Jazz in America Glossary for Lesson VI - Cool, Hard Bop, and Modal Jazz

contrafact: A jazz tune based on an extant set of chord changes, usually from a standard; the result when composers use the chord structure of a given, established composition to write an entirely new composition (e.g., "Donna Lee" is a contrafact of "Back Home Again in Indiana;" "Moose the Mooch" is a contrafact of "I Got Rhythm").

dynamic range: The expanse between the softest and loudest passages of music.

homophony: Distinguished by a single melodic line with accompaniment (e.g., One musician improvising a solo with rhythm section accompaniment is an example of homophony.).

modal jazz: Jazz tunes that stay on each mode (and thus each chord) for a long time, usually at least four bars per mode (in contrast with standard jazz repertoire which changes chords far more frequently - usually at least once per measure).

mode: A type of scale defined by its particular sequence of melodic intervals (e.g., C dorian mode: C D Eb F G A Bb C)

nonet: A band, ensemble, combo, or unit consisting of nine musicians.

polyphony: The simultaneous sounding of two or more melodies of equal importance (e.g., Polyphony is a device often employed in Cool jazz).
The 1950s: A Decade of Change

The 1950s was a time of economic growth. Since the mid-1940s Americans were eager to spend money on cars, appliances, and virtually any commodity that had been rationed during the war years. The 1950s heightened a consumer-spending spree despite a rise in the price of goods that had previously been held in check by wartime price controls. The gross national product, a measure of the total value of the nation's goods and services, nearly doubled, rising from approximately $300 billion in 1950 to $500 billion in 1960. Defense spending, fueled by the Cold War and military expenditures during the Korean conflict, represented an important stimulant to the economy.

As the annual earnings of most American workers grew, so did the desire to purchase goods and services. The construction of new homes boomed in the late 1940s and throughout most of the 1950s. Planned suburban communities drew the middle class from large crowded cities, leaving the inner cities to low income and minority groups. Levittown, a planned community on Long Island begun in 1946, was typical of the new suburbia. The prosperity of the 1950s produced thousands of new "Levittowns" across the nation. Homes had the latest conveniences, including a garage for the family car, that had spurred the growth of suburban communities. Shopping centers dependent on the family automobile grew from a mere eight in the nation in 1945 to 3,840 in 1960. During the '50s, shopping became, what one historian called, "a major recreational activity."

Social critics, however, lamented the new landscape created by the consumer economy. Malvina Reynolds, a California folksinger, ridiculed the sameness of "Levittowns" calling them "Little boxes on the hillside, Little boxes made of ticky tacky..." Some writers criticized what they viewed as changes in traditional American values while others rebelled against the materialistic society of the 1950s. Among these were a new group known as beatniks.

Although the annual earnings of most American workers grew, all did not share the prosperity-another American existed hidden by the opulence of the 1950s. Michael Harrington's The Other America and James Baldwin's Notes of a Native Son are two important "muckraking" works that exposed the extent of poverty in the midst of affluence in postwar America.

The prejudice and discrimination of Jim Crow America came under a vigorous attack following World War II. The war had been fought, in part, against the racial ideology of Nazi Germany, and African American soldiers wanted nothing less than an end to racism at home. Two-thirds of the 15 million African Americans in 1950 lived in a rigidly segregated South. In 1944, Swedish writer Gunnar Myrdal published a massive report, The American Dilemma, on the contradiction between America's ideal of equal justice and its history of depriving African Americans of civil and equal rights.

Since the end of World War II, African Americans in increasing numbers refused to adhere to segregation enforced by Jim Crow legislation. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) had for years fought legal battles in the courts to end segregation. In 1950, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall (later to be appointed
to the Supreme Court by President Lyndon Johnson) successfully argued that his African American client had the right to attend a previously all-white law school at the University of Texas. This case, Sweatt v. Painter made it clear that statutory segregation was doomed.

In 1954 the Supreme Court issued its landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas (http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/early-civilrights/brown.html) which ruled that "separate but equal" school systems were unconstitutional. Throughout the South, white citizens councils formed to stop integration. Despite the Supreme Court's momentous ruling in the Brown case, less than two percent of African Americans in the South were attending integrated schools ten years later.

President Dwight Eisenhower had criticized the unanimous decision in the Brown Case in 1954 as upsetting "the customs and convictions" of most Americans and remarked "that prejudices, even palpably unjustifiable prejudices, will not succumb to compulsion." However, in 1957, when Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas called out the state's National Guard to prevent court-ordered integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort students to their classes (http://www.centralhigh57.org/).

The boycott was one of the most successful tools African Americans employed. In 1955, Rosa Parks, an African American seamstress, aroused the conscience of the nation when she refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama bus to a white passenger (http://www.watson.org/~lisa/blackhistory/civilrights-55-65/montbus.html). This act of civil disobedience began a year-long boycott and served notice that African Americans would no longer tolerate segregation.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott brought Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., pastor of the Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in downtown Montgomery, to prominence. In 1957, Dr. King founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and mobilized the power and influence of Black churches in an all-out thrust against segregation. The civil rights movement of the 1950s continued through the 1960s, breaking down entrenched legal barriers that had segregated the races.

Jazz in the 1950s, like the society it reflected and culture to which it contributed, also went through considerable change. Cool, Hard Bop, and Modal Jazz were manifestations of the diversity of the times, reflecting, in part, both "have" (affluence, prosperity) and "have not" (civil rights, equal opportunity) America. The national pride during and immediately following World War II was gradually replaced by questions, doubts, and, eventually, hostility and opposition, leading to the 1960s - one of America's most tumultuous decades.

For further research examine the unique popular culture that developed in the 1950s (http://home.earthlink.net/~neuhausj/1950s/pop.html).
Questions to consider:

1. What accounts for the prosperity of the 1950s?
2. What were the "Levittowns?"
3. How important was the Supreme Court’s decision in Sweatt v. Painter?
4. What were the issues that led to the Brown v. Board of Education case?
5. How important was the Brown case in breaking down racial segregation in schools?
6. How did the integration of Little Rock’s Central High School underscore the difficulties involved in enforcing the Brown decision?
7. What were the tactics used to begin to break down racial barriers in Montgomery, Alabama in the mid-1950s?
8. How did jazz in the 1950s reflect the Decade of Change?

Jazz in America Student Handout--Lesson Plan VI--Jazz Biography 1

MILES DAVIS, TRUMPET (1926-1991) Biography
(http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761576242/Miles_Davis.html)

Miles Davis was from an upper middle-class professional and musical family in St. Louis, Missouri; his father was a successful dentist and his mother and sister were both capable musicians. Davis’ musical career began on his thirteenth birthday when his father gave him a trumpet. He studied briefly at the famed Juilliard School of Music in New York. Davis, never settling on one style of jazz, was in a constant state of evolution playing bop, cool jazz (which he helped introduce), hard bop, modal music, and a blend of avant-garde and fusion. He was also recognized as a skilled composer. As a bandleader, his ability to recognize potential in new musicians opened careers for numerous jazz greats including such artists as pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter, saxophonist Wayne Shorter, and drummer Tony Williams.

Consider the following questions as you read the biography of Miles Davis:

1. How did Miles Davis become interested in music?
2. What influence did jazz musicians Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker have on Davis?
3. What was so noteworthy about Davis’ audio recordings of the 1960s?
4. How did jazz purists react to Davis’ free-form fusion jazz?
ART BLAKEY, DRUMS (1919-1990) Biography
(http://www.duke.edu/~pkp1/)

Art Blakey, one of the greatest jazz drummers of all time, helped to define hard-bop and, along with pianist Horace Silver, founded the "Jazz Messengers" in 1954, a jazz combo devoted to keeping jazz vibrant and spirited. This group was noted for being a training ground for up-and-coming young jazz players, many of whom were to go on to become highly successful in their own right.

Consider the following questions as you read the biography of Art Blakey:

1. Why did Art Blakey form the "Jazz Messengers?"
2. Why did Blakey encourage up-and-coming jazz musicians to be innovative and take risks?
3. What regard do other great contemporary jazz musicians have for Art Blakey?

1 Alumni from the Jazz Messengers who played with the group for various stints from 1954 to 1990 include such prominent jazz artists as pianists Kenny Barron, Joanne Brackeen, Chick Corea, Kenny Drew, Benny Green, Keith Jarrett, Geoff Keezer, Wynton Kelly, Mulgrew Miller, Horace Silver, McCoy Tyner, Cedar Walton, and James Williams; trumpeters Terence Blanchard, Randy Brecker, Clifford Brown, Donald Byrd, Kenny Dorham, Freddie Hubbard, Chuck Mangione, Wynton Marsalis, Lee Morgan, Wallace Roney, and Woody Shaw; saxophonists Benny Golson, Don Byas, Lou Donaldson, Kenny Garrett, Johnny Griffin, Philip Harper, Donald Harrison, Javon Jackson, Branford Marsalis, Hank Mobley, Jackie McLean, Billy Pierce, Wayne Shorter, and Bobby Watson; trombonists Curtis Fuller, Slide Hampton, and Steve Turre.