***When America Was Rocked* (SEPTEMBER 9, 1956)**

**Generations who had lived through The Depression and WWII craved stability, security, and safety in the 1950s. Meanwhile, younger generations were looking for fun and were more accepting and desirous of change. Rock’n’roll entered pop culture, and Elvis became a huge success. By his dress, performing style, and sound, Presley crossed the deep racial divide that segregated American music. His appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show on September 9th, 1956, was like throwing a hand grenade in America’s cultural living room. The electrifying performance signaled the beginning of a shift in popular culture that would profoundly influence American attitudes about race, entertainment, fashion and music for decades to come.**

**QUESTIONS**

1. **According to one historian, the “official ideology” of the United States was that it was a “happy, homogeneous nation” in 1954. What does that statement mean? What visuals are used in the documentary to support that interpretation?**
2. **What was happening in the United States and the world during the 1950’s to create an “age of anxiety”?**
3. **Why did young white people often attend Black churches in Memphis? What is gospel music? How is it related to the “Blues” and “Rhythm and Blues” music?**
4. **Why were so many white adults worried about their children listening to Black artists like Chuck Berry and B.B. King?**
5. **How did Presley’s dress, performing style, and music upset the status quo?**
6. **In your opinion, do you think most of Presley’s fans saw him as a symbol of integration and social change? Why or why not?**
7. **Why were some adults convinced that rock’n’roll would lead to the decline of America’s youth? What did they try to do to control rock music? Do you think people can be successful in censoring music?**
8. **How and why did teenagers become an important consumer group in the 1950’s? Are they still an important consumer group?**
9. **Describe the response to Presley on television. Who was Ed Sullivan? Why is his television program important in this documentary?**