

12: 1920s

ESSENTIAL TERMS



KEY CONCEPTS

Laissez-Faire: A government policy of low regulation and low taxation in order to spur business.

Return to Normalcy: President Harding's campaign slogan. It tapped into Americans' desire to move beyond the heartache of World War I.

Line of Credit: A set amount of money a store or bank was willing to loan a customer in order to make purchases.

Installment Plan: A plan for paying back a loan for a purchase a small amount at a time over the course of a set time.

Buying on Margin: Purchasing stock with borrowed money in the hope that the stock will gain in value and the borrower will make money after paying back the loan.

Jim Crow: The nickname for a system of laws that enforced segregation. For example, African Americans had separate schools, rode in the backs of busses, could not drink from White drinking fountains, and could not eat in restaurants or stay in hotels, etc.

Atlanta Compromise: Belief that the best way for African Americans to advance their position in society was to learn useful skills rather than agitate for equality and justice. It was promoted by Booker T. Washington in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The name derives from a speech.

Redlining: Unofficial segregation in northern cities that occurred after the Great Migration in which realtors and banks refused to sell homes in certain neighborhoods to African American buyers.

New Negro: Idea that African Americans should assert themselves as members of American society, with literature, art, music and civil rights equal to all other people. It was popularized in the 1920s as part of the Harlem Renaissance and Niagara Movement. It was championed by W. E. B. Du Bois and contradicted Booker T. Washington's Albany Compromise.

Lynching: Illegal hanging by a mob. It is a term most commonly used when White mobs hung African American men and was common throughout the South during the Jim Crow era.



DOCUMENTS

Declaration of Principles: Statement published at the meeting of African American leaders in Niagara in 1905 calling for political, economic and social equality.

The Crisis: Journal published by W. E. B. Du Bois to promote the causes of African Americans.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Ohio Gang: A group of President Harding's advisors. Their corruption causes the president a great deal of political trouble.

Calvin Coolidge: Republican president in the 1920s. He became president after the death of Harding and advocated pro-business policies.

Henry Ford: Entrepreneur who founded an automobile company and pioneered the use of the assembly line and famously paid his workers \$5 per day.

Charles Lindbergh: American pilot who was the first person to fly across the Atlantic Ocean non-stop. He became a national hero.

The Lost Generation: Group of American authors who wrote about disenchantment with consumerism and waste during the 1920s. They included Hemingway, Stein, and Fitzgerald.

Booker T. Washington: African American educator in the late 1800s and early 1900s who led the Tuskegee Institute and argued that the best way for African Americans to advance their position in society was to learn useful skills rather than agitate for equality and justice. This was the Atlanta Compromise.

W. E. B. Du Bois: African American author, political leader and intellectual who led the Niagara Movement and published The Crisis. He believed that African Americans should reject the Atlanta Compromise and fight for equality and justice.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP): Organization dedicated to promoting African American rights through the justice system. It was established in 1909 as part of the Niagara Movement.

Marcus Garvey: Jamaican-born entrepreneur and leader during the 1920s who led the Universal Negro Improvement Association.

United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA): Organization founded by Marcus Garvey that encourage cooperation among all African people and people of African descent in the world. They also supported the independence movement in Jamaica.

Ku Klux Klan (KKK): Racist organization based in the South that terrorized African Americans after the Civil War and helped establish the system of Jim Crow. They were also anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic. The organization experienced a revival in the 1920s and again during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s.

Modernists: People who embrace science and changes as positive influences on society. In the 1920s they were concentrated in cities.

Traditionalists: People who rejected changes and embraced traditional values, especially Christianity instead of science. In the 1920s they were concentrated in rural areas and the South.

Fundamentalists: People who embraced the Bible and traditional Christian teachings and rejected scientific theories that contradict the Bible. Rural areas and the Bible Belt in the South are the heart of this thinking.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU): Organization that provides lawyers to defend people they believe have had their basic rights violated. For example, they defend freedom of speech cases and in the 1920s, helped defend John Scopes.

William Jennings Bryan: Former populist and democratic presidential candidate who became the primary champion of traditionalist and fundamentalists in the 1920s. He promoted laws such as the Butler Act and led the prosecution at the Scopes Trial.

Clarence Darrow: Famous attorney in the 1920s who rejected traditionalism as an encroachment on individual freedom of belief and led the defense of John Scopes.

Bootleggers: People who imported illegal alcohol during prohibition.

Al Capone: Nicknamed "Scarface," he was the most famous gangster during the era of prohibition. He ran the illegal alcohol operation in Chicago and although was renowned for violence, eventually went to jail for tax evasion.



EVENTS

Teapot Dome Scandal: Political scandal that hurt President Harding. It stemmed from the illegal sale of naval oil reserves.

Niagara Movement: Movement in the African American community led by W. E. B. Du Bois to advocate for equality and racial justice. The NAACP was founded as part of this movement.

Great Migration: Movement of nearly two million African Americans out of the South to cities of the North in the 19-teens, largely to escape segregation and take advantage of job opportunities during World War I.



TECHNOLOGY

Assembly Line: A system of production in which each worker performs one step and the product moves past the workers, beginning at one end of the factory as parts, and exiting the other end as a finished product.

Model T: Famous automobile built by Henry Ford. It was relatively inexpensive and always black.

Silent Movies: The first form of movies that did not have sound. They were accompanied by live musicians playing music in the theater.

Talkie: Nickname for the first movies with sound.



THE ARTS

Jazz: Musical style created around 1900. It grew out of West African influences, ragtime, slave songs, and European classical influences. First created in New Orleans, it was popularized in the rest of the country during the 1920s. It often features syncopated rhythms and improvisation.

Art Deco: Artistic style popularized in the 1920s and 1930s featuring geometric shapes, repetition, and solid colors.

Surrealism: Art style popular in the 1920s. It features dreamlike images rather than realistic representations. The most famous painter of this style was Salvador Dali.



LAWS

Butler Act: Law passed in the 1920s in Tennessee that banned the teaching of Darwin's Theory of Evolution. John Scopes was charged with violating this law.

18th Amendment: Amendment to the constitution that outlawed alcohol and established prohibition.

Volstead Act: 1919 law that implemented the 18th Amendment and made alcohol illegal, thus initiating prohibition.

21st Amendment: Amendment to the Constitution ratified in 1933 that ended prohibition by repealing the 18th Amendment.



COURT CASES

Plessy v. Ferguson: 1896 Supreme Court case in which the court declared that racially segregated schools and other public facilities were constitutional establishing the "separate but equal" doctrine. It was overturned in the Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954.

Scopes "Monkey" Trial: Trial of biology teacher John Scopes in 1925 that became a visible symbol of the conflict between modernists and traditionalists.