



## The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974

By Arthur Marwick

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### The Sixties: Cultural Revolution in Britain, France, Italy, and the United States, c.1958-c.1974 By Arthur Marwick

If the World Wars defined the first half of the twentieth century, the sixties defined the second half, providing the pivot on which modern times have turned. From popular music to individual liberties, the tastes and convictions of the Western world are indelibly stamped with the impact of that tumultuous decade. Now one of the world's foremost historians provides the definitive look at this momentous time. Framing the sixties as a period stretching from 1958 to 1974, Arthur Marwick argues that this long decade ushered in nothing less than a cultural revolution--one that raged most clearly in the United States, Britain, France, and Italy. Writing with wit and verve, he brilliantly recaptures the events and movements that shaped our lives: the rise of a youth subculture across the West; the impact of post Beat novels and New Wave cinema; the sit ins and marches of the civil rights movement; Britain's surprising rise to leadership in fashion and music; the emerging storm over Vietnam; the Paris student rising of 1968; the new concern for poverty; the growing force of feminism and the gay rights movement; and much more. As Marwick unfolds his vivid narrative, he illuminates this remarkable era--both its origins and its impact. He concludes that it was a time that saw great leaps forward in the arts, in civil rights, and in many other areas of society and politics. But the decade also left deep divisions still felt today.

Written with tremendous force of insight and narrative power, *The Sixties* promises to be the single most important account of the single most important decade of our times.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

These days it seems obligatory to be either for or against the 1960s. Arthur Marwick, Professor of history at the Open University, is definitely for them. He likes them so much that this massive account of the decade starts in 1958 and doesn't finish until 1974--but this unorthodox time frame is well chosen, with a view that extends from the end of postwar austerity to the crunch of the mid-'70s oil crisis. It allows Marwick not only to place all the famous sixties incidents--including the Paris riots, the Vietnam war, the anti-war protests, and the fight over abortion rights--in historical context, but then to follow them through to their various conclusions.

While the cultural developments remain in the memory, it was the economic progress, allied to the baby boom, that really invigorated this decade. In America, the percentage of the population below the poverty line halved in the years between 1965 and 1975; in Italy the number of families with television sets and fridges doubled over the same period. "There has been nothing quite like it", Marwick persuasively argues; "nothing would ever be the same again." --*Nick Wroe*

#### From Kirkus Reviews

A scholarly, earnest, sometimes dense cultural history of the decade. English historian Marwick (*Britain in Our Century*, 1985, etc.) seems determined to rescue the 1960s, both from orthodox leftist historians (who view the era as an explosion of the youthful bourgeoisie) and from conservatives (who believe that it brought about the decline and fall of Western civilization). Marwick enumerates the periods cultural, artistic, and political achievements, which, he believes, really began in 1958 (the year big business headed full-tilt at the youth market, and the year popular music shifted to rock 'n roll) and ended in 1974, when the oil crisis reached consumers around the world and set off a wave of conservative reaction. The authors viewpoint is European. Much of what he says will be unfamiliar to American readers (as, for instance, when he discusses the role of upper-crust English schools in shaping political radicalism). Much else, however, concerns common ground, especially when Marwick writes about music. Hes also perceptive about the literature of the time and how it influenced other forms of expression. For example, he includes an interview with ex-Beatle Paul McCartney, who reminisces about the influence of Jack Kerouacs autobiographical novel *On the Road* on British youth in the late 1950s. And Marwick has a lot to tell us about the student revolt in France and Italy of 1968 and 1969. Occasionally, he gets a little too pedantically encyclopedic for his own good, as in examining the miniskirt, which, almost always worn with tights, was a very popular, and even tenacious, fashion, being worn and argued over after the advent of hot pants . . . and then, in the classic fashion pattern of extreme innovation followed by extreme reaction, the maxiskirt, which reached to the ankles. Even then, however, he offers a fine resource for students of the era. And for those who remember Marcuse, McLuhan, and Marx fondly, Marwicks tome will offer a stimulating stroll down memory lane. -- *Copyright ©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

#### Review

...*The Sixties* is an important and timely contribution to public debate. -- *The New York Times Book Review*, Ellen Willis

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