

Grade 9 Answer

12 Mark Essay Question

12
Marks

Question:

Which of the following had more impact on post-war American society?

- McCarthyism
- Popular culture?

Explain your answer with reference to both bullet points.

(12 marks)

Answer:

Firstly, McCarthyism had a very important impact on post-war American society. Communism was seen as the opposite of everything America stood for - capitalism and democracy, and McCarthy was a senator that was extremely anti-communist, and stirred up a lot of fear around communism in post-war America. During a speech in February 1950, he claimed to have a list of 200 known communists within the US State Department. However, his methods of finding communist spies were very controversial, as he often had little evidence and used intimidation against suspects. These tactics made him well-known, and those who spoke against him risked being accused of being communist and blacklisted. This had a large impact on post-war American society, as it created widespread fear of communism, and also produced a fear of being accused of being a communist, due to his sensationalist accusations.

Secondly, popular culture had a very important impact on post-war American society. In the 1950s, rock'n'roll music became extremely popular with artists such as Elvis, and more white youths began listening to R&B music by African American artists such as Chuck Berry. Additionally, television viewing increased drastically in post-war America, and shows such as I Love Lucy became key in American popular culture. Television also helped break down regional differences as most Americans watched the same TV programmes. Therefore, changes in popular culture had an impact on post-war American society because pastimes such as listening to music or watching television changed enormously.

Overall, the most important impact on post-war American society was McCarthyism. Although changes in popular culture did impact Americans' lives greatly, with the introduction of new music and television. However, the impact of McCarthyism was far greater, as this created widespread fear of communism and led to the blacklisting of many innocent Americans.

Feedback:

This answer would get 12/12 marks because the pupil has explained each of the given points (McCarthyism and popular culture) in depth using historical information, and directly linked to the question throughout. The pupil has also included a judgement at the end, explaining which point was more important and why.

