

# Defining Documents in American History: The 1950s (1950-1959)

“Examining a decade known for conformity, confidence, communism, and civil rights, *The 1950s* is the latest in a series of titles that **examines discrete periods of American history through a close reading of the primary documents produced therein**. Previous volumes by Salem Press include the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), the decade of the 1920s, and others.

A standard format allows the user of any one work to be familiar with the entire set. An **“Editor’s Introduction” sets the scene by giving an objective overview of the period in question**. Each chapter takes an in-depth look at a single speech (President Dwight David Eisenhower, “The Chance for Peace”), government report (“A ‘New Look’ at National Defense Policy”), Congressional legislation (Civil Rights Act of 1957”), or other document, and uses this as a springboard to discuss not only the primary source itself, but also the social, cultural, and political ramifications that later came to be.

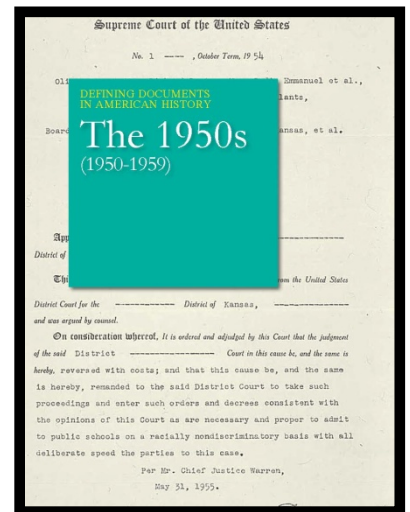
A **“Summary Overview” gives the researcher a snapshot of the contents of the document, while “Defining Moment” fleshes out the background that led up to its creation**. This is followed by “Author Biography” (if appropriate, as some documents are created by committees or other groups, as opposed to an individual writer), “Document Analysis,” which is self-explanatory, and “Essential Themes,” which **discusses the significance and historical import of the document**. Lastly, a “Bibliography and Additional Reading” section lists resources helpful for further research. The core of each chapter, however, is a shaded box that contains the verbatim text of the primary source under examination. Shorter pieces appear in their entirety, while the more lengthy are excerpted, which can still run to several pages.

Editor Michael Shally-Jensen holds a doctorate in cultural anthropology from Princeton University. He has assembled a competent crew of academics whom likewise hold advanced degrees and that have contributed to the contents of this work.

As with previously published volumes in this series, *The 1950s* is **well written, exhibits solid scholarship, and presents an engaging read**. As an understanding of our nation’s past is central to becoming a well-rounded citizen, **this volume is strongly recommended for purchase by all public and academic libraries.**”

-ARBA

## Text Reviews



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