you name it, they questioned it and embraced alternative ways of being. Many young people rebelled against the morals and standards of the 1950s, and some adopted the hippie lifestyle. Why did they make such a drastic change? Perhaps because they thought that their parents' lives were so conformist and sterile, because they believed that materialism didn't buy happiness, or maybe because, removed from economic struggles or a world war, they just had to do something different.

Free love, long hair, tie-dye, sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll were the most obvious signs of the lifestyle, but those characteristics were just on the surface. The love wasn't just the sexual kind; the hippies believed in sharing with their friends — whether it was food or a joint. Often hippies lived communally, whether in apartments in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood in San Francisco or in rural communes to be closer to nature.

Hippies also wanted to expand their consciousness, and to do so, they not only experimented with marijuana and LSD but also explored different religious traditions. To a large extent, the hippies weren't interested in politics but were angry enough about the Vietnam War to join the protests in the late '60s.

Rocking to the music

Perhaps one of the greatest cultural changes of the '60s was in the field of music (see Chapter 15 for more about the '60s music scene). Although rock music started in the '50s, it took on a whole new dimension the following decade. Influenced by jazz, blues, and soul, the British Invasion influenced American music back from the other side of the pond, beginning with the Beatles in 1964. The Rolling Stones and other British groups continued to shape rock music throughout the decade.

However, other, purely American influences affected the '60s music scene as well. Folk music, the surfer sound, and Motown, which brought black music to white audiences, were widespread during the '60s. The drug culture and antiwar sentiments also affected the music — the psychedelic sound and protest songs were popular. And all these styles were heard during the huge '60s rock festivals — Monterey and Woodstock, which reflected the hopeful mood of "making love, not war," and Altamont, which showed the dark side of the hippie culture.

Stylin' in the '60s

Almost nothing remained unchanged during the '60s. Fashion revolted against the status quo of design, with women wearing miniskirts, bikinis, see-through blouses, or — on the other end of the spectrum — pantsuits. Men also broke out of their conformist fashion image; even "establishment" types added colorful clothes, with bright shirts and wide ties. Men began wearing their hair longer, and women cut theirs shorter or ironed it straight, and by the end of the decade, whites as well as blacks grew big Afros. (See Chapter 16 for more on how the '60s influenced fashion.)

Turning to entertainment

New movements in visual art, such as pop art, op art, and psychedelic art, became popular during the '60s. In the theater, although established forms of drama and musicals continued, a new show, *Hair! The American Tribal Rock-Love Musical,* reflected the hippie, antiwar culture of the late '60s. Movies also both took the traditional route and echoed the times — huge epics and historical dramas, such as *Lawrence of Arabia, Dr. Zhivago, A Man for All Seasons,* and *A Lion in Winter* were top hits, and people loved *Mary Poppins* and *The Sound of Music.* In addition, movies such as *Dr. Strangelove* and *James Bond* reflected cold war concerns, and *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* showed the changing sexual morality of the '60s.

But perhaps the greatest change and influence was due to television. The '60s brought events such as presidential debates, Kennedy's funeral, civil rights struggles, and the Vietnam War (as well as antiwar protests) into American living rooms. No longer did people have to visualize what was going on after reading words in a newspaper — with TV, they saw the events that occurred, almost in real time.

TV also reflected the way many people lived. By the mid- to late '60s, television started to portray blacks in similar roles as whites, women were depicted as independent and single with careers of their own, and comic and variety shows, such as *Rowan and Martin's Laugh-In* and *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour,* mirrored '60s fashions. (See Chapter 16 for more about popular culture and society in the decade.)