

Lesson Plan

# Contemporary History Post-1945: Economy

## Length

One 45-minute period

## Grade Level

High School

## Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to explain how goods became cheaper and buying power increased.
- Students will be able to identify benefits and drawbacks of the new age of consumerism.

[How Did Mass Production and Mass Consumption Take Off After World War II?](#)

[Know It Now: How Did Mass Production Make Microwaves So Cheap?](#)

[Presentation](#)

[Guided Reading Handout](#)

[Worksheet: Mass Production After World War II Guessing Game](#)

## Homework

Students will read *How Did Mass Production and Mass Consumption Take Off After World War II?* and complete Part 1 of the guided reading handout.

## Class

1. **(10 Minutes) Debrief:** As a quick refresher, watch this 46 second YouTube Short: [Know It Now: How Did Mass Production Make Microwaves So Cheap?](#) Ask students to brainstorm other consumer goods that are mass produced and are relatively cheap. Discuss as a class. Ask students to share key takeaways about mass production and mass consumption from the homework.
2. **(10 Minutes) Mass Production after World War II Guessing Game:** Hand out the *Worksheet: Mass Production After World War II Guessing Game*. Students will work with a partner to quickly guess the average cost of products in the late 1940s compared to today. Students will then be given the actual costs listed in the chart below (Note: The 1940s figures include the adjusted for inflation cost for reference). Students should then answer if the product is more or less affordable than in the 1940s with some possible reasons why. Debrief as a class.

Refrigerator: \$200 in 1947 (\$2,736.40 in 2023 dollars)	\$1,500 in 2022
Ballpoint Pen: \$12.50 in 1945 (\$211.88 in 2023 dollars)	\$0.11–\$3.00 in 2022
Television: \$445 in 1947 (\$6,088.50 in 2023 dollars)	\$400–500 in 2022
Electric stove: \$34.95 in 1940s (\$478.19 in 2023 dollars)	\$650 in 2022

Average cost of cars: \$429.73 in 1945 (\$7,284.14 in 2023 dollars)

\$46,290 in 2022

3. **(20 Minutes) Mass Production Mini-Debate:** Students will work with a partner to complete the attached Worksheet: T Chart Advantages/ Disadvantages of Mass Production. They will reference the guided reading handout that was completed for homework to provide specific examples. At the bottom of the worksheet they should then write their stance. After students have had time to complete, divide the class into two groups. One will argue in favor of mass production and the other against. Give them a few minutes to discuss as a group, then engage in a mini-debate taking turns between sides.
4. **(5 Minutes) Debrief:** As a class, give a few minutes to discuss their actual thoughts on mass production. Ask what key takeaways they have in relation to the changes that mass production brought to the global economy.

## Vocabulary

### General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)

an agreement signed on October 30, 1947, that governed global trade until the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1994. By the end of 1994, the GATT had 128 signatories.

### interest rates

the percentage of a loan that the person borrowing must pay to the lender on top of paying back the loan itself.

### pandemic

disease outbreak that has reached at least several countries, affecting a large group of people.

### supply chain

a network—consisting of individual producers, companies, transportation, information, and more—that extracts a raw material, transforms it into a finished product, and delivers it to a consumer.

### tariff

a tax on goods arriving from a foreign country, generally used as a tool of trade and foreign policy to penalize adversaries or favor allies or domestic producers.