

Historic Route 66

Historical and social background behind the song 'Route 66'

US Highway 66, popularly known as "Route 66," is the nation's first highway linking Chicago to Los Angeles. Route 66 reflects the origin and evolution of road transportation in the United States, underlining the importance of the automobile as a technological achievement which symbolized freedom and mobility for every citizen who could afford to own a car. The period of historical significance for Route 66 is 1926 to 1985. The national system of public highways brought geographic cohesion and economic prosperity to the different regions of the country. As a component of the federal network, Route

66 linked the isolated and predominantly rural West to the densely populated urban Midwest and Northeast. It also enabled one of the most comprehensive movements of people in the history of the United States. One result was the irreversible transformation of the American Far West from a rural frontier to metropolitan region. In recent years Route 66 – imaginatively documented in prose, song, film, and television – has come to represent the essence of the American highway culture to countless motorists who traversed its course during the more than fifty years of its lifetime.

Adapted from: <https://ncptt.nps.gov/rt66/history-and-significance-of-us-route-66/>

1 In your opinion, which of these statements reflects the essence of Route 66?

1. Route 66 was an important road that linked the northeast of the country to the southwest.
2. Route 66 is an icon in American popular culture which has the automobile as its symbol.
3. Route 66 helped the social transformation of the country.
4. Route 66 inspired songs, films and television programmes.

