

The Consuming 1980s

Events and Policies

- RONALD REAGAN (1911-2004, in office 1981-1989, 40th President)
- GEORGE H. W. BUSH (b. 1924, in office 1989-1993, 41st President)

Cold War Operations (1947-1991)

- Reagan broke the Helsinki Accords (1975) and revived the Cold War patriotism and anti-communist feelings
- escalated investment into defence system, especially in a space-based defence system, dubbed Star Wars (1983)
- the US boycotted the Moscow Summer Olympics (1980), the USSR the Los Angeles Summer Olympics (1984)
- the General Secretary of the Communist Party MIKHAIL GORBACHEV opened the USSR to a more capitalistic way of life, negotiated to end the Cold War and so 'deprived America of an enemy'
- the Eastern Bloc dissolved, the Berlin Wall fell (1989), and the USSR collapsed (1991)

Middle East Conflicts

- Iranian Revolution (1979): the overthrow of PAHLAVI's monarchy and establishment of a republic under KHOMEINI
- Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989): the USSR invaded Afghanistan to support the Marxist government against the mujahideen resistance supported by resources from US and other states in the context of the Cold War
- Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988): based on border disputes, successively both Iraq and Iran were supported by the US

Reaganomics

- **supply-side** economics: support for people producing goods and services, including reduction of income taxes
- reduced public spending on health care, social security, education, etc., reduced government control on economy
- increased defence budget, raised national debts and turned the US from the biggest creditor to the biggest debtor
- the policies were designed to help the country out of the economic depression, which they eventually did
- the most prosperous branches: the Wall Street stock exchange, real estate (DONALD TRUMP becomes an epitome of a real estate success), business services (lawyers), defence contracting, hi-tech business

Society

- **yuppies** (Young Urban Professionals): a new class showing off its wealth by buying designer products and paying exaggerated attention to their looks and bodies
- drug problem: the result of the attitude to drugs in 1960s, cocaine becomes popular among yuppies, crack appears
- mostly black/Hispanic/Italian family gangs import drugs mostly from South America, traffic them by using children dealers, and fight violently over the trafficking area, especially in Los Angeles
- NANCY REAGAN launches Just Say No campaign against drug demand, rehab centres for addicts are established
- AIDS appears (1981), is perceived as a disease of homosexuals, spreads quickly but is ignored by the government
- **ACT UP** (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, 1987): founded by LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community) in East Village, New York, to fight the epidemics with non-violent civil disobedience, organizing happenings and demonstrations, and asking for information on the disease which lacked ('silence = death')
- Earth Day held for the first time in 1970, the environmental problems began in 1970s and deepened in 1980s when natural resources were exploited by Reaganomics

Culture

- fashion: tight cuts, sneakers, designer clothes, imitating the style of celebrities (Madonna)
- life style: free time activities, children's sport classes, home computers, video games (Pac-Man, Mario Bros)
- hobbies: collectibles, Rubik's cubes, Barbie dolls, ninja turtles, etc.

Music

- **MTV** launched, digital compact disc introduced, a wave of learning dances arrived (lambada, break dance)
- Madonna, Michael Jackson, and other MTV stars become popular due to their music clips
- **New Wave**: an experimental anti-pop punk rock (DEPECHE MODE, EURYTHMICS, both British; METALLICA, BON JOVI)
- rap, hip hop: originated twenty years earlier, but only in 1980s became popular (MILLI VANILLI, VANILLA ICE, MC HAMMER, LL COOL J, PUBLIC ENEMY, RUN-D.M.C.)
- the first Live Aid concert (1985) organized to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia

Film

Films

- dominated by the themes of success and money
- *The Blues Brothers* (1980): musical comedy
- *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1980): comedy, romance
- *The Blue Lagoon* (1980): adventure, romance
- *Beverly Hills Cop* (1984): action comedy, starring Eddie Murphy
- *The River* (1984): starring Mel Gibson
- *Top Gun* (1986): action, starring Tom Cruise
- *Fatal Attraction* (1987): thriller, starring Michael Douglass
- *Dirty Dancing* (1987): romance
- *Lethal Weapon* (1987): action, starring Mel Gibson
- *The Untouchables* (1987): crime drama, starring Kevin Costner, Sean Connery, and Robert De Niro
- *Working Girl* (1988): starring Melanie Griffith, Harrison Ford, and Sigourney Weaver
- *Rain Man* (1988): comedy drama, starring Dustin Hoffman and Tom Cruise
- *Driving Miss Daisy* (1989): starring Morgan Freeman
- *Dirty Harry* series: crime thriller, starring Clint Eastwood

Directors

- DAVID LYNCH: *The Elephant Man* (1980), *Dune* (1984, science fiction), *Blue Velvet* (1986, mystery)
- STEVEN SPIELBERG: *E.T.* (1982), *Back to the Future* (1985)
- SYDNEY POLLACK: *Tootsie* (1982, comedy), *Out of Africa* (1985)
- OLIVER STONE: *Scarface* (1983, crime drama), *Platoon* (1986, Vietnam War)
- STANLEY KUBRICK: *The Shining* (1980, horror)
- MARTIN SCORSESE: *The Colour of Money* (1984)
- RIDLEY SCOTT: *Legend* (1985, fantasy)
- WOODY ALLEN: *Hannah and Her Sisters* (1986, comedy drama)
- COEN BROTHERS: *Raising Arizona* (1987)

Television

- **talks shows:** *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (since 1986)
- anti-family series: *Married with Children*, *Roseanne*
- other series: *Dynasty*, *Dallas*, *Star Trek*, *Knight Rider*

Architecture

- Trump Tower in New York City (1983, architect DER SCUTT)
- High Museum of Art in Atlanta, Georgia (1983, architect RICHARD MEIER)
- Menil Collection in Houston, Texas (1987, architect RENZO PIANO)
- Sunshine Skyway Bridge crossing Tampa Bay, Florida (1987)

Pictorial Arts

- JASPER JOHNS: painter and printmaker, representative of pop art and abstract expressionism (author of 'Flag' 1955)
- ROY LICHTENSTEIN: a painter and sculptor, representative of pop art, inspired by comics
- KEITH HARING: representative of pop art and graffiti art
- MARISOL: sculptor, influenced by pop art and abstract expressionism

Literature

- BRET EASTON ELLIS's *American Psycho* (1991): a psychological thriller and satirical novel on yuppies
- JAY MCINERNEY's *Bright Lights, Big City* (1984): on a character with unadventurous day life and yuppie night life