

The Teen-agers



There's more in these trim teen-agers than an ambition toward jive. After the cokes they'll go stepping back to class at John Marshall High, Richmond, Va.

The headline-making antics of the current younger generation are as truly typical of them as goldfish swallowing was of us.

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Teen-agers are surprisingly like other people. Some of them are all right and some of them are jerks. The good ones will grow up to be a little less silly than they are now, and the jerks will possibly become foremen and first sergeants, and prosper in their own poisonous way.

Teen-agers, as the term is popularly used, appear to be boys and girls from 14 to 17 who do the things that seem like a good idea at that age. The girls among the teen-agers are called bobby-soxers. This is because they wear bobby sox.

Bobby sox are short socks. The hosiery mills in the States indignantly deny they have manufactured one pair of bobby sox; they emphasize that last year they produced 298,614,200 pairs of anklets. The manufacturers stress that they would be called anklets if your grandma wore them, and conceivably she might wear them if she's a sporty old grandma with Grable gams. Anklets, it seems, become bobby sox and a psychological problem only when a teen-age girl crams her feet into them.

The boys are called simply boys, or maybe young idiots if their pa happens to be put out with them. One of them will probably grow up to be President provided some smarty pants of a girl doesn't beat him out of the job.

THESE jive kids of the early and middle 40s are the successors to the gaudy sophisticates of some years back who whooped it up in rumble seats, danced the Black Bottom, screamed "It's the cat's pajamas," jangled banjos, jangled slave bracelets, jangled everybody's nerves.

Some of today's teen-agers — pleasantly not many — talk the strange new language of "sling swing." In this bright lexicon of the good citizens of tomorrow, a girl with sex appeal is an "able Grable" or a "ready Hedy." A pretty girl is "whistle bait." A boy whose mug and muscles appeal to the girls is a "mellow man," a "hunk of heartbreak" or a "glad lad." A prude is a "hair shirt." A grind is a "book beater." A teacher's pet is a "gone Quisling." A fancy dancer is a "jive bomber" or a "cloud walker." A boy given to hugging the girls — sentimental little rascals, some of these lads — is a "wolf on a scooter" or an "educated fox." A boy who is girl crazy is "dame-dazed." A girl who is boy crazy is "slack-happy" and "khaki-wacky." To be jilted is to be "shot down in flames."

Despite this devotion to ritualistic incoherency, most of the teen-agers get good grades in English, which they read and sometimes speak. They want to know whose business it is if they prefer broken English.