

1950s Slang Speech Activity

NAME _____ DATE _____

Directions: Read through the list of slang expressions from the 1950s. Then choose examples from the list that you feel fit best into the categories given below. ***WRITE THE WORD OR PHRASE AND WHAT IT MEANS***

3 expressions that are still around today (and still used by young people to mean the same thing)

1) _____ <i>(slang word or phrase)</i>	--	_____	<i>(what it means)</i>
2) _____	--	_____	
3) _____	--	_____	

3 expressions that are still used but have changed in some way—either the *word* has changed (now there's a new word that means the same thing) or the word is the same but means something *different* now.

*If the word has changed, then write the old word *and* the new word on the 1st line, w/ a slash in between.

*If the meaning has changed, then write "Now means..." then the new meaning on the 2nd line.

1) _____	--	_____	
2) _____	--	_____	
3) _____	--	_____	

3 expressions that you've heard old people say (but that young people of today would never say)

1) _____	--	_____	
2) _____	--	_____	
3) _____	--	_____	

3 expressions that have *disappeared altogether* (that you've NEVER heard anyone say)

1) _____	--	_____	
2) _____	--	_____	
3) _____	--	_____	

3 expressions that, in your opinion, just make no sense at all

1) _____	--	_____	
2) _____	--	_____	
3) _____	--	_____	

1950s Slang Translation Activity

NAME _____

DATE _____

Directions: Read the dialogue between the two fifties guys. As you go, try to figure out what they are talking about. When you are finished reading, write a brief summary of the content of their discussion, based on what you think they are saying. Use a pencil, not a pen, to write your summary, since you may need to make changes later. Then complete the line-by-line translation of the dialogue. When you are finished translating, go back to your summary and compare. Revise your summary, including any changes or additions necessary to make it more accurate.

1950s Slang Dialogue

*This dialogue occurred between two male friends in Chesterfield, Illinois on October 17, 1956.**

50s Guy #1: Hey, cast an eyeball at that chick in skins.

50s Guy #2: Wow, she's chrome-plated. I wonder if she's circled. You in orbit?

50s Guy #1: Oh yeah... that's the word from the bird. (Shoot low 'cause they're riding Shetlands.) Now don't you sing, but last week while I was makin' the scene at a bash with the mushroom people, wearing my best threads and a jelly roll, I thought I had it made in the shade with that dolly.

50s Guy #2: You fakin' me out, goof?

50s Guy #1: No, Daddy-o... it's the word from the bird!

50s Guy #2: You're lightin' up the tilt sign!

50s Guy #1: I ain't no shuckster.

50s Guy #2: Righto. So what's your tale, nightingale? Flat out.

50s Guy #1: Meanwhile, back at the ranch... I thought I would kill her with my souped-up ragtop chariot. It's radioactive with the chicks. Turns out she's real gone with a big-daddy square with a lot of bread who gave her a rock.

50s Guy #2: You got clutched!

50s Guy #1: Cut the gas! He came in frosted with his wheels on fire and gave me a knuckle sandwich. I woke up the next day with a smog in the noggin'.

50s Guy #2: Oh, man... royal shaft.

**Just kidding. It's made up.*

Part 1—Summary: _____

1950s Slang Translation Activity

NAME _____ DATE _____

Part 2—Translation to Today’s English (Use today’s slang expressions, if you like.)

50s Guy #1: Hey, cast an eyeball at that chick in skins.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: Wow, she’s chrome-plated. I wonder if she’s circled. You in orbit?

Translation: _____

50s Guy #1: Oh yeah... that’s the word from the bird. (Shoot low ‘cause they’re riding Shetlands.) Now don’t you sing, but last week while I was makin’ the scene at a bash with the mushroom people, wearing my best threads and a jelly roll, I thought I had it made in the shade with that dolly.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: You fakin’ me out, goof?

Translation: _____

50s Guy #1: No, Daddy-o... it’s the word from the bird!

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: You’re lightin’ up the tilt sign!

Translation: _____

50s Guy #1: I ain’t no shuckster.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: Righto. So what’s your tale, nightingale? Flat out.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #1: Meanwhile, back at the ranch... I thought I would kill her with my souped-up ragtop chariot. It’s radioactive with the chicks. Turns out she’s real gone with a big daddy square with a lot of bread who gave her a rock.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: You got clutched?

Translation: _____

50s Guy #1: Cut the gas! He came in with frosted his wheels on fire and gave me a knuckle sandwich. I woke up the next day with a smog in the noggin’.

Translation: _____

50s Guy #2: Oh, man... royal shaft.

Translation: _____

1950s SLANG EXPRESSIONS

(in alphabetical order)

- actor—a show-off
agitate the gravel—to leave (in a car)
ankle-biter—a little child
antsville—a crowded place
baby—term of endearment for
 boyfriend/girlfriend
bad news—a depressing person
bash—a great party
big daddy—an older man
big tickle—really funny
bit—an act
blast—a good time
bobbed (as in hair)—shortened
boss—something that's great
bread—money
bug—to bother somebody
burn rubber—to accelerate quickly
cast an eyeball—to look at something
cat—a hip person
chariot—a car
chick—girl or young woman
skins—a fur coat
chrome-plated—dressed up, looking good
circled—married
cloud 9 (as in being on it)—really happy
clutched—rejected
cookin'—doing well
cool—great, interesting, extraordinary, etc.
cool it—relax, settle down
cooties—imaginary germs or bugs from
 someone who is not cool
cranked—excited
crazy—a really great thing
cream—to destroy or damage
cruisin' for a bruisin'—looking for trouble
cut the gas—be quiet
cut out—leave
dibs—a claim to have something before others
dig—to understand or approve
dolly—a cute girl or young woman
don't have a cow—don't get so excited
drag—a boring person
earthbound—reliable or dependable
fake out—too fool someone
fat city—a great thing or place
fired up—ready for action
flat out—as fast as you can
flick—a movie
flip—to get very excited
floor it—to accelerate very quickly
fracture—to amuse
freak—someone who is different or doesn't fit in
front burner—the current problem or crisis
frosted—angry
geek—a weirdo; someone who lives on the fringes of society
germsville—an illness
get bent—drop dead! / get lost!
get with it—try to understand what's going on
gig—a job
go ape—get very excited
goof—someone who makes mistakes
goopy—messy
goose it—accelerate the car (hit the gas pedal)
greaser—a guy with lots of hair-grease (and usually
 wearing a leather jacket and jeans, also)
grody—sloppy, messy, disgusting
hang out—to do very little
heat—the police
heels on fire—in a hurry
hopped up—a car that's been customized nicely
horn—telephone
hot rod / hottie—a fast, nice-looking car
in orbit—in the know
jacketed—dating someone (and no one else)
jets—smarts, brains
kick—a brief, fun thing, like a fad
kill—to really impress
knuckle sandwich—a punch in the face
kookie—kind of crazy (in a good way)
later, gater—goodbye (comes from “see you
 later, alligator”)
lay it on me—give me something or tell me something
long green—a lot of money
machine—a nice car
made in the shade—success is guaranteed
make the scene—go to a party or event
meanwhile, back at the ranch—continue the story, please
 (comes from old TV “Westerns” [movies about the old West])
mushroom people—people who only come out at night
nerd—a very enthusiastic and ambitious student
nod—drop off to sleep
nosebleed—a stupid person
no sweat—hey, no problem
nowhere—a boring, uncool place
nuggets—loose change
odd ball—a strange person

MORE ON THE OTHER SIDE...



on the stick—prepared for anything; smart and organized
pooper—someone who ruins the fun
peepers—glasses
pound/pounding—to beat up / a beating
punch it—press the gas pedal
put down—to speak badly about someone
radioactive—very popular
ragtop—a convertible car
rap—to tatttle on someone
rattle your cage—get you upset
raunchy—messy or disgusting
real gone—very much in love; or unstable
righto—okay
rock—a diamond
rocket—a fast car
royal shaft—a raw deal; being treated badly
scream—drive very fast
screamer—a very fast car
shot down—failed or rejected
shuckster—a deceiver, liar or cheat
sing—to tatttle or inform on someone
smog in the noggin’—confused or unable to remember
souped up—a car customized to be very fast
spaz—someone who is uncoordinated or clumsy
split—leave
square—a regular person, who does not fit in with
the “hip” or “cool” crowd; a conformist
tank—a large, slow car
tear—to drive off very quickly
think fast—look out, something’s coming at you
threads—clothing
tight—close friends
total—to completely wreck a car
unreal—amazing or extraordinary
wail—to drive very fast
Washington—a dollar
word from the bird—the truth
What’s buzzin’, cousin?—What’s new?
What’s your tale, nightingale?—What happened to you?
or What’s your story?
wheelie—lifting the car’s front wheels off the ground
by accelerating rapidly
Z’s—sleep