



Understanding *The Outsiders*
Exploring Teen Culture in the 1950s and 1960s

Greaser Subculture Origin

Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)

 **greas·er**
/'grɛsər/

noun

noun: **greaser**; plural noun: **greasers**

1. an engine mechanic or an unskilled member of a ship's engine-room crew.
2. **INFORMAL**
a rough young man, especially one who greases his hair back and is a member of a motorcycle gang.
3. **OFFENSIVE · US**
View definition ▾
4. **INFORMAL**
a gentle landing of an aircraft.
"it is best to try and avoid greasers and attempt a firm landing"

Use over time for: greaser



Source: Oxford Languages

The 1950s greaser subculture originated in the United States after World War II when American youths were looking for excitement and forms of self-expression. It began in working-class communities and especially in Italian American, Mexican American, and other Latinx communities.

Greasers were a group of young people in the 1950s known for their distinct style and attitudes. They got their name from the oily or greasy look of their hair. The "greaser" term was originally an ethnic slur, but as the youth subculture spread, the term came to describe their unique style, and specifically, their hairstyles.

"Traditional" Fashion



Men's Fashion

- **Casual Trousers and Jeans:** Often high-waisted and straight-legged, with denim jeans becoming increasingly popular.
- **Button-Down Shirts and Polo Shirts:** Often paired with trousers or jeans. Shirts were typically tucked in and sometimes worn with a belt.
- **Sweaters and Cardigans:** Worn over shirts, often in classic patterns or solid colors.

Women's Fashion:

- **Full Skirts and Dresses:** Popular styles included full-circle skirts and dresses with petticoats for added volume. Dresses often featured fitted bodices and flared skirts.
- **Cardigans and Sweaters:** Worn over blouses or dresses, often with matching skirts or trousers.
- **Blouses and Shirts:** Typically high-necked or with Peter Pan collars, often paired with skirts or trousers.

Source: 20thcenturyhistorysongbook.com

Greaser Subculture

Fashion and Style

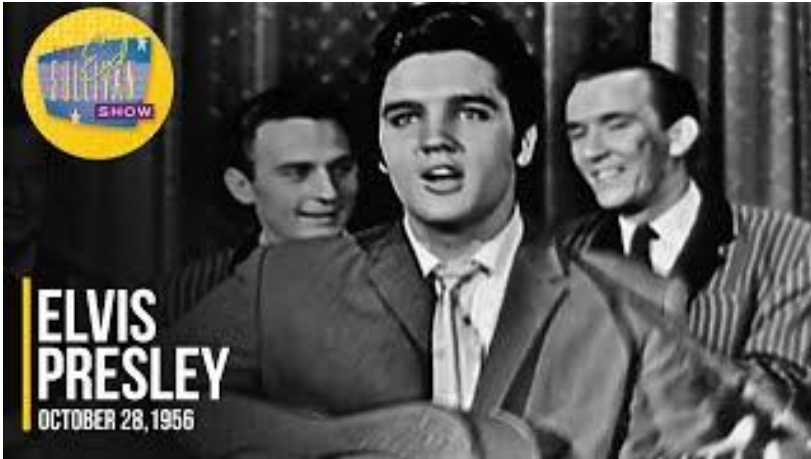


Source: rarehistoricalphotos.com/greasers-vintage-photos/

- **Leather Jackets:** Greasers often wore black leather jackets, which became a symbol of their tough, rebellious image.
- **Slicked-Back Hair:** The signature hairstyle involved combing hair back with pomade or gel, creating a sleek, shiny look.
- **Jeans and T-Shirts:** They favored worn jeans and plain T-shirts, often with rolled-up sleeves, contributing to a rugged, informal appearance.
- **Boots or Converse Sneakers:** Footwear typically included work boots or canvas sneakers.

Greaser Subculture

The Influence of Music



Rock 'n' roll—led by Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry—shaped the greaser subculture. Its rebellious themes influenced their style (leather jackets, slicked hair, jeans) and reinforced their identity as defiant outsiders.