

# **Student Essay on Great Britain**

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# Essay

The 1950's for Great Britain brought many changes to their country. During this decade, many changes occurred in their government, economy, and also their cultural lifestyle. The main issues which will be discussed about the 1950's in Great Britain are government, economy, geography, world politics, religion, as well as their cultural lifestyle.

## Government

One main topic in Great Britain during the 1950's was their government. Following the death of George VI in February of 1952, Queen Elizabeth II gained the thrown at age 25. At this time in Britain's history, the monarchy is only seen as a "figure head." During the 1950's, even though the monarchy had no real power, they still had a strong influence on the decision making on the government. The two parties that fought for power of Great Britain after World War II was the Labour party and the Conservative party. The Labour party believed that moderate socialism was the key to regaining Great Britain's social and economic power. This type of socialism believed in government support for insurance programs and major industry ownership within a democratic system. The Labour party was mostly supported by the lower class.

The Conservative party believed Great Britain needed free enterprise, and not government control. The Conservatives thought that the country could regain it's wealth by supporting businesses and reducing taxes. The Conservative party had the support of the middle and upper class, as well as people in the rural areas and the suburbs.

The Labour party continued in power in 1950 and 1951. While in power, Attlee, the Labour party leader and prime minister, nationalized the Bank of England, railways, mines, and other major utilizes. He also raised taxes to pay for a broader range of services.

In the General Election of 1951, the Conservative party gained power of Great Britain. The Labour party actually polled more votes than the Conservative party, but the British electoral system gave the reins of government to the Conservatives. Churchill, once again prime minister, turned in the direction of free enterprise; steel and road haulage were denationalized. In 1954, the Conservatives eventually put an end to all rationalizing, and the following year, Anthony Eden takes power as prime minister. Due to British actions in the Suez Crisis and also poor health conditions, Eden felt the need to resign and Macmillan took power as prime minister in 1957.