



Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture

Jon Savage

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture

Jon Savage

Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture Jon Savage

From the author of the critically acclaimed *England's Dreaming*, a landmark cultural history of youth

Teenagers —as we have come to define them —were not, award-winning author Jon Savage tells us, born in the 1950s of rockers and Beatniks, when most histories would begin. Rather, the teenager as icon can be traced back to the 1890s, when the foundations for the new century were laid in urban youth culture.

Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture is a monumental cultural history that charts the spread of the American ideal of youth through England and Europe and around the world. From Peter Pan to Oscar Wilde, Anne Frank to the Wizard of Oz, Savage documents youth culture's development as a commodity and an industry from the turn of the last century to its current driving force in the global economy. Fusing film, music, literature, diaries, fashion, and art, this epic cultural history is an astonishing and surprising chronicle of modern life sure to appeal to pop culture fans, social history buffs, and anyone who has ever been a teenager.

Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture Details

Date : Published April 19th 2007 by Viking Adult (first published 2007)

ISBN : 9780670038374

Author : Jon Savage

Format : Hardcover 576 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, History, Sociology

 [Download Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture Jon Savage

From Reader Review Teenage: The Creation of Youth Culture for online ebook

Rj says

Savage places the development of the teenage as a cultural construct from the late 19th-century to the present. Looking at it comparatively he studies Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States. Looking at film, literature, academic writing and popular culture this is an important book for anyone interested in the development of Western culture.

"The buccaneering individuality of the early nineteenth-century had become obsolete: it had fled across the Atlantic to the American frontier. In the place of the freebooting imperial conqueror came the ideal of the group player. Team games like soccer, cricket, and rugby football became the principal test of characters, the new institutional rite of passage. For despite the social status of its pupils, the public school education involved a holistic, almost panoptic system that matched the severity, if not the brutality, of tribal rites." 19

This is best expressed in the Monty Python film *The Meaning of Life* with the public school segment that seques into war.

"If he had expressly planned it, Wilde could not have chosen a line of attack more unsettling to the Imperial English. The values that he promoted-the twin sins of Sodom and socialism-were diametrically opposed to those of muscular Christianity. In place of team spirit, he suggested rampant individuality.." 28

"The closing of the frontier meant the demonization of the traveler. By the mid-1910s, the hobo was a disturbing holdout of a wild past that many Americans were anxious to put behind them....Charlie Chaplin brought the underworld to light in the guise of entertainment." 123

"American finance had bankrolled the war: now its media and youth culture would set the tone of the peace. This process was boosted by the new eastward migration, as hundreds of American writers, musicians, and bohemians cross the Atlantic." 236-237

"Young women were at the forefront of the new modernism. This American pattern was heightened by a brutal demographic fact: with one in every seven eligible men killed in the war, there were up to a million surplus women. Marriage was no longer automatic. Suffragette visions had become reality with the granting of partial enfranchisement in 1918. 240

"Whether on the left or the extreme right, politics had a mystical quality in the early 1930s, demanding the submersion of the individual ego within the collective ideal: the sacrifice described by the poet Louis MacNeice as "self-fulfillment through self-agngation." This sincere and idealistic impulse, however, would be channeled within the two opposing totalitarian ideologies of the age. The irony was that these deadly enemies would have the same fundamental belief: we want the same thing...a new system." 259

Channing says

Jon Savage went to Cambridge, but instead of doing what Cambridge grads normally do, he started writing reviews of punk shows for "Sounds" magazine, moved to Manchester where he befriended a new band called Joy Division and a scruffy young folk guitarist named Johnny Marr, and ultimately stumbled into becoming

one of the finest Anglo-American pop culture commentators of the late 20th century. His book on punk, *England's Dreaming*, is THE definitive work on the genre and its origins.

Teenage takes things back a few steps further and explores the development of modern youth culture in Europe and America between 1875 and 1945. Well-researched and deftly written.

Tosh says

Jon Savage (once again) did another amazing book. His book on British punk is essential, but this one - the history of the 'Teenager.' And it is so hardcore that it stops in the 1950's, where most think the Teenage became 'teenage.' A remarkable history and the parts about the Hitler Youth is fascinating as well as disturbing. Savage is great.

Jodi says

I wavered between three and four stars on this book. On the one hand, there was a lot of fascinating facts, but on the other hand, it was interspersed with some very dull sections. Even though I learned a lot, it bugged me that Savage at times held up examples of the minority and then applied their actions with sweeping generalization to all adolescents. He even says in his introduction, "It may be argued that I have concentrated too much on the extraordinary rather than the ordinary, the extreme at the expense of the routine." Um, yes. I DO argue that! I also wearied of hearing about how every decade the teens were at odds with their parents, that there was this huge generation gap, that morals were disintegrating, the adults had somehow failed the youth, etc., etc. The book was honestly a bit of a downer focusing on these type of things for FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY-NINE PAGES! Savage never mentioned, "Hey, this was just like the previous decade when kids and adults didn't get along!", but always made it seem like it was a new and terrible thing that was happening. It did put the England riots of August of last year in perspective. Riots like that are nothing new. Teens rebel. Kids and parents are going to have a generation gap. We don't need to get our knickers in a twist because history just repeats itself over and over again. I did learn so much though which made this book (and the late fee the library will charge me when I finally return it) worth it. It also made me incredibly grateful to my teens who though far from perfect, are fairly obedient and loving.

Trevor Smith says

A fantastic book, that's finishing point is 1945, the birth of teenagers as we think of them today. The story of the White Rose movement in nazi Germany, something I wasn't aware of, is gut wrenching. Jon Savage is one of my favourite writers and this is a top, top book.

Cat says

Author Jon Savage is best noted for writing what many consider to be the definitive history of punk rock- "England's Dreaming" (personally, I prefer Greil Marcus's "Lipstick Traces".) In "Teenage"- his new book- he gets all ambitious. Teenage is a straight forward social history of what Savage calls "the creation of youth culture." One of the facts i learned this book, was that socialologist/philosopher Talcott Parsons coined the

term "youth culture" in 1943.

I think this book is a must read for professionals in the culture industries- journalists, music industry folks, etc. The 450 page length is a tad offputting, but the length is set off by the structure of the book: episodic, proceeding from the 1890s- to 1945 in chronological orders, most focusing on one specific youth cultures from the U.S., the U.K. or Germany (France is mostly absent, along with Italy, Austria and Spain).

Generally speaking, Savage explicates his (fairly non-controversial) thesis that the industrial revolution stimulated the consciousness of youth as a class (by getting them into the work force early, creating more leisure time on a society wide basis, and weakening the relationship between children and their parents) and that "Youth" emerged in the mid 1920s as the most powerful "demographic" of western market capitalism.

Not a very novel set of ideas- I think most would already "know" the above paragraph to be true at some innate level. The devil, of course, is in the details, and it is Savage's work with the primary sources of each particular era which elevates this work from tedious pop history to a must read classic.

Working with the same careful eye for detail that marked his other work, Savage mines the detrius of low and middle brow culture (with the occasional shout out to contemporary academics and artists) with the skilled eye of a grizzled prospector.

Savage starts off in the 1890s- the earliest chapters are the weakest. The apogee, as far as Savage is concerned is in the 20's:

"The youth movement of the 1920s had been all too scucesful in creating their own discrete worlds. In doing so, they had reminded manufactuers, governments, and ideologues that youth comprised a social force that was far too important to be left to be left on its own."

The next 10 chapters mainly deal with Hitler and his fondness for youth culture(!). Indeed, in Savage's analysis, Hitler's succesful appeal to youth was key in his rise to power within Germany. Hitler, it turns out was a fan of American advertising guru Bernays. Whether the goal is social control or consumer capitalism, the techniques, all too often, are the same. It's hard to read the Hitler Youth chapters without thinking a little bit about some of the common characteristics of youth culture. Specifically, the thought that youth, unburdened by experience- are quick to embrace extreme ideas and have little patience for ideas that invovle gradualness or delayed gratificiation.

One of the intriguing inferences one can draw from this book is that- because of the tight relationship of industrialism and consumer captialism to "youth culture"- it's almost fair to say "youth market" instead of "youth culture." In other words- "youth culture" effectively doesn't exist in the absence of consumer driven market capitalism. Think about it.

Savage leaves many of the bolder inferences the reader can draw from this book unstated. The lack of any kind of theoretical explication makes "Teenage" an enjoyable read.

Will says

When an American turns 21, it's supposed to be a big deal. Finally we've fully graduated from childhood, finally we can spend all of our spare cash on liquor... legally, finally we're liberated from the tight grasp of our parents. 21 is the final threshold, the official end of youth.

I wasn't terribly excited to turn 21, and when it happened, I yawned, answered a few phone calls, went to class, had a drink with my roommate, and went to sleep relatively content. On your 21st birthday, you're supposed to be excited for the future, but I wasn't. I could've lived it up, but Trump's victory just a week earlier had dampened my spirits and the outlook of an entire generation. Celebrating still didn't seem right. On November 8th we had watched a nightmare unfold in real time. The mood refused to lighten no matter how much we told jokes to calm ourselves down or drowned ourselves in wine. Trump didn't want us, and we didn't want him.

In Jon Savage's *Teenage*, young people are the future, the path towards utopia, the consumers and drivers of a perfect capitalist or communist future. Adults fought to harness youth for their own economic, political, and cultural dreams, and youth fought back, seeking to define themselves. Even though adults and youth constantly fought from 1875 to 1945 (to today), there was a clear agreement that young people were the future, the means through which a resplendent era would be created. While communists, Nazis, capitalists, concerned parents, and youth gangs had little in common, they all looked forward.

But it seems like the past has won for now. Youth are no longer the future, but an impediment to the new American régime's path to ultimate power. We will be precariously employed, bound to the gig economy and its promise of low wages, zero job security, and limited benefits. The majority of us have been failed by a foundering education system. The government and the economy are unprepared for the acceleration of automation, the impending threat of climate chaos, stock market collapse, and increasing structural unemployment. If the youth of the past that Savage so impressively details had something in common, it was employment and a forward outlook. We don't have that luxury.

It feels eerie to be 21 today. Young people have no idea what will happen next, be it nuclear war, isolationism, or climate catastrophe. But if one thing is for sure, young people are fed up. If late capitalism continues on its death spiral, massive youth discontent will most likely play a role in a new wave of global revolutions, for better or for worse. Ignoring the pleas of young people today, while likely, could lead to a crisis of legitimacy that no government can afford.

But enough of all this doom and gloom. While I read *Teenage*, I participated in a wonderful seminar on the history of youth cultures taught by a former radical vegan, left-wing, German punk rocker, a caricature of himself and a brilliant man. His and my classmates' wit and passion have inspired me to hold on to hope at the start of this uncertain era. Some will always continue to fight..

If I learned anything from my professor and if there's anything you'll learn from Savage's illuminating work, it's that youth have cultural, economic, and political power. How they use it has and will continue to shape our histories.

Nickie says

An account of the changing fortunes of youth between 1875 and 1945 and the often confused reaction of the state and the media to a group that have always been difficult to control and understand - at once exploited, venerated and vilified, depending on the time they're living in (today's media being a case in point that not much has changed here). The book's a bit thin on the ground before WW1, but from there it's a good read - the disillusion that followed WW1, resulting in the Bright Young Things, then the tales of youth roughs and vagabonds, riding the boxcars during the Depression in the US, hepcats and swing cats, through to the Hitler Youth and the mass-commercialisation of the Coke drinking, bobby-soxxed teenager of the 40s and 50s.

Thing is, this isn't "a history never described before" as the back-cover states. Nobody really thought that the

teenager and the adolescent mindset was a sudden invention of the 1950s. Aside from this, up until World War 1 the book's a bit weak. From World War 1 you might as well read Modris Eksteins' *The Great War And The Making Of The Modern Mind*, which will get you through to WW2. And without much psychological grounding or massively political questioning it's really just a mix of events, not an in-depth study that makes you feel that you're actually learning something. I guess that's always going to happen when your subject is so epic and ambitious.

Thing is, that though age is a massively uniting factor, there are other dividing factors - like class, race and nationality - which youth arguably can't overcome. Where were the upper class debutantes when the lower class youth of Britain were turning to delinquency in the 1930s - not in the same boat, presumably? While they danced to black music and demanded respect and freedom, why did so many teenagers feel that their black counterparts didn't deserve the same rights? Yes, Hitler Youth was an example of youth leading youth, but also an example of youth killing youth.

Most of all, this book, by switching from the American teen dream explosion of the 40s to the likes of Anne Frank dying of typhus in Bergen-Belsen really drives home the fact that age isn't everything. Does it really matter what age Frank was? Her experiences are on a scale so different from those of the privileged, coke-swilling teenager in the US that it's almost wrong to compare them. A sentence along the lines of "life carried on as normally as possible after an invasion, unless you were a Jew" from earlier on in the book doesn't really help matters.

So a good read, but without asking the question "why?" enough, a bit unsatisfying.

Tim says

Jon Savage's history of teenage from the 1860's or so thru the mid-1900's. Couldn't finish it...just didn't have the gumption. Savage can be & is a great writer but I wasn't interested enough in what this book has to offer. Disappointed. A bit too much sociology for me & not enough story telling.

Jack Bates says

You were a teenager once, and so were your parents - and if you're younger than me, your grandparents too. But how did teenagers develop? Where did they come from and what formed them? How were they different from people who had their teens before the term was coined? An investigation into the development of 'the teenager' as a concept, focussing on America, Britain, and Germany.

Savage's book about punk, *England's Dreaming*, is one of my favourite explorations of pop culture and this is just as good. Engagingly written and well researched, it looks at adolescence, responsibility, and consumerism, from both the point of view of the teens of the time and the adults looking at them in (mostly) horror. From the earliest sociological suggestions that the teenage years are different to childhood and adulthood to the recognition of a mass market for all kinds of goods, and, for some people, the opportunity to take almost total control of a whole generation. From the experiences of the Bright Young Things, too young to fight in WWI but old enough to resent the destruction of their childhood, to the dangerous enthusiasm of German youth for 'joining in', through juvenile delinquency, the Depression, and swing, Savage looks at the impact of America, music, and basically shopping, on the formation of teenagers. The stuff about the Hitler Youth is fascinating and disturbing, and makes me extremely glad that our right-leaning governments today haven't (yet) decided that they need to get teenagers 'onside'. Great stuff and heartily recommended to

anyone interested in these most defining years.

Cassy says

The book was actually fascinating if you enjoy learning about the teenage culture. It traced the development of the adolescent age group from the early 1890s to 1945. Savage talks about several youth organizations, such as the Boy Scouts, and their impact on the youth of the time. He talks about how young adults really had no voice until the first world war came around. You were either a child or an adult and there wasn't much in between. He focused on America and Europe through the time periods he discusses. It was so interesting when he talked about the Hitler Youth and the things that Hitler did to brainwash his country from a young age and how little he actually cared for the youth of his country. They were simply there to further his agenda.

Savage discussed youth as a consumer and how they became one of the largest markets to advertise to. Adolescents are among the largest consumer group, a fact that wasn't realized until after the first world war. He talked about the establishment of High School and increased participation in education. It went from something for rich adolescents to a standard among youth.

The only part that I was disappointed with was his discussion about the first world war. I was really looking forward to reading about the effect that the war had on youth and the part that they played in the war but he said little about it. He talked a lot about what was happening with the war but not really how it pertained to the teenager.

I would definitely recommend this to anyone interested in Adolescent literature. It gives you some really interesting insight to the age group that YA lit is target towards.

Karen says

David Bowie's Formative Reading List of 75 Favorite Books
#4

Nick Huntington-Klein says

Talk about thorough! A fascinating look at a wide range of social changes that I'd imagine most people know on a surface level but never thought too much about.

Lindy says

My favorite thing I learned from this book is that, outside the funeral home where the funerals of Bonnie & Clyde were ongoing, the funeral home owner dissipated the crowd of unruly fans by spraying embalming fluid at them.

Compressing the years 1875-1945 into 465 pages and focusing on England, the US, and Germany, Jon

Savage sketches in broad strokes what he terms "the prehistory of the teenager," arguing against the idea that youth culture is a strictly post-World War II phenomenon. Savage is a fairly lively writer and has a good eye for detail, both of which count for a lot as far as readability goes.

While Savage is concerned with the dynamics of social power that lead to the construction of "teenagers" as a social class, there is little analysis afforded to the tensions within that class, how the category of "teenage" itself is *de facto* exclusive. The lives of African-American girls, for example, are completely absent from this book's narrative, and I don't think this problem with the book is even close to being a blip on the author's radar.

So my verdict is: *Teenage* is pretty standard.

Dave says

I wasn't really sure what to expect with this one. I figured it'd probably have an annoying amount of pop culture trivia and nostalgic narratives but hoped it'd also get into things like legitimate rebellion against authority versus rebelling just because it's fun, examples of youth groups being hijacked or surreptitiously created by business interests, constant change keeping generations from interacting with each other, kids rejecting everything about their parents' lifestyles instead of just the worst aspects, etc. He does touch on a lot of these things as well as things like the role sports have played in wiring our brains for nationalism and the perpetual hypocrisies of the older generations towards their kids and the scapegoating of both young and old that occurs when society runs into problems. Unfortunately, his complete focus on the subject of adolescence led to an oversimplified analysis of things like the causes of wars and political issues. What he says about the bombing of Hiroshima was particularly irritating. I also think this would have benefitted from more ideas about the treatment of youth in non-western cultures and in both earlier and later time periods (it mainly focuses only on the late 1800's to 1945), especially considering how thick this book is. I didn't hate it though.
