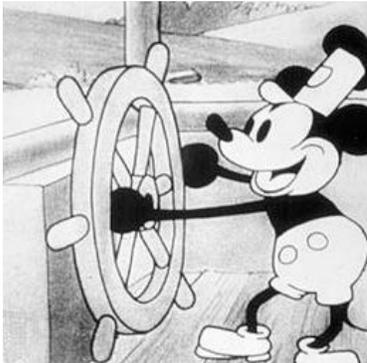


a t i m e o f
PROGRESS?





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Q u e s t i o n T w e l v e



a t i m e o f

PROGRESS?

EXPLORING AMERICA'S HISTORY THROUGH COMPELLING QUESTIONS

S U P P O R T I N G Q U E S T I O N S

- 1** IS CONSUMERISM AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF AMERICA'S IDENTITY?
- 2** IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?
- 3** WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE A NEW NEGRO?
- 4** CAN LAWS MAKE US MORAL?

D E V E L O P E D A N D C O M P I L E D B Y
J O N A T H A N L O O M I S

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C R E A T I V E C O M M O N S A T T R I B U T I O N
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Q u e s t i o n T w e l v e



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The 1920s saw the culmination of fifty years of rapid American industrialization. New products seemed to burst from American production lines with the potential of revolutionizing American life. Other products that had previously been toys for the rich were now available to a majority of Americans. The standard of living increased as the economy grew stronger and stronger. The results were spectacular. The America of 1929 was vastly different from the America of 1919.

The automobile was first and foremost among these products. The practices of Henry Ford made these horseless carriages affordable to the American masses. Widespread use of the automobile ushered in changes in work patterns and leisure plans. Dating and education were changed by the automobile. Radio usage brought further changes. For the first time, a national popular culture was supplanting regional folkways. Americans across the continent were sharing the same jokes, participating in the same fads, and worshipping the same heroes. Flapper women strove to eliminate double standard values. Young females engaged in behaviors previously reserved for men including smoking and drinking.

Meanwhile, the Harlem Renaissance brought a new form of entertainment. The sounds of jazz bands had appeal that transcended African American audiences, as thousands flocked to hear the new sounds, and behind the music, African Americans sought racial justice and to assert themselves as a proud, valuable part to the American fabric.

The bleak outlook and large sacrifices of the wartime era were now a part of the past. Young Americans were looking to cut loose and have a good time. A new era of prohibition did not end alcohol usage. The romantic subculture of the speakeasy kept the firewater flowing. Organized crime flourished as gangland violence related to bootlegged liquor plagued America's cities.

The 1920s turned out to be a time of exciting change, some constructive, and some destructive. On one hand, new industries turned out new products, and consumers devoured them. On the other, frivolity and waste

showed a negative side of this new life, a side that led some to seek out the “good old days” and reject the new consumerism and rush toward change that seemed to have gripped the nation.

What do you think? Were the 1920s a time of progress?

1

F I R S T Q U E S T I O N IS CONSUMERISM AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF AMERICA'S IDENTITY?



INTRODUCTION

Americans love to go shopping. We even have a holiday for shopping: Black Friday. Of course, we were not always like this. The first colonists had no stores after all.

So, when did we become a nation of shoppers? And since we did, has shopping become an essential part of what makes us who we are? Would we still be American if we didn't shop? Has consumerism come to be a defining element of our national identity?

What do you think?

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A RETURN TO LAISSEZ FAIRE

The election of 1920 saw the passing of a generation of Progressive leaders. Progressive zeal was declining with the deaths of former presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson. Wilson's support of the League of Nations turned Irish and German immigrants against the Democrats. Americans were tired of reform and ready for a return to "normalcy."

Above all, the 1920s signaled a return to a pro-business government, almost a return to the **laissez-faire** politics of the Gilded Age of the late 1800s. Calvin Coolidge's statement that "the chief business of the American people is business," often rendered as "the business of America is business" became the dominant attitude. During the 1920s, America's leaders sought to reduce taxes, reduce government regulation and let business leaders do as they pleased.

In the election of 1920, professional Republicans were eager to nominate a man whom they could manage and control. **Warren G. Harding**, a senator from Ohio, represented just such a man. Before his nomination, Harding stated, "America's present need is not heroics but healing; not nostrums but normalcy; not revolution but restoration." Harding was known for enjoying golf, alcohol, and poker, although not necessarily in that order. Although his critics depicted him as weak, lazy, or incompetent, he was actually quite shrewd and politically astute. Together with his running mate, Calvin Coolidge, the governor of Massachusetts, they attracted the votes of many Americans who sought Harding's promised **return to "normalcy,"** a word he invented. In the election, Harding defeated Governor James Cox of Ohio by the greatest majority in the history of two-party politics. Harding won 61% of the popular vote.

Harding's cabinet reflected his pro-business agenda. Herbert Hoover, a millionaire mechanical engineer and miner, became his Secretary of Commerce. Hoover had served as head of the relief effort for Belgium during World War I and helped to feed those in Russia and Germany after the war ended. He was a very effective administrator, seeking to limit inefficiency in the government and promoting partnerships between government and businesses. Harding's Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, was also a pro-business multimillionaire with a fortune built in banking and aluminum. Even more so than Hoover, Mellon entered public service with a strong sense that government should run as efficiently as any business, famously writing that "the Government is just a business, and can and should be run on business principles."

Consistent with his principles of running government with business-like efficiency, Harding proposed and signed into law tax rate cuts as well as the country's first formal budgeting process, which created a presidential budget director and required that the president submit an annual budget to Congress.



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



Warren G. Harding: Republican president in the 1920s. He died in office.



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

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These policies helped to reduce the debt that the United States had incurred during World War I.

Despite these successes, the Harding administration has gone down in history as one that was especially ridden with scandal. While Harding was personally honest, he surrounded himself with politicians who were not. Harding made the mistake of often turning to unscrupulous advisors or even his drinking and poker buddies for advice and guidance. And, as he himself recognized, this group of old friends, dubbed the **Ohio Gang**, tended to cause him grief. "I have no trouble with my enemies," he once commented. "I can take care of my enemies in a fight. But my friends, my goddamned friends, they're the ones who keep me walking the floor at nights!"



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



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

An artist's impression of the Ohio Gang running for cover as news of the Teapot Dome Scandal broke in the press.

The scandals mounted quickly. From 1920 to 1923, Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall was involved in a scam that became known as the **Teapot Dome Scandal**. Fall had leased the navy's oil reserves in Teapot Dome, Wyoming, and two other sites in California to private oil companies without opening the bidding to other companies. In exchange, the companies gave him \$300,000 in cash and bonds, as well as a herd of cattle for his ranch. Fall was convicted of accepting bribes from the oil companies; he was fined \$100,000 and sentenced to a year in prison. It was the first time that a cabinet official had received such a sentence.



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

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In 1923, Harding also learned that the head of the Veterans' Bureau, Colonel Charles Forbes, had stolen most of the \$250 million set aside for extravagant bureau functions. Forbes served to two years in prison.

Although the Harding presidency had a number of large successes and variety of dark scandals, it ended before the first term was up. In July 1923, while traveling in Seattle, the president suffered a heart attack. In his weakened condition, he suffered a stroke and died in San Francisco, leaving the presidency to his vice president, **Calvin Coolidge**.

Coolidge ended the scandals, but did little beyond that. His first term was devoted to eliminating the taint of scandal that Harding had brought to the White House. Domestically, Coolidge adhered to the creed: "**The business of America is business.**" Coolidge believed the rich were worthy of their property and that poverty was the wage of sin. Most importantly, Coolidge believed that since only the rich best understood their own interests, the government should let businessmen handle their own affairs with as little federal intervention as possible. Coolidge was quoted as saying, "The man who builds a factory builds a temple. The man who works there worships there."

Thus, silence and inactivity became the dominant characteristics of the Coolidge presidency. Coolidge's legendary reserve was famous in Washington society. Contemporaries told a possibly apocryphal story of how, at a dinner party at the White House, a woman bet her friends that she could get Coolidge to say more than three words. He looked at her and said, "you lose."

After winning the 1924 election, Coolidge chose not to run again 1928. Republicans promoted the heir apparent, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. The Democrats nominated Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York. Smith represented everything that small-town, rural America hated. He was Irish, Catholic, and a big-city politician. He was flamboyant and outspoken, which also did not go over well with many Americans. Republican prosperity carried the day and Hoover won easily with twenty-one million votes over Al Smith's fifteen million.

Overall, the theme of the three republican presidents of the 1920s was the same: laissez-faire. Let business leaders do what they do best and enjoy the benefits of a surging economy.

THE AUTOMOBILE

Perhaps no invention affected American everyday life in the 20th Century more than the automobile, a no single invention characterized the surging economy of the 1920s more the than automobile.

Although the technology for the automobile existed in the 19th century, it took **Henry Ford** to make the useful gadget accessible to the American public. Ford used the idea of the **assembly line** for automobile manufacturing. In



Calvin Coolidge: Republican president in the 1920s. He became president after the death of

Harding and advocated pro-business policies.



The Business of America is Business: President Coolidge's famous saying showing that he

believed the government's job was to support business.



Henry Ford: Entrepreneur who founded an automobile company and pioneered the use of the

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Ford's factories, instead of training each worker how to build an entire car, he trained each worker to efficiently and accurately complete just one step. Then, the cars moved through the factory, beginning with just parts at one end, and exiting as finished products on the other end. He paid his workers an unprecedented \$5 a day when most laborers were bringing home two, hoping that it would increase their productivity. Furthermore, they might use their higher earnings to purchase a new car.



assembly line and famously paid his workers \$5 per day.



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.

Primary Source: Photograph

A view of Henry Ford's assembly line, where cars were built quickly, efficiently, and exited his factories as high quality, although not particularly varied, products Americans wanted to buy.

Ford reduced options, even stating that the public could choose whatever color car they wanted, so long as it was black. The **Model T** sold for \$490 in 1914, about one quarter the cost of the previous decade. By 1920, there were over 8 million registrations. The 1920s saw tremendous growth in automobile ownership, with the number of registered drivers almost tripling to 23 million by the end of the decade.



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

The automobile changed the face of America, both economically and socially. Industries like glass, steel, and rubber processing expanded to keep up with auto production. The oil industry in California, Oklahoma, and Texas expanded, as Americans' reliance on oil increased and the nation transitioned from a coal-based economy to one driven by petroleum. The need for public roadways required local and state governments to fund a dramatic expansion of infrastructure, which permitted motels and restaurants to spring up and offer new services to millions of newly mobile Americans with cash to spend. With this new infrastructure, new shopping and living patterns emerged, and

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streetcar suburbs gave way to automobile suburbs as private automobile traffic on public roads began to replace mass transit on trains and trolleys.

Even the federal government became involved with the **Federal Highway Act of 1921**. Gas stations began to dot the land, and mechanics began to earn a living fixing the inevitable problems. Oil and steel were two well-established industries that received a serious boost by the demand for automobiles. Travelers on the road needed shelter on long trips, so motels began to line the major long-distance routes.

 **Federal Highway Act of 1921:** Law that allocated money to develop a system of national highways in the 1920 when automobiles were first becoming common.



Primary Source: Photograph

A service station in the 1920s. Now common throughout America, gas stations were a new feature of American roads in the 1920s.

Even cuisine was transformed by the automobile. The quintessential American foods — hamburgers, French fries, milk shakes, and apple pies — were hallmarks of the new roadside diner. Drivers wanted cheap, relatively fast food so they could be on their way in a hurry. Unfortunately, as new businesses flourished, old ones decayed. When America opted for the automobile, the nation's rails began to be neglected. As European nations were strengthening mass transit systems, individualistic Americans invested in the automobile infrastructure.

The social effects of the automobile were as great. Freedom of choice encouraged many family vacations to places previously inaccessible. Urban dwellers had the opportunity to rediscover pristine landscapes, just as rural dwellers were able to shop in towns and cities. Teenagers gained more and more independence with driving freedom. Dating couples found a portable place to be alone as the automobile helped to facilitate relaxed sexual attitudes.

Americans experienced traffic jams for the first time, as well as traffic accidents and fatalities. Soon demands were made for licensure and safety regulation on the state level. Despite the drawbacks, Americans loved their

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cars. As more and more were purchased, drivers saw their worlds grow much larger.



Primary Source: Photograph

Charles Lindbergh in front of his airplane, the Spirit of St. Louis. Lindbergh became an overnight hero in America after landing safely in Paris.

AIRPLANES

The 1920s not only witnessed a transformation in ground transportation but also major changes in air travel. By the mid-1920s, men, as well as some pioneering women like the African American stunt pilot Bessie Coleman, had been flying for two decades. Americans who had learned to fly during World War I bought the planes the army was selling off after the war and toured the country. They would land in an open field and sell rides to the locals who, having never seen an airplane before, flocked from miles around to see and experience the amazing machines. These **barnstormers**, a name they were given because of the daring trick of flying through a barn with doors open at both ends, made the airplane familiar across America.

Despite increasing familiarity, there remained doubts about the suitability of airplanes for long-distance travel. Orville Wright, one of the pioneers of airplane technology in the United States, once famously declared, "No flying machine will ever fly from New York to Paris [because] no known motor can



Barnstormer: A pilot that travels from place to place performing tricks.



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

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run at the requisite speed for four days without stopping.” However, in 1927, this skepticism was put to rest when **Charles Lindbergh** became the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean, flying from New York to Paris in thirty-three hours. Lindbergh’s flight made him an international hero: the best-known American in the world. On his return, Americans greeted him with a parade through Manhattan. His flight, which he completed in the monoplane **Spirit of St. Louis**, seemed like a triumph of individualism in modern mass society and exemplified Americans’ ability to conquer the air with new technology. Following his success, the small airline industry began to blossom, fully coming into its own in the 1930s, as companies like Boeing and Ford developed airplanes designed specifically for passenger air transport. As technologies in engine and passenger compartment design improved, air travel became more popular. In 1934, the number of domestic air passengers was just over 450,000 annually. By 1940, that number had increased to nearly two million.



Spirit of St. Louis: Charles Lindbergh’s airplane.

CONSUMERISM AND CREDIT

The 1920s was a decade of increasing conveniences for the middle class. New products made household chores easier and led to more leisure time. Products previously too expensive became affordable. New forms of financing allowed every family to spend beyond their current means. Advertising capitalized on people’s hopes and fears to sell more and more goods.

By the end of the 1920s, household work was revolutionized. A typical work week for a housewife before the 1920s involved many tedious chores. All the furniture was moved off the carpets, which were rolled up and dragged outside to beat out the week’s dirt and dust. The ice in the icebox was replaced. The clothes were scrubbed in a washing tub outside on a washboard. An iron was heated on the stove to smooth out the wrinkles. Women typically spent the summer months canning food for the long winter. Clothes were made from patterns, and bread was made from scratch. Very few of these practices were necessary by the end of the decade. Vacuum cleaners displaced the carpet beater. Electric refrigerators, washing machines, and irons saved hours of extra work. New methods of canning and freezing made store-bought food cheap and effective enough to eliminate this chore. Off-the-rack clothing became more and more widespread. Even large bakeries were supplying bread to the new supermarkets. The hours saved in household work were countless.

“Buy now, pay later” became the credo of many middle class Americans of the 1920s. For the single-income family, all these new conveniences were impossible to afford at once. However, retailers wanted the consumer to have it all. Department stores opened up generous **lines of credit** for those who could not pay up front but could demonstrate the ability to pay in the future. Similar **installment plans** were offered to buyers who could not afford the



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

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lump sum, but could afford “twelve easy payments.” Over half of the nation’s automobiles were sold on credit by the end of the decade. America’s consumers could indeed have it all, if they had an iron stomach for debt. Consumer debt more than doubled between 1920 and 1930. In modern times we are entirely comfortable with the idea of debt. Credit cards are a form of debt in which we make purchases with the promise of paying off our bill at a later date, but in the 1920s, this sort of shopping was entirely new.

At the same time that Americans were getting used to the idea of buying things they wanted with borrowed money, they were also beginning to take an interest in the stock market. To be sure, the stock market had existed for generations, but for the first time in the 1920s, everyday Americans started to purchase stocks. As the government enacted legislation and reduced regulation to the advantage of corporations, their stocks grew. Americans found that purchasing stock was a way to cash in on booming corporate wealth. As the decade wore on and stocks continued to rise, so did the demand for stock.

Buying and selling stock was not in and of itself a problem. Americans today risk their savings in the stock market with the understanding that prices may fall. The 1920s were different, however, in that Americans borrowed money to buy stock. This strategy, called **buying on margin**, meant that people borrowed cash to purchase a stock, which they would later sell when the price rose, and use the profits to pay back the original loan with some profit left over. If stock prices only rose, the system worked beautifully, and as stocks rose and rose during the decade, more and more people bought on margin. Of course, if a stock’s value fell, the investor would have to sell the stock, and then turn around and repay the loan, which was then worth more than the stock, leaving the investor in debt. Buying on margin was a risky investment strategy that would eventually land the United States in a world of trouble.

THE LOST GENERATION

As old ways of life fell aside and were replaced by new, electric conveniences that were fueled by a wild spending spree, some felt a sense of discontent with the new spirit of the times. Although anything seemed possible, it also felt like Americans were trying to forget the horrors of World War I by shopping, drinking, dancing, playing and driving their way to happiness. It seemed as if Americans were trying to lose themselves in anything shiny and new.

To express this sense of loss a new group of authors emerged. Called the **Lost Generation**, many of these writers were expatriates who ended up living together in Paris. The term Lost Generation first appeared in **Ernest Hemingway’s** novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, which centers on a group of expatriate Americans in Europe during the 1920s and epitomizes the lifestyle



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.



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

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and mindset of the postwar expatriate generation. Hemingway credits the phrase to **Gertrude Stein**, who was then his mentor and patron.



 **Ernest Hemingway:** Author of the Lost Generation. His books included *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

 **Gertrude Stein:** Author of the Lost Generation who hosted and mentored younger authors in Paris.

Primary Source: Photograph

F. Scott Fitzgerald in the 1920s around the time he wrote *The Great Gatsby*.

F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote about the excesses of the decade. He and his wife Zelda operated among the social elite in New York, Paris, and on the French Riviera. **The Great Gatsby**, his most famous novel, highlights the opulence of American materialism while harshly criticizing its morality. **T.S. Eliot** commented on the emptiness of American life in his epic poem **The Waste Land**. The sharpest critic of American middle-class lifestyle was **Sinclair Lewis**. In **Main Street**, he takes aim on small-town American life. After a string of successful novels, Lewis brought honor to American writers by becoming the first to win a Pulitzer Prize for literature.

 **F. Scott Fitzgerald:** Author of the Lost Generation who wrote *The Great Gatsby*.

 **The Great Gatsby:** Most famous novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Themes of the novel included the excess of the 1920s.

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Some of the names linked to the Lost Generation movement were not necessarily among Hemingway's companions in Paris during the postwar period, but are included because their formative years occurred shortly before or during World War I. In addition to Hemingway and Fitzgerald, the movement of writers and artists also loosely includes John Dos Passos, Waldo Peirce, Alan Seeger, John Steinbeck, Sherwood Anderson, Aldous Huxley, Malcolm Crowley, Isadora Duncan, James Joyce, and Henry Miller.

The Lost Generation was greatly influenced by World War I. American modernist writers offered an insight into the psychological wounds and spiritual scars of the war experience, a theme repeated in Hemingway's work and in Fitzgerald's portrayal of the lives and morality of post-World War I youth in his book, *This Side of Paradise*.

In that same vein, but employing a perspective outside of the American viewpoint, the 1929 novel, *All Quiet on the Western Front* by Erich Maria Remarque, recounts the horrors of World War I and the deep detachment from German civilian life felt by many men returning from the front. The 1930 film version of the book was nominated for four Academy Awards and won two, including best director for Lewis Milestone.

CONCLUSION

During the 1920s, technologies were changing and the world was exciting. It seemed like there was nothing that could not be done. Lindbergh had hopped the Atlantic, and business was booming. Politicians cleared the way for entrepreneurs produce new products for Americans to buy with newfound wealth. Refrigerators, automobiles and toasters appeared in many homes. And, when there wasn't enough money to buy something a neighbor had, we bought on credit.

Some writers and philosophers questioned the new obsession with shopping and money, just as commentators do each November now as shoppers line up after Thanksgiving dinner to score the latest bargains. We may love Black Friday deals now, and be obsessed with having the latest thing in the 21st Century, but our love affair with consumerism began in the 1920s.

Has our shopping habit come to define us? Does shopping make us unique in the world? Is consumerism an essential part of what makes us American?

What do you think?



T.S. Eliot: Author of the Lost Generation who wrote the poem *The Waste Land*.



The Waste Land: Poem by Lost Generation author T.S. Eliot about the emptiness of life in the 1920s.



Sinclair Lewis: Author of the Lost Generation who wrote *Main Street*, a criticism of small-town life.



Main Street: Novel by Lost Generation writer Sinclair Lewis that criticizes small-town life.

1 IS CONSUMERISM AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF AMERICA'S IDENTITY?



SUMMARY

During the 1920s, three Republican presidents pursued laissez-faire policies by reducing taxes and regulation. The result was an increase in business activity. Higher wages led to higher spending and people remember the decade as a time of wealth and plenty.

The administration of President Harding however was plagued by scandal, including the Teapot Dome Scandal.

The 1920s were the first decade in which many Americans were able to own automobiles, especially due to innovations in production implemented by Henry Ford. Cars had the effect of changing America. Gas stations, paved roads, motels, and kissing in cars were all things that were new because of the availability of the automobile.

Airplanes were new in the 1920s. Most famously, Charles Lindbergh became the first person to fly non-stop from New York to Paris, becoming a great hero in the United States.

America became a consumer culture. Having the latest thing became an important part of life, especially new electronic inventions such as refrigerators and vacuum cleaners.

When they were unable to buy such things, Americans borrowed money. Being in debt became common.

This was a time when average Americans began buying stocks in the stock market. Some made the risky choice of borrowing money to buy stocks. However, since business was good during most of the decade, even investors who borrowed usually made money in the end.

Not all Americans believed this new emphasis on having things and making money was a good idea. A group of writers known as the Lost Generation felt that Americans had lost their sense of what was good and true and wrote novels focused on these themes.



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.

The Business of America is Business: President Coolidge's famous saying showing that he believed the government's job was to support business.



ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

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.



LAWS

Federal Highway Act of 1921: Law that allocated money to develop a system of national highways in the 1920 when automobiles were first becoming common.



LITERATURE

The Great Gatsby: Most famous novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald. Themes of the novel included the excess of the 1920s.

The Waste Land: Poem by Lost Generation author T.S. Eliot about the emptiness of life in the 1920s.

Main Street: Novel by Lost Generation writer Sinclair Lewis that criticizes small-town life.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Warren G. Harding: Republican president in the 1920s. He died in office.

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.

Barnstormer: A pilot that travels from place to place performing tricks.

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.

Ernest Hemingway: Author of the Lost Generation. His books included *The Sun Also Rises*, *The Old Man and the Sea*, and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

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Sinclair Lewis: Author of the Lost Generation who wrote *Main Street*, a criticism of small-town life.



EVENTS

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



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.

Spirit of St. Louis: Charles Lindbergh's airplane.

2

S E C O N D Q U E S T I O N IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?



INTRODUCTION

Popular culture – the music, dances, crazes, games, fashion and fads everyone is talking about – is something we are all familiar with now. We hear about things online, on television, and in magazines and movies. But before those means of communication existed, neither did pop culture. There was simply no way to spread ideas to everyone.

The 1920s saw the growth of pop culture in tandem with the growth of radio and the film industry. It is no wonder that we sometimes call the 1920s the Roaring 20s. They were roaring with excitement!

However, is popular culture a good thing? Is all the attention we focus on the latest dance craze, or latest fashion, simply a distraction from more important things in our life like family, school or work?

What do you think? Is pop culture a distraction?

2 IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?



THE GROWTH OF RADIO

Commercial radio in America had humble beginnings. Frank Conrad, an engineer for Westinghouse, set up an amateur radio station above his garage in a Pittsburgh suburb. Since the wireless technology was developed by **Guglielmo Marconi** in the late 19th Century, thousands of enthusiasts across the world experimented with the new toy. After World War I, Conrad began broadcasting a variety of programming from his station. High school music groups performed, phonograph records were played, and news and baseball scores were reported. Conrad had dramatically improved the transmitter, and soon hundreds of people in the Pittsburgh area were sending requests for airtime. The bosses of Westinghouse knew that Conrad was on to something and convinced him to make his hobby commercially profitable.



Guglielmo Marconi: Italian inventor who pioneered radio.

On the night of November 2, 1920, Conrad and his Westinghouse associates announced that Warren G. Harding had defeated James Cox to become the next President. The message was heard as far north as New Hampshire and as far south as Louisiana. The federal government granted the call letters KDKA to the Pittsburgh station and a new industry was born. For nearly a year, KDKA monopolized the airwaves. However, competition came fast and furious. By the end of 1922, there were over 500 such stations across the United States. The federal government exercised no regulation over the nascent enterprise, and the result was complete chaos. Stations fought over call letters and frequencies, each trying to out-broadcast the closest competitor. Finally in 1927, Congress created the Federal Radio Commission to restore order.

One of the great attractions to the radio listener was that once the cost of the original equipment was covered, radio was free. Stations made money by selling airtime to advertisers. The possibility of reaching millions of listeners at once had advertising executives scrambling to take advantage of radio. By the end of the decade advertisers paid over \$10,000 for an hour of premium time.

THE POWER OF RADIO

The power of radio further sped up the processes of nationalization and homogenization that were previously begun with the wide distribution of newspapers made possible by railroads and telegraphs. Far more effectively than these print media, however, radio created and pumped out American culture onto the airwaves and into the homes of families around the country.

The **Radio Corporation of America (RCA)** created a new dimension to the venture in 1926. By licensing telephone lines, RCA created America's first radio network and called it the **National Broadcasting Company (NBC)**. For the first time, citizens of California and New York could listen to the same programming simultaneously. Regional differences began to dissolve as the influence of network broadcasting ballooned. Americans listened to the same



Radio Corporation of America (RCA): Early company that sold radio sets to everyday Americans.

sporting events and took up the same fads. Baseball games and boxing matches could now reach those far away from the stadiums and arenas. A mass national entertainment culture was flowering.



National Broadcasting Company (NBC): First broadcasting company in America. It was founded by RCA

to produce content for the radios RCA was selling.

Primary Source: Print Advertisement

A 1920s magazine ad for a new RCA radio set. Since receiving radio signals was free, the only cost was the purchase of the radio itself.

**thousands of tests
have proved it!**

Radiola 20, with Radiotron
\$115
RCA Loudspeaker 100—the
match to the performance
\$35

**Compare any competitor—at any price—
and you will find none to surpass the
RADIOLA 20
in Musical Reproduction.**

The challenge has been taken up. People everywhere have been testing the Radiola 20, in comparison with other sets. Testing as the experts do . . . listening awhile to Radiola 20, and then with ear accustomed to its clear reproduction, switching over to another set. Then the difference shows up clearly. Thousands have made the test—and proved the point. And in thousands of homes everywhere, the continued test of use has shown up more good points.

It is not only in musical reproduction and clear speaking voice that Radiola 20 excels. It is twenty times as selective as the

**Make this test yourself
before buying
any radio**

RADIO CORPORATION
OF AMERICA
New York Chicago San Francisco

ordinary radio set. It is more sensitive than larger sets using a greater number of tubes, and reaches out far, for distant stations. It is simple to operate—a single control brings in near stations, program after program—and small verniers give sharp accuracy on distance tuning.

Radiola 20 is replacing thousands of antenna sets that have not been able to meet present day broadcast conditions. It has new principles—but it is no experiment. It is tried—perfected—proved. Hear it yourself, before you make any Christmas buy, and you will be satisfied with nothing less than its clear, true tone!

ANY RADIOLA 20 CAN BE BOUGHT ON CONVENIENT TERMS

RCA Radiola

MADE BY THE MAKERS OF THE RADIOTRON

Syndicated radio programs like Amos 'n' Andy, which began in the late 1920s, entertained listeners around the country. In the case of the popular Amos 'n' Andy, it did so with racial stereotypes about African Americans familiar from minstrel shows of the previous century. No longer were small corners of the country separated by their access to information. With the radio, Americans

2 IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?



from coast to coast could listen to exactly the same programming. This had the effect of smoothing out regional differences in dialect, language, music, and even consumer taste.



Primary Source: Photograph

Babe Ruth was the great baseball hero of the 1920s and 1930s. He played first for the Boston Red Sox and later for the New York Yankees.

Radio also transformed how Americans enjoyed sports. The introduction of play-by-play descriptions of sporting events broadcast over the radio brought sports entertainment right into the homes of millions. Radio helped to popularize sports figures and their accomplishments. **Jim Thorpe**, who grew up in the Sac and Fox Native American Reservations in Oklahoma, was known as one of the best athletes in the world. He medaled in the 1912 Olympic Games, played Major League Baseball, and was one of the founding members of the National Football League. Other sports superstars were soon household names. In 1926, **Gertrude Ederle** became the first woman to swim the English Channel. **Helen Wills** dominated women's tennis, winning Wimbledon eight times in the late 1920s, whereas "**Big Bill**" **Tilden** won the

 **Jim Thorpe:** Native American who studied at the Carlisle Indian School, played in the Olympics, and played professional baseball and football.

 **Gertrude Ederle:** First woman to swim the English Channel.

 **Helen Wills:** Women's tennis champion in the 1920s.

 **"Big Bill" Tilden:** Men's tennis champion in the 1920s.

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national singles title every year from 1920 to 1925. In football, **Harold “Red” Grange** played for the University of Illinois, averaging over ten yards per carry during his college career. The biggest star of all was the “Sultan of Swat,” **Babe Ruth**, who became America’s first baseball hero. He changed the game of baseball from a low-scoring one dominated by pitchers to one where his hitting became famous. By 1923, most pitchers intentionally walked him. In 1924, he hit sixty homeruns.

The radio created the conditions for the first national fads. Without such a method of live and immediate communication, fads could amount only to local crazes. 1920s fads ranged from the athletic to the ludicrous. One of the most popular trends of the decade was the dance marathon. In a typical **dance marathon**, contestants would dance for 45 minutes and rest for 15. The longest marathons lasted 36 hours or more. Beauty pageants came into vogue. The first **Miss America Pageant** was staged in Atlantic City in 1921. One of the most bizarre fads was **flagpole sitting**. The object was simple: be the person who could sit atop the local flagpole for the longest period of time. Fifteen-year-old Avon Foreman of Baltimore set the amateur standard: 10 days, 10 hours, 10 minutes, and 10 seconds.

THE BIRTH OF HOLLYWOOD

The increased prosperity of the 1920s gave many Americans more disposable income to spend on entertainment. As the popularity of moving pictures grew in the early part of the decade, movie palaces, capable of seating thousands, sprang up in major cities. A ticket for a double feature and a live show cost twenty-five cents; for a quarter, Americans could escape from their problems and lose themselves in another era or world. In an era before television, people of all ages attended the movies with far more regularity than today, often going more than once per week. By the end of the decade, weekly movie attendance swelled to ninety million people.

The **silent movies** of the early 1920s gave rise to the first generation of movie stars. **Rudolph Valentino**, the lothario with the bedroom eyes, and **Clara Bow**, the “It Girl” with sex appeal, filled the imagination of millions of American moviegoers. However, no star captured the attention of the American viewing public more than **Charlie Chaplin**. This sad-eyed tramp with a moustache, baggy pants, and a cane was the top box office attraction of his time.

In 1927, the world of the silent movie began to wane with the New York release of the first **talkie**: **The Jazz Singer**. The plot of this film, which starred Al Jolson, told a distinctively American story of the 1920s. It follows the life of a Jewish man from his boyhood days of being groomed to be the cantor at the local synagogue to his life as a famous and Americanized jazz singer. Both the story and the new sound technology used to present it were popular with audiences around the country. It quickly became a huge hit for Warner



Harold “Red” Grange: Star football player in the 1920s.



Babe Ruth: Famous homerun-hitting baseball player of the 1920s and 1930s. He played for the New York Yankee’s and inspired nicknames such as the “Sultan of Swat.”



Dance Marathon: A competition popular in the 1920s in which couples tried to see who could dance for the longest amount of time.



Miss America Pageant: Beauty contest established in the 1920s.



Flagpole Sitting: Fad in the 1920s in which people sat on chairs at the top of flag poles.



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



Rudolph Valentino: Famous movie star of the 1920s. He was known for his sex-appeal.



Clara Bow: Most famous film actress of the silent film era.



Charlie Chaplin: Famous actor, writer, and director of the early film era. He is most famous for playing the tramp.



Talkie: Nickname for the first movies with sound.

The Jazz Singer: The first film with sound. It starred Al Jolson.

2 IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?



Brothers, one of the big five motion picture studios in Hollywood along with Twentieth Century Fox, RKO Pictures, Paramount Pictures, and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM).



Primary Source: Photograph

Clara Bow was the greatest female movie star of the silent era. Her “look” was emulated by girls across America, especially her sad, doe eyes.

Southern California in the 1920s, however, had only recently become the center of the American film industry. Film production was originally based in and around New York, where Thomas Edison first debuted the kinetoscope in 1893. However, in the 1910s, as major filmmakers like **D. W. Griffith** looked to escape the cost of Edison’s patents on camera equipment, this began to change. When Griffith filmed *In Old California* (1910), the first movie ever shot in **Hollywood**, California, the small town north of Los Angeles was little more than a village. As moviemakers flocked to southern California, Hollywood swelled with moviemaking activity. California offered predictable sunshine, and many natural film sets. The ocean, a desert, mountains, palm trees, and forests were all within a day or two’s travel. By the 1920s, the once-sleepy



D. W. Griffith: Director who filmed the first movie in Hollywood.



Hollywood: Neighborhood of Los Angeles that became the center of the new movie industry in the 1920s.

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village was home to a majorly profitable innovative industry in the United States.

Animators also found the 1920s favorable for innovation. Short animated films were popular in movie theaters during this time. The late 1920s saw the emergence of **Walt Disney** and his eponymous studio. Disney's marquee character, Mickey Mouse, made his debut in "**Steamboat Willie**" on November 18, 1928, at the Colony Theater in New York City. Mickey would go on to star in more than 120 cartoon shorts, as well as in "The Mickey Mouse Club" and other specials. This jump-started Walt Disney Studios and led to the creation of many other characters in the 1930s. In 1937, Disney released *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first full-length animated movie.

JAZZ

One of America's great contributions to the world of music was **jazz**, which originated in the late 1800s and early 1900s as African Americans blended European classical music with African and slave folk songs and the influences of West African culture. Although jazz developed over time, it flourished and gained national attention in the 1920s.

Jazz is an incredibly diverse musical style, but generally is characterized by swing and blue notes, call and response vocals, polyrhythms and improvisation. The immediate precursor to jazz was ragtime, with composers such as Scott Joplin, turning out compositions for piano that had a wide audience at the turn of the century. Jazz first appeared in New Orleans in the early 1900s. Then, after World War I, large numbers of jazz musicians migrated from New Orleans to major northern cities such as Chicago and New York, leading to a wider dispersal of jazz as different styles developed in different cities. As the 1920s progressed, jazz rose in popularity and helped to generate a cultural shift. Because of its popularity in illegal nightclubs where alcohol was sold during Prohibition, and its proliferation due to the emergence of more advanced recording devices, jazz became very popular in a short amount of time, with stars including **Duke Ellington**, Cab Calloway, and Chick Webb. Several famous entertainment venues such as the **Apollo Theater** and the **Cotton Club** came to epitomize the 1920s, and the term the Jazz Age was coined to refer to the decade.

Dances such as the **Charleston**, developed by African Americans, became popular among different demographics, including among young, urban Whites. With the introduction of large-scale radio broadcasts in 1922, Americans were able to experience different styles of music without physically visiting the jazz clubs of the cities. Through its broadcasts and concerts, the radio provided Americans with a trendy new avenue for exploring unfamiliar cultural experiences from the comfort of their living rooms. Sadly, due to the racial prejudice prevalent at most radio stations, White jazz artists received

 **Walt Disney:** Animator who created the first animated films. His character Mikey Mouse debuted in 1928.

 **Steamboat Willie:** The first animated film featuring Mickey Mouse.

 **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.

 **Duke Ellington:** Early jazz musician who led an orchestra.

 **Apollo Theater:** Theater in New York that hosted many early jazz musicians.

 **Cotton Club:** Club in New York that hosted many early jazz musicians.

 **Charleston:** Dance craze that swept the nation in the 1920s.

 **Louis Armstrong:** Famous jazz musician. He sang and played the trumpet.

 **Jelly Roll Morton:** Pianist and bandleader from New Orleans who claimed to have invented jazz.

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much more air time than Black artists such as **Louis Armstrong**, or **Jelly Roll Morton**.

Several famous female musicians emerged during the 1920s, including **Bessie Smith**, who garnered attention not only because she was a great singer, but also because she was a Black woman. It was not until the 1930s and 1940s, however, that female jazz and blues singers such as Smith, **Ella Fitzgerald**, and **Billie Holiday** were truly recognized and respected as successful artists throughout the music industry. Their persistence paved the way for the female artists of later decades.



Bessie Smith: Great female jazz and blues singers of the 1920s.



Ella Fitzgerald: Great female jazz singer beginning in the 1930s. She was sometimes called the Queen of Jazz.



Billie Holiday: Along with Ella Fitzgerald, one of the great female jazz singers of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

Primary Source: Photograph

Bessie Smith was one of the great jazz singers of the early years of the genera.



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FLAPPERS

After 1920, the battle for women's suffrage was finally over. After a 72-year struggle, women had won the precious right to vote. The generations of suffragists that had fought for so long proudly entered the political world. Carrie Chapman Catt and Alice Paul had sacrificed so much to win voting rights. To their dismay, the daughters of the Jazz Age seemed uninterested in these grand causes. As the 1920s roared along, many young women of the age wanted to have fun, and thus were born the flappers.

Flappers were northern, urban, single, young, middle-class women. Many held steady jobs in the changing American economy. The clerking jobs that blossomed in the Gilded Age were more numerous than ever. Increasing phone usage required more and more operators to connect all the calls being placed. The consumer-oriented economy of the 1920s saw a burgeoning number of department stores. Women were needed on the sales floor to relate to the most precious customers — other women. But the flapper was not all work and no play.

By night, flappers engaged in the active city nightlife. They frequented jazz clubs and vaudeville shows. Speakeasies were a common destination, as the new woman of the 1920s adopted the same carefree attitude toward prohibition as her male counterpart. Ironically, more young women consumed alcohol in the decade it was illegal than ever before. Smoking, another activity previously reserved for men, became popular among flappers. With the political field leveled by the 19th Amendment, women sought to eliminate social double standards. Consequently, the flapper was less hesitant to experiment sexually than previous generations. **Sigmund Freud** had popularized psychology and his declaration that the libido was one of the most natural of human needs seemed to give the green light to explore.

Visually, the flappers rejected the style of their mothers who had embraced the **Gibson Girl** look. The Gibson Girl was the personification of the feminine ideal of physical attractiveness as portrayed by the pen-and-ink illustrations of artist Charles Dana Gibson. His ideal was of a woman who had an hourglass shape, held in tight with a corset, and wore a dress with a high neck, full-length arms, and extended down to the floor. The Gibson Girl's hair was pinned up. The flapper rejected everything about the Gibson Girl's look. The long locks of Victorian women lay on the floors of beauty parlors as young women cut their hair to shoulder length. Hemlines of dresses rose dramatically to the knee. The cosmetics industry flowered as women used make-up in large numbers. Flappers bound their chests and wore high heels. They left corsets behind and embraced a straight line.

Many women celebrated the age of the flapper as a female declaration of independence. Experimentation with new looks, jobs, and lifestyles seemed liberating compared with the socially silenced woman in the Victorian Age of



Flappers: Northern, urban, single, young middle-class White women who rejected social expectations, wore makeup, dated, smoked, drank, danced, and dressed in dresses that were short, sleeveless and straight. They are emblematic of the 1920s.



Sigmund Freud: Scientist who popularized psychology. His ideas about sex were shocking but captivated American's attention.



Gibson Girl: Fashion style popular at the turn of the century that feature long dresses that covered necks, arms and legs. Underneath was a corset, and hair would be tied up, often with a hat. The Flappers of the 1920s rejected this style.

2 IS POP CULTURE A DISTRACTION?



the 1800s. The flappers chose activities to please themselves, not a father or husband. Nevertheless, critics were quick to elucidate the shortcomings of flapperism. The political agenda embraced by the previous generation was largely ignored until the feminist revival of the 1960s. Many wondered if flappers were expressing themselves or acting like men. One thing was certain: Despite the potential political and social gains or losses, the flappers of the 1920s sure managed to have a good time.

Primary Source: Magazine Cover

In 1924, The Saturday Evening Post marked the emergence of the new fashion trends of the decade with an illustration of a flapper on its cover.



TEENAGERS

In the 1800s, the American world consisted of children and adults. Most Americans tried their best to allow their children to enjoy their youth while they were slowly prepared for the trials and tribulations of adulthood. That

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began to change in the early 1900s. Although child labor practices still existed, many states passed restrictions against such exploitation and the average number of years spent in school for young Americans rose. Parents were waiting longer to push their youngsters into marriage rather than pairing them off at the tender age of 16 or 17. In short, it soon became apparent that a new stage of life — the teenage phase — was becoming a reality in America. American adolescents were displaying traits unknown among children and adults. Although the word teenager did not come into use until decades later, the teenage mindset dawned in the 1920s.

The single greatest factor that led to the emergence of the independent teenager was the automobile. Teens enjoyed a freedom from parental supervision unknown to previous generations. The courtship process rapidly evolved into dating. In earlier times, young boys and girls spent their first dates at home. The boy would meet the girl's parents, they would have a sitting in the parlor, followed by dinner with the entire family. Later in the evening, the couple might enjoy a few moments alone on the front porch. After several meetings, they could be lucky enough to be granted permission for an unchaperoned walk through town. The automobile shattered these old-fashioned traditions. Dating was removed from the watchful eyes of anxious parents. Teenagers had privacy, and a sexual revolution swept America. Experimentation with sexual behaviors before marriage became increasingly common. Young Americans were now able to look beyond their own small towns at an enlarged dating pool.

Automobile technology led directly to the other major factor that fostered a teenage culture: the **consolidated high school**. Buses could transport students farther from their homes, leading to the decline of the one-room schoolhouse. Furthermore, Americans realized the potential of a longer education, and states were adding more years to their compulsory schooling laws. As a result, a larger number of teenagers were thrown into a common space than ever before. It was only natural that discussions about commonalities would occur. Before long, schools developed their own cultural patterns, completely unlike the childhood or adult experience. **School athletics** and **extracurricular activities** only enhanced this nascent culture. The American teenager was born.

ART

The 1920s was a remarkable period of creativity in many aspects of life, including the world of art and architecture.

Art Deco was a dominant style in design and architecture of the 1920s. Originating in Europe, it spread throughout Western Europe and North America in the mid-1920s and remained popular through the 1930s and early 1940s, waning only after World War II. The name is short for Arts Décoratifs, which came from the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et

 **Consolidated High School:** A form of high school established in the 1920s that was larger because busses carried students in from many neighborhoods.

 **School Athletics:** Sports played by high school students. It was a creation of the 1920s.

 **Extracurricular Activities:** Student clubs, dances, etc. that became a part of school life in the 1920s.

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

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Industriels Modernes (International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts) held in Paris in 1925. The first use of the term is attributed to architect Charles-Edouard Jeanneret-Gris, known as “**Le Corbusier.**”



Le Corbusier: French architect who popularized Art Deco style.

Primary Source: Photograph

A close-up photograph of the spire of the Chrysler Building in New York City reveals some of the art deco elements of the design, especially repeated geometric motifs.



The eclectic style emerged from the years between World War I and World War II, often referred to as the interwar period, and combined traditional craft motifs with machine imagery and materials and an embrace of technology. Visually it is characterized by rich colors, lavish ornamentation, and geometric shapes. Artists employing the Art Deco style often drew inspiration from nature and initially favored curved lines, though rectilinear designs became increasingly popular. New York City’s **Chrysler Building** and the **Empire State Building** typified the Art Deco style. Other American examples can be found in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The Hoover Dam, constructed



Chrysler Building: Skyscraper in New York City built in the 1920s in the art deco style. It was briefly the tallest building in the world until the Empire State Building a few blocks away was completed.



Empire State Building: Iconic building in New York City. Completed in 1931, it is an excellent example of the art deco style of its time.

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between 1931 and 1936 on the border between Nevada and Arizona, includes Art Deco motifs throughout the structure including its water-intake towers and brass elevator doors. Art Deco expanded beyond architecture and found its way into advertising and many other aspects of America's visual world.

Surrealism was another cultural movement that began in the early 1920s. Surrealist works featured elements of surprise, unexpected juxtapositions, and non sequitur. Spanish painter **Salvador Dali**, best known for his 1931 work, *The Persistence of Memory*, was one of the most famous practitioners of Surrealism.

As with many other areas of life, Americans were excited about trying new things, and new ways of seeing the world through art seemed like just another way of experimenting and trying having a good time.

CONCLUSION

Work and school make things possible. They provide money to feed our families and the necessary education to find good jobs. However, they are not usually the things we look forward to most in life. They are not the spice of life. When we look back at the things that we were most excited about, or look back through the photos in our phones, our favorite memories are friends, dinners, parties, events, shopping and trips. Consider how much time we spend watching online videos. Would those hours be better spent studying?

Maybe so, or maybe not. Perhaps participating in the culture of the people around us is what makes our life enjoyable. Perhaps popular culture is not a distraction at all. Maybe it is what makes work and school worthwhile.

What do you think? Is pop culture a distraction?



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.



Salvador Dali: Spanish artist. He is the most famous artists of the surrealist style.

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SUMMARY

During the 1920s, as more and more Americans had electricity in their homes and could afford radio sets, radio became an important form of entertainment. For the first time, Americans could all listen to the same radio shows, or listen to live sports broadcasts.

Baseball, football, swimming, tennis, and boxing were popular sports.

Fads such as flagpole sitting, dance marathons, and beauty pageants became popular across the nation.

Hollywood and the movie industry were born in the 1920s. The first movies had no sound, but eventually “talkies” were invented. Just like today, movie stars were fashion idols. The first cartoons also were born in the 1920s, including Walt Disney’s Mickey Mouse.

Jazz was a new American form of music that became popular in the 1920s. Based on old African-American musical traditions, Jazz became popular in the North and among White audiences.

Some middle-class and upper-class young women rejected traditional gender roles and the fashion sense of their mothers and embraced a new style. These flappers went out without chaperones, smoked, drank, danced, and dressed in shocking new ways (at least shocking for the 1920s).

The idea of the teenager was born in the 1920s. High schools added sports, extracurricular activities, and many young Americans waited longer to get married or start working.

New forms of art became popular in the 1920s. Art deco used bold colors, repeated patterns, and geometric shapes. Both artists and architects used this new style. Alternatively, some artists embraced surrealism, which included the painting of fantastic, dream-like images.



KEY CONCEPTS

Dance Marathon: Dance Marathon: A competition popular in the 1920s in which couples tried to see who could dance for the longest amount of time.

Miss America Pageant: Beauty contest established in the 1920s.

Flagpole Sitting: Fad in the 1920s in which people sat on chairs at the top of flag poles.

Consolidated High School: A form of high school established in the 1920s that was larger because busses carried students in from many neighborhoods.

School Athletics: Sports played by high school students. It was a creation of the 1920s.

Extracurricular Activities: Student clubs, dances, etc. that became a part of school life in the 1920s.



LOCATIONS

Hollywood: Neighborhood of Los Angeles that became the center of the new movie industry in the 1920s.

Apollo Theater: Theater in New York that hosted many early jazz musicians.

Cotton Club: Club in New York that hosted many early jazz musicians.

Chrysler Building: Skyscraper in New York City built in the 1920s in the art deco style. It was briefly the tallest building in the world until the Empire State Building a few blocks away was completed.

Empire State Building: Iconic building in New York City. Completed in 1931, it is an excellent example of the art deco style of its time.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

Guglielmo Marconi: Italian inventor who pioneered radio.

Jim Thorpe: Native American who studied at the Carlisle Indian School, played in the Olympics, and played professional baseball and football.

Gertrude Ederle: First woman to swim the English Channel.

Helen Wills: Women's tennis champion in the 1920s.

"Big Bill" Tilden: Men's tennis champion in the 1920s.

Harold "Red" Grange: Star football player in the 1920s.

Rudolph Valentino: Famous movie star of the 1920s. He was known for his sex-appeal.

Babe Ruth: Famous homerun-hitting baseball player of the 1920s and 1930s. He played for

the New York Yankee's and inspired nicknames such as the "Sultan of Swat."

Clara Bow: Most famous film actress of the silent film era.

Charlie Chaplin: Famous actor, writer, and director of the early film era. He is most famous for playing the tramp.

D. W. Griffith: Director who filmed the first movie in Hollywood.

Walt Disney: Animator who created the first animated films. His character Mikey Mouse debuted in 1928.

Duke Ellington: Early jazz musician who led an orchestra.

Louis Armstrong: Famous jazz musician. He sang and played the trumpet.

Jelly Roll Morton: Pianist and bandleader from New Orleans who claimed to have invented jazz.

Bessie Smith: Great female jazz and blues singers of the 1920s.

Ella Fitzgerald: Great female jazz singer beginning in the 1930s. She was sometimes called the Queen of Jazz.

Billie Holiday: Along with Ella Fitzgerald, one of the great female jazz singers of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Flappers: Northern, urban, single, young middle-class White women who rejected social expectations, wore makeup, dated, smoked, drank, danced, and dressed in dresses that were short, sleeveless and straight. They are emblematic of the 1920s.

Sigmund Freud: Scientist who popularized psychology. His ideas about sex were shocking but captivated American's attention.

Gibson Girl: Fashion style popular at the turn of the century that feature long dresses that covered necks, arms and legs. Underneath was a corset, and hair would be tied up, often with a hat. The Flappers of the 1920s rejected this style.

Le Corbusier: French architect who popularized Art Deco style.

Salvador Dali: Spanish artist. He is the most famous artists of the surrealist style.



BUSINESSES

Radio Corporation of America (RCA): Early company that sold radio sets to everyday Americans.

National Broadcasting Company (NBC): First broadcasting company in America. It was founded by RCA to produce content for the radios RCA was selling.



TECHNOLOGY

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

The Jazz Singer: The first film with sound. It started Al Jolson.

Steamboat Willie: The first animated film featuring Mickey Mouse.

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.

Charleston: Dance craze that swept the nation in the 1920s.

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.

3

T H I R D Q U E S T I O N WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE A NEW NEGRO?



INTRODUCTION

For over 200 years of America's history, African Americans had been slaves, primarily in the southern states. In the 1860s, slavery ended with the Civil War, but the position of African Americans at the bottom of the social order did not change much, despite the best efforts of reform-minded Reconstructionists. However, in the 1920s a group of African Americans in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City began promoting the idea of the New Negro. For them, things were changing.

What was it that they saw as new? If the former slaves and their children who had been the Negro of the later 1800s, what was new about the African Americans in the 1920s?

What did it mean to be a New Negro that was different from the African Americans of the period between the end of slavery and WWI?

3 WHAT DID IT MEAN TO BE A NEW NEGRO?



AFRICAN AMERICAN LIFE AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

After the Civil War ended in 1865, the victorious Union spent eleven years trying to remake the South. Although three constitutional amendments were passed ending slavery, granting citizenship to former slaves, and legally giving voting rights to all men, the era of Reconstruction is often seen as a failed effort to change the culture of the South. As many historians have said, the North won the war but lost the peace.

After the end of Reconstruction in 1877, with the passage of new constitutions, Southern states adopted provisions that caused disenfranchisement of large portions of their populations by skirting constitutional protections. While their voter registration requirements applied to all citizens, in practice, they disenfranchised most Blacks.

Democratic state legislatures passed **Jim Crow** laws to assert white supremacy, establish racial segregation in public facilities, and treat Blacks as second-class citizens. The landmark court decision in **Plessy v. Ferguson** in 1896 held that “separate but equal” facilities, as on railroad cars, were constitutional. Thus were born segregated public schools.

For the national Democratic Party, the alignment after Reconstruction resulted in a powerful Southern region that was useful for congressional clout. Virginian Woodrow Wilson, one of the two Democrats elected to the presidency between Abraham Lincoln and Franklin D. Roosevelt, was the first Southerner elected after 1856. He benefited from the disenfranchisement of Blacks and the crippling of the Republican Party in the South.

THE NIAGARA MOVEMENT

Born into slavery in Virginia in 1856, **Booker T. Washington** became an influential African American leader in the era after Reconstruction. In 1881, he became the first principal for the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute, better known as the **Tuskegee Institute** in Alabama, a position he held until he died in 1915. Tuskegee was an all-black normal school, an old term for a teachers’ college, teaching African Americans a curriculum geared towards practical skills such as cooking, farming, and housekeeping. Graduates would then travel through the South, teaching new farming and industrial techniques to rural communities. Washington extolled the school’s graduates to focus on the Black community’s self-improvement and prove that they were productive members of society, something Whites had often doubted was possible

In a speech delivered at the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta in 1895, which was meant to promote the economy of a South, Washington proposed what came to be known as the **Atlanta Compromise**. Speaking to a racially mixed audience, Washington called upon African Americans to work diligently for their own uplift and prosperity rather than preoccupy themselves with political and civil rights. Their success and hard

 **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.

 **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.

 **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.

 **Tuskegee Institute:** Famous collage for African Americans led by Booker T. Washington.

 **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.

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work, he implied, would eventually convince southern Whites to grant these rights. Not surprisingly, most Whites liked Washington's model of race relations, since it placed the burden of change on Blacks and required nothing of Whites. Wealthy industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller provided funding for many of Washington's self-help programs, as did Sears, Roebuck & Co. co-founder Julius Rosenwald, and Washington was the first African American invited to the White House by President Roosevelt in 1901. At the same time, his message also appealed to many in the Black community, and some attribute this widespread popularity to his consistent message that social and economic growth, even within a segregated society, would do more for African Americans than agitation for equal rights.



Primary Source: Photograph

A history class at the Tuskegee Institute in 1902. Booker T. Washington emphasized education as a means to be productive citizens, but not citizens who would agitate for change to the Jim Crow system of the South.

Yet, many African Americans disagreed with Washington's approach. Much in the same manner that Alice Paul felt the pace of the struggle for women's rights was moving too slowly under the NAWSA, some within the African American community felt that immediate agitation for the rights guaranteed under the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments, established during the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, was necessary. In 1905, a group of prominent civil rights leaders, led by **W. E. B. Du Bois**, met in a small hotel on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls, where segregation laws did not bar them from hotel accommodations, to discuss what immediate steps were needed for equal rights. Du Bois, a professor at the all-black Atlanta University and the first African American with a doctorate from Harvard, emerged as the prominent spokesperson for what would later be dubbed the **Niagara Movement**. By 1905, he had grown wary of Booker T. Washington's calls for



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.



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.

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African Americans to accommodate White racism and focus solely on self-improvement. Du Bois, and others alongside him, wished to carve a more direct path towards equality that drew on the political leadership and litigation skills of the black, educated elite, which he termed the **talented tenth**.

At the meeting, Du Bois led the others in drafting the **Declaration of Principles**, which called for immediate political, economic, and social equality for African Americans. These rights included universal suffrage, compulsory education, and the elimination of the convict lease system in which tens of thousands of Blacks had endured slavery-like conditions in southern road construction, mines, prisons, and penal farms since the end of Reconstruction. Within a year, Niagara chapters had sprung up in twenty-one states across the country. By 1908, internal fights over the role of women in the fight for African American equal rights lessened the interest in the Niagara Movement. However, the movement laid the groundwork for the creation of the **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)**, founded in 1909 to fight for African American rights in the courts. Du Bois served as the influential director of publications for the NAACP from its inception until 1933. As the editor of the journal **The Crisis**, Du Bois had a platform to express his views on a variety of issues facing African Americans in the later Progressive Era, as well as during World War I and its aftermath.

In both Washington and Du Bois, African Americans found leaders to push forward the fight for their place in the new century, each with a very different strategy. Both men cultivated ground for a new generation of African American spokespeople and leaders who would then pave the road to the modern civil rights movement after World War II.

THE GREAT MIGRATION

Between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, nearly two million African Americans fled the rural South to seek new opportunities elsewhere. The vast majority of these internal migrants moved to the cities of the industrial North during World War I. New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Indianapolis were the primary destinations for these African Americans. Together, these eight cities accounted for over two-thirds of the total population of the African Americans who travelled during this **Great Migration**.

A combination of both push and pull factors played a role in this movement. Despite the end of the Civil War and the passage of constitutional amendments ensuring freedom, the right to vote and equal protection under the law, African Americans were still subjected to intense racial hatred. For African Americans fleeing this culture of violence, Northern and Midwestern cities offered an opportunity to escape the dangers and intense poverty of the South.



Talented Tenth: W. E. B. Du Bois's idea that 10% of African Americans had the skills, education, and motivation to be the leaders of the community.



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



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.



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

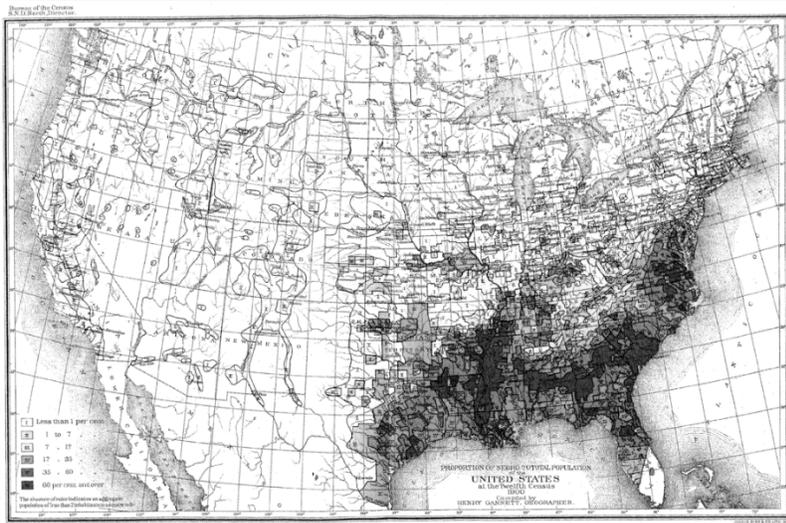


Great Migration: Movement of nearly two million African Americans out of the South to cities of the North in the 19-teens, largely to escape segregation and take advantage of job opportunities during World War I.

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In addition to this push out of the South, African Americans were also drawn to the cities of the North by job opportunities which had opened up when White men left for the army during World War I. Although many lacked the funds to move themselves, factory owners and other businesses that sought cheap labor assisted the migration. Often, the men moved first then sent for their families once they were ensconced in their new city life. Racism and a lack of formal education relegated these African American workers to many of the lower-paying unskilled or semi-skilled occupations. More than 80% of African American men worked menial jobs in steel mills, mines, construction, and meatpacking. In the railroad industry, they were usually employed as porters or servants. In other businesses, they worked as janitors, waiters, or cooks. African American women, who faced discrimination due to both their race and gender, found a few job opportunities in the garment industry or laundries, but were more often employed as maids and domestic servants. Regardless of the status of their jobs, however, African Americans earned higher wages in the North than they did for the same occupations in the South and typically found housing to be more available.



Secondary Source: Map

This map shows the concentration of African Americans in the United States in 1900 before the Great Migration. The darker colors show counties in which a higher percentage of residents were African American.

However, such economic gains were offset by the higher cost of living in the North, especially in terms of rent, food costs, and other essentials. As a result, African Americans usually found themselves living in overcrowded, unsanitary conditions, much like the tenement slums in which European immigrants lived in the cities. For newly arrived African Americans, even those who sought out the cities for the opportunities they provided, life in these urban centers was exceedingly difficult. They quickly learned that racial discrimination did not end at the Mason-Dixon Line, but continued to flourish in the North as well as the South. European immigrants, also seeking a better life in the cities of the



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.

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United States, resented the arrival of the African Americans, whom they feared would compete for the same jobs or offer to work at lower wages. Landlords frequently discriminated against them. Their rapid influx into the cities created severe housing shortages and even more overcrowded tenements. Homeowners in traditionally White neighborhoods later entered into covenants in which they agreed not to sell to African American buyers. Some bankers practiced mortgage discrimination, later known as **redlining**, in order to deny home loans to qualified buyers who wanted to buy houses in White neighborhoods, indicated on a map with a red line. Such pervasive discrimination led to a concentration of African Americans in some of the worst slum areas of most major metropolitan cities, a problem that persists today.

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Beginning in the early 1900s, the neighborhood of **Harlem** on the island of Manhattan in New York City became home to a growing African American middle class. In 1910, a large block along 135th Street and Fifth Avenue was purchased by various African-American realtors and a church group. Many more African Americans arrived during World War I. Due to the war, the migration of laborers from Europe virtually ceased, while the war effort resulted in a massive demand for unskilled industrial labor. The Great Migration brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the South. Among them were a great number of artists, writers, musicians and thinkers who would live and work together in Harlem. Their ideas and creative talents marked an outpouring of cultural creation and pride called the **Harlem Renaissance**.

Characterizing the Harlem Renaissance was an overt racial pride that came to be represented in the idea of the **New Negro**, who through intellect and production of literature, art, and music could challenge the pervading racism and stereotypes to promote progressive or socialist politics, and racial and social integration. The creation of art and literature would serve to uplift the race. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance embraced the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois and rejected the Atlanta Compromise of Booker T. Washington.

There would be no uniting form singularly characterizing the art that emerged from the Harlem Renaissance. Rather, it encompassed a wide variety of cultural elements and styles, including traditional musical styles as well as blues and jazz, traditional and new experimental forms in literature such as modernism and the new form of jazz poetry. This duality meant that numerous African-American artists came into conflict with conservatives in the Black intelligentsia. In this way, the Harlem Renaissance was not a monolithic movement, but a vibrant opportunity for the African American community to develop and explore the many facets of its identity.



Harlem: Neighborhood in Manhattan in New York City that became the home of African American politics and culture in the 1920s.



Harlem Renaissance: Time period in the 1920s marked by an outpouring of cultural creativity, political action, and pride. It was centered in the Harlem neighborhood in New York City.



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.

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Although the forms of expression varied widely, some common themes threaded throughout much of the work of the Harlem Renaissance. Black identity, the influence of slavery and emerging African-American folk traditions, institutional racism, the dilemmas inherent in performing and writing for elite White audiences, and the question of how to convey the experience of modern Black life in the urban North all found outlets in the work of the Harlem artists.



Primary Source: Photograph

Three young women on the sidewalk in Harlem during the 1920s. For African Americans, Harlem was the center of culture – fashion, music, art, literature and politics – during the decade.

African American artists used their creativity to prove their humanity and demand equality. The Harlem Renaissance led to more opportunities for Blacks to be published by mainstream houses. Many authors began to publish novels, magazines and newspapers during this time. The new fiction attracted a great amount of attention from the nation at large. Among authors who

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became nationally known were **Claude McKay**, **Zora Neale Hurston**, **James Weldon Johnson**, **Alain Locke**, and **Langston Hughes**.

The Harlem Renaissance was more than a literary or artistic movement. It also embraced a development of ethnic pride, as seen in the **Back to Africa** movement led by **Marcus Garvey**, a Jamaican-born political leader, publisher, journalist, entrepreneur, and orator. Garvey was President-General of the **Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)** and also President and one of the directors of the Black Star Line, a shipping and passenger line. Garvey was unique in advancing a philosophy to inspire a global mass movement and economic empowerment focusing on Africa known as Garveyism. Garveyism would eventually inspire others, ranging from the Nation of Islam to the Rastafari movement, which proclaim Garvey as a prophet, and the Black Power Movement of the 1960s.

At the same time, a different expression of ethnic pride, promoted by W. E. B. Du Bois, introduced the notion of the “talented tenth,” the African Americans who were fortunate enough to inherit money or property or obtain a college degree during the transition from Reconstruction to the Jim Crow period of the early twentieth century. According to Du Bois, these talented tenth were considered the finest examples of the worth of Black Americans as a response to the rampant racism of the period. Du Bois did not assign any particular leadership to the talented tenth, but in his writings he held them up as a model to be emulated.



 **Claude McKay:** Poet of the Harlem Renaissance. His most famous poem is “If We Must Die.”

 **Zora Neale Hurston:** Author of the Harlem Renaissance. Her novels celebrated the life of everyday African Americans.

 **James Weldon Johnson:** Poet of the Harlem Renaissance. He wrote “Life Every Voice and Sing.”

 **Alain Locke:** Author, philosopher, teacher and patron of the arts during of the Harlem Renaissance.

 **Langston Hughes:** Most famous poet of the Harlem Renaissance.

 **Back to Africa Movement:** Movement championed by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s that argued for African Americans to assert ethnic pride and move to Africa.

 **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.

Primary Source: Photograph

Madam C. J. Walker in her car. She served as a symbol of the possibilities for African Americans, both men and women.

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The artists and writers of the Harlem Renaissance rested primarily on a support system of Black patrons, Black-owned businesses and publications rather than on support from wealthy Whites. Among the most notable of these was Sarah Breedlove, better known as **Madam C. J. Walker**. Walker was an entrepreneur, philanthropist, and political and social activist. The first female self-made millionaire in the United States, she became one of the wealthiest self-made women in America and the wealthiest African-American woman in the country. Walker made her fortune by developing and marketing a line of beauty and hair products for black women. In addition to being a patron of the arts, Walker's home served as a social gathering place for the African-American community.

 **Madam C. J. Walker:** Female African American entrepreneur who was an important patron of the arts and leader during the Harlem Renaissance. She rose from poverty and made her fortune selling cosmetic products designed for African American women.

Although the vibrant creativity of the Harlem Renaissance faded in the 1930s with the onset of the Great Depression, the movement had an enormous, lasting impact on the African American community in both New York City and the nation in general. The Harlem Renaissance was more than a literary or artistic movement. It possessed a certain sociological development, particularly through a new racial consciousness, through racial integration, and it helped lay the foundation for the later Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

CONCLUSION

W. E. B. Du Bois is rightfully remembered as a man who challenged Booker T. Washington's accommodationist attitude toward White power and is properly accorded a position as one of the African American thinkers who gave birth to the ideas that became the Civil Rights Movement.

Du Bois' New Negro was a different kind of person than Washington's ideal African American citizen. But how so? What did it mean to be a New Negro in the 1920s? What was new or reborn?

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SUMMARY

After the end of Reconstruction, White leaders in the South established the Jim Crow system of segregation, which recreated the social order of the pre-Civil War Era with African Americans stuck firmly at the bottom.

The most prominent African American leader in the late 1800s was Booker T. Washington. He ran the Tuskegee Institute and argued that African Americans should find ways to become educated so that they could be productive members of society. He did not emphasize fighting for equality or equal rights.

In 1905, a group of African Americans formed the Niagara Movement. They wanted equal rights and founded the NAACP to fight for equality in the courts. Their leader was W. E. B. Du Bois, who offered a contrast to Booker T. Washington.

During WWI, thousands of African Americans moved out of the South to find jobs in factories in the North. This movement of people is called the Great Migration. They mostly settled in urban centers such as New York City, Chicago or Detroit. Although they did find higher paying jobs, they also found that segregation still existed in the North in the form of limits on where they could live and what jobs they could have.

A large number of the most creative and important leaders of the African American community settled in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City during the 1920s. They made music, wrote poetry and novels, danced, created artwork, and advocated for new political rights. This period of intense racial pride and activism was the Harlem Renaissance.



KEY CONCEPTS

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.

Talented Tenth: W. E. B. Du Bois's idea that 10% of African Americans had the skills, education, and motivation to be the leaders of the community.

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.



EVENTS

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.

Back to Africa Movement: Movement championed by Marcus Garvey in the 1920s that argued for African Americans to assert ethnic pride and move to Africa.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

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.

Claude McKay: Poet of the Harlem Renaissance. His most famous poem is "If We Must Die."

Zora Neale Hurston: Author of the Harlem Renaissance. Her novels celebrated the life of everyday African Americans.

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Madam C. J. Walker: Female African American entrepreneur who was an important patron of the arts and leader during the Harlem Renaissance. She rose from poverty and made her fortune selling cosmetic products designed for African American women.



LOCATIONS

Tuskegee Institute: Famous college for African Americans led by Booker T. Washington.

Harlem: Neighborhood in Manhattan in New York City that became the home of African American politics and culture in the 1920s.



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.



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.

4

F O U R T H Q U E S T I O N CAN LAWS MAKE US MORAL?



INTRODUCTION

Civilization works if people follow rules. No nation or society can function if its people run amuck and do as they please. Some rules are simply a matter of being polite. We hold the door open and say please and thank you. Other rules are laws. We cannot steal or commit murder.

In some cases, our government tries to make us to be good by making bad behavior costly. Sin taxes that make cigarettes expensive, for example, are a way of society discouraging smoking. However, is this a good idea? Can we make people good by making bad behavior illegal? And what happens when we extend this idea to thoughts. Can we make destructive thoughts illegal?

What do you think? Can laws make us moral?

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RACISM IN THE 1920s

Foreigners had been flowing into Ellis and Angel Islands for years. African Americans had been moving north for jobs and promoting new ideas about equality and justice. Many White, Protestant, Americans, especially in rural areas, had a sense that their nation, sense of identity, and way of life was under siege. This sense was clearly reflected in the popularity of the 1915 motion picture, D. W. Griffith's **The Birth of a Nation**. Based on *The Clansman*, a 1915 novel by Thomas Dixon, the film offers a racist, White-centric view of the Reconstruction Era. The film depicts White southerners made helpless by Northern carpetbaggers who empower freed slaves to abuse White men and violate women. The heroes of the film were the Ku Klux Klan, who saved the Whites, the South, and the nation. While the film was reviled by many African Americans and the NAACP for its historical inaccuracies and its maligning of freed slaves, it was celebrated by many Whites who accepted the historical revisionism as an accurate portrayal of Reconstruction Era oppression. After viewing the film, President Wilson reportedly remarked, "It is like writing history with lightning, and my only regret is that it is all so terribly true." Wilson, a Virginian, was renowned for his racist views.

The **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)**, which had been dormant since the end of Reconstruction in 1877, experienced a resurgence of attention following the popularity of the film. Just months after the film's release, a second incarnation of the Klan was established at Stone Mountain, Georgia, under the leadership of William Simmons. This new Klan now publicly eschewed violence and received mainstream support. Its embrace of Protestantism, anti-Catholicism, and anti-Semitism, and its appeals for stricter immigration policies, gained the group a level of acceptance by nativists with similar prejudices.

Unlike its historical predecessor, the group was not merely a male organization. The ranks of the Klan in the 1920s also included many women, with chapters of its women's auxiliary in locations across the country. These women's groups were active in a number of reform-minded activities, such as advocating for prohibition and the distribution of Bibles at public schools. But they also participated in more expressly Klan activities like burning crosses and the public denunciation of Catholics and Jews. By 1924, this Second Ku Klux Klan had six million members in the South, West, and, particularly, the Midwest. To give a sense of the popularity of the Klan in the 1920s, more Americans were Klansmen than there were in the nation's labor unions at the time. While the organization's leaders publicly rejected violence, its members continued to employ intimidation, violence, and terrorism against its victims, particularly in the South. The new Ku Klux Klan was a violent organization with a peaceful façade.



The Birth of a Nation: 1915 movie by D. W. Griffith that glorified the history of the KKK in the years after the Civil War. It helped revive the KKK during the 1920s.



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.

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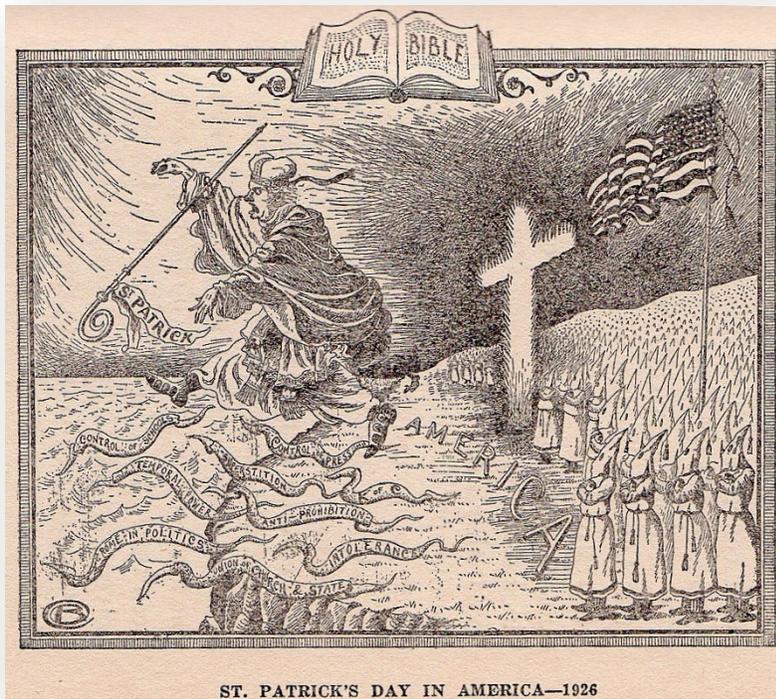
The Klan's newfound popularity proved to be fairly short-lived. Several states effectively combatted the power and influence of the Klan through anti-masking legislation, that is, laws that barred the wearing of masks publicly. As the organization faced a series of public scandals, such as when the Grand Dragon of Indiana was convicted of murdering a White schoolteacher, prominent citizens became less likely to openly express their support for the group without a shield of anonymity. More importantly, influential people and citizen groups explicitly condemned the Klan. Reinhold Niebuhr, a popular Protestant minister and conservative intellectual in Detroit, admonished the group for its ostensibly Protestant zealotry and anti-Catholicism. Jewish organizations, especially the **Anti-Defamation League**, which had been founded just a couple of years before the reemergence of the Klan, amplified Jewish discontent at being the focus of Klan attention. Moreover, the NAACP, which had actively sought to ban the film *The Birth of a Nation*, worked to lobby congress and educate the public on **lynching**, the illegal hanging of African Americans by mobs. Ultimately, however, it was the Great Depression that put an end to the Klan. As dues-paying members dwindled, the Klan lost its organizational power and sunk into irrelevance until the 1950s.



Anti-Defamation League: Jewish organization that works against anti-Semitism.



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.

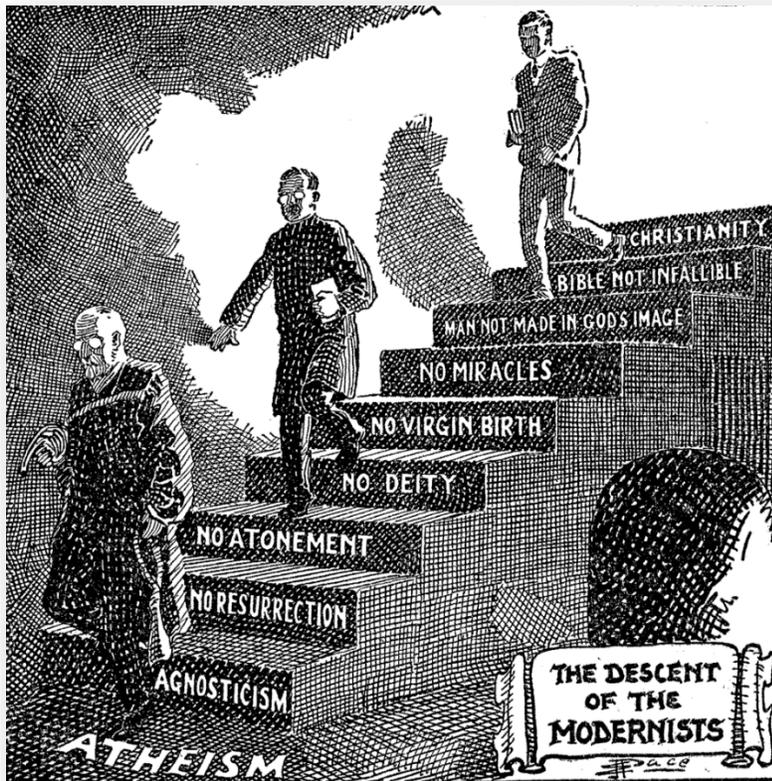


Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

A Pro-KKK Cartoon from 1926 depicting the Klan chasing out St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, along with snakes representing the evils the Klan believed immigrant Catholics brought with them. Ironically, many of these evils, including intolerance and control were characteristics of the Klan who, unlike Catholic immigrants, were unwilling to show they faces.

CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISM

The sense of degeneration that the Klan and anxiety over mass immigration prompted in the minds of many Americans was in part a response to the process of postwar urbanization. Cities were swiftly becoming centers of opportunity, but the growth of cities, especially the growth of immigrant populations in those cities, sharpened rural discontent over the perception of rapid cultural change. As more of the population flocked to cities for jobs and quality of life, many left behind in rural areas felt that their way of life was being threatened. To rural Americans, the ways of the city seemed sinful and excessive. Urbanites, for their part, viewed rural Americans as hayseeds who were hopelessly behind the times.



Primary Source: Editorial Cartoon

This cartoon criticizes the modernists as too willing to bend the moral rules of the Bible, which in the artist’s view, leads eventually to disbelief in god.

The conflict between the **modernists** of the cities, and the **traditionalists** of the countryside was best exemplified by the trial of a teacher in Tennessee in 1925.

When **Charles Darwin** announced his theory that humans and apes had descended from a common ancestor in 1859, he sent shock waves through the Western world. The **Theory of Evolution** contradicted the Bible’s version of the creation of the world, and churches hotly debated whether to accept

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

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the findings of modern science or continue to follow the teachings of ancient scripture. By the 1920s, most of the urban churches of America had been able to reconcile Darwin's theory with the Bible, but rural preachers preferred to follow a stricter interpretation of the Bible as truth and rejected Darwin's theory. These religious **fundamentalists** saw the Bible as the only salvation from a materialistic civilization in decline.

Charles Darwin had first published his theory of natural selection in 1859, and by the 1920s, many standard textbooks contained information about Darwin's theory of evolution. Fundamentalist Protestants targeted evolution as representative of all that was wrong with urban society. Tennessee's **Butler Act** made it illegal "to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals."



The **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** believed such laws limited the freedom of speech and led the charge of evolution's supporters. It offered to fund the legal defense of any Tennessee teacher willing to fight the law in

they were concentrated in rural areas and the South.

 **Charles Darwin:** British naturalist who proposed the Theory of Evolution and wrote the book "On the Origin of Species."

 **Theory of Evolution:** Theory proposed by Charles Darwin that all life is the result of evolution. Teaching this theory was outlawed in Tennessee by the Butler Act.

 **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.

 **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.

Primary Source: Photograph

Clarence Darrow, famed defense attorney, came to Dayton to defend John Scopes and the teaching of science. The idea of religious leaders being able to dictate what could and could not be discussed in schools infuriated him.

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court. The man who accepted the challenge was **John Scopes**, a science teacher and football coach in Dayton, Tennessee. In the spring of 1925, he walked into his classroom and read, from Hunter’s Civic Biology, part of a chapter on the evolution of humankind and Darwin’s theory of natural selection. His arrest soon followed, and a trial date was set.

Former presidential candidate, populist and fundamentalist champion **William Jennings Bryan** came to town to argue the case for the prosecution. Bryan had been preaching across the country about the spread of secularism and the declining role of religion in education. He was known for offering \$100 to anyone who would admit to being descended from an ape. **Clarence Darrow**, a prominent lawyer and outspoken agnostic, led the defense team. His statement that, “Scopes isn’t on trial, civilization is on trial. No man’s belief will be safe if they win,” struck a chord with those who feared that fundamentalist were on the verge of dictating what Americans could and could not think.

The trial turned into a media circus. When the case was opened, journalists from across the land descended upon the mountain hamlet of Dayton. H. L. Mencken of The Baltimore Sun provided the trial with its nickname: the **Monkey Trial**. Preachers and fortune seekers filled the streets. Entrepreneurs sold everything from food to Bibles to stuffed monkeys. It was the first trial to be broadcast on national radio.

The outcome of the trial, in which Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100, was never really in question, as Scopes himself had confessed to violating the law. Nevertheless, the trial itself proved to be high drama. The drama only escalated when Darrow made the unusual choice of calling Bryan as an expert witness on the Bible. Knowing of Bryan’s convictions of a literal interpretation of the Bible, Darrow peppered him with a series of questions designed to ridicule such a belief. The result was that those who approved of the teaching of evolution saw Bryan as foolish, whereas many rural Americans considered the cross-examination an insulting attack on the Bible and their faith.

The Scopes Monkey Trial was not the only evidence that fundamentalist Christian belief was on the rise in the 1920s among rural and White Americans. Another example of this shift was the emergence of **Billy Sunday** as a national icon. As a young man, Sunday had gained fame as a baseball player with exceptional skill and speed. Later, he found even more celebrity as the nation’s most revered evangelist, drawing huge crowds at camp meetings around the country. He was one of the most influential evangelists of the time and had access to some of the wealthiest and most powerful families in the country. Sunday rallied many Americans around fundamentalist religion and garnered support for prohibition. Recognizing Sunday’s popular appeal, Bryan attempted to bring him to Dayton for the Scopes trial, although Sunday politely refused.

 **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.

 **John Scopes:** High school biology teacher in Tennessee who was accused of violating the Butler Act. His trial became a symbol of the conflict between modernists and traditionalists during the 1920s.

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 **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.

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

 **Billy Sunday:** Former baseball star and widely followed evangelist preacher during the 1920s. He promoted fundamentalism and prohibition.

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Even more spectacular than the rise of Billy Sunday was the popularity of **Aimee Semple McPherson**, a Canadian Pentecostal preacher whose Foursquare Church in Los Angeles catered to the large community of Midwestern transplants and newcomers to California. Although her message promoted the fundamental truths of the Bible, her style was anything but old fashioned. Dressed in tight-fitting clothes and wearing makeup, she held radio-broadcast services in large venues that resembled concert halls and staged spectacular faith-healing performances. Blending Hollywood style and modern technology with a message of fundamentalist Christianity, McPherson exemplified the contradictions of the decade well before public revelations about a scandalous love affair cost her much of her status and following.



 **Aimee Semple McPherson:** Preacher from Los Angeles during the 1920s who helped promote fundamentalism. She was famous for broadcasting her services on the radio and wearing fashionable cloths while preaching, as well as series of scandalous love affairs.

Primary Source: Photograph

The Angelus Temple in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles was the center of Aimee Semple McPherson's Foursquare Church. It is still in operation today.

PROHIBITION

After many decades of hard work, the Temperance Movement finally succeed in banning alcohol in the United States when, on October 28, 1919, the **18th Amendment** to the Constitution was implemented through the **Volstead Act**, which went into effect on January 17, 1920. A total of 1,520 Prohibition agents from three separate federal agencies, the Coast Guard, the Treasury Department's Internal Revenue Service Bureau of Prohibition, and the Department of Justice's Bureau of Prohibition, were tasked with enforcing the new law.

The effort to enforce the 18th Amendment and Volstead Act's was always problematic. Outlawing drugs, especially a drug like alcohol that has a long history of use, is a challenging mix of law enforcement and changing public opinion. With the job of enforcing the law separated between different departments, it was hard to know who was in charge in what areas, and who was responsible for what tasks. Geography presented another complication.

 **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 initiation prohibition.

 **Bootleggers:** People who imported illegal alcohol during prohibition.

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America is a vast nation with many places to hid illegal brewing and distilling operations. To make matters worse, Canada and Mexico did not ban alcohol and the extensive seaways, ports, and massive borders running along Canada and Mexico, made it exceedingly difficult to stop **bootleggers** intent on bringing alcohol into the country.

While the commercial manufacture, sale, and transport of alcohol was illegal, Section 29 of the Volstead Act allowed private citizens to make wine and cider from fruit, but not beer, in their homes. Up to 200 gallons per year could be produced, with some vineyards growing grapes for purported home use. In addition to this loophole, the wording of the act did not specifically prohibit the consumption of alcohol. In anticipation of the ban, many people stockpiled wines and liquors during the latter part of 1919 before alcohol sales became illegal in January 1920. As Prohibition continued, people began to perceive it as illustrative of class distinctions, since it unfairly favored social elites who could afford to purchase in bulk. Working-class people were enraged that their employers could dip into a cache of private stock while they were unable to afford similar indulgences.



Primary Source: Photograph

Deputies dump illegal alcohol during the 1920s.

CRIME

The rift between the **Dries**, who favored prohibition, and the **Wets** who wanted to legalize alcohol consumption and sales again, hinged on the long-running debate over whether drinking was morally acceptable in light of the antisocial behavior that overindulgence could cause. Ironically, this dispute over ethics the era of prohibition led to a sudden groundswell of criminal activity, with those who opposed legal alcohol sales unintentionally enabling the growth of vast criminal organizations that controlled the illegal sale and



Dries: People who supported prohibition.



Wets: People who opposed prohibition.

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distribution of alcohol and related activities including gambling and prostitution.

Powerful gangs corrupted law enforcement agencies, leading to the blanket criminal activity of racketeering, which includes bribery, extortion, loan sharking, and money laundering. Illicit alcoholic beverage industries earned an average of \$3 billion per year in illegal income, none of which was taxed, and effectively transformed cities into battlegrounds between opposing bootlegging gangs.

Chicago, the largest city in the Midwest and of one America's true metropolises along with New York and Los Angeles, became a haven for Prohibition dodgers. Many of Chicago's most notorious gangsters, including **Al Capone** and his archenemy, Bugs Moran, made millions of dollars through illegal alcohol sales. By the end of the decade, Capone controlled all 10,000 Chicago **speakeasies**, illegal nightclubs where alcohol was sold, and ruled the bootlegging business from Canada to Florida. Numerous other crimes, including theft and murder, were directly linked to criminal activity in Chicago and other cities.

THE EFFECTS OF PROHIBITION

Prohibition had a large effect on music in the United States, specifically on jazz. Speakeasies became far more popular during the Prohibition era than bars had been, partially influencing the mass migration of jazz musicians from New Orleans to major northern cities such as Chicago and New York. This movement led to a wider dispersal of jazz, as different styles developed in different cities. In this way, prohibition may have also helped pave the way for limited integration, as it united mostly African American musicians with mostly White crowds.

Prohibition also had an effect on gender roles. As the saloon began to die out, public drinking lost much of its macho association, resulting in an increased social acceptance of women drinking in the semipublic environment of a speakeasy. This new norm established women as a notable new target demographic for alcohol marketers, who sought to expand their clientele.

By the 1930s, the Great Depression had settled over the country. Millions of Americans were out of work and times were hard. Americans were ready for a drink. On December 5, 1933, ratification of the **21st Amendment** repealed the 18th Amendment. As Prohibition ended, some of its supporters, including industrialist and philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, openly admitted its failure.

In a positive epilogue, however, the overall consumption of alcohol dropped and remained below pre-Prohibition levels. In the end, the Temperance Movement succeeded in reducing, if not eliminating, the drinking of alcohol in America.

 **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.

 **Speakeasy:** A bar where illegal alcohol was sold during prohibition.

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

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CONCLUSION

Clearly prohibition failed. Americans simply did not want to be told they could not drink alcohol. Despite efforts to enforce the 18th Amendment, drinking did not stop. In fact, prohibition of alcohol did not lead Americans to give up alcohol, is made us drinkers who also had to endure increased crime.

In the case of the Butler Act, fundamentalists were unable to legislate what Americans could and could not think about the origin of the human species, and in the case of the KKK, they failed to turn the entire nation against immigrants, Jews, Catholics and African Americans, although they certainly turned the minds of many.

All of this work to make people think or behave in certain ways worked partially, but not fully. On the other hand, some laws such as those that prohibit violent crime, are still with us today and seem to be doing a pretty good job of keeping people from behaving violently.

What do you think? Can laws make us moral?

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SUMMARY

Fueled partly by the popularity of a movie celebrating the Ku Klux Klan in the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, the KKK became popular and quite common in the 1920s. They targeted their hatred on African Americans, immigrants, Catholics and Jews. Although the Klan's leaders promised to be non-violent, in reality the members of the Klan carried out numerous lynching and other forms of terrorism.

The 1920s saw the rise of Christian Fundamentalism who reacted to new inventions and excitement about science by teaching that truth can be found in the Bible. Most importantly, they focused on preventing Darwin's Theory of Evolution from being taught in public schools because it conflicted with the Biblical story of creation.

Although some Americans wanted their children to learn the Bible's version of creation in public school, others did not like it that Christian teachings were being enacted into law. In 1925, a great court case showed off the conflict between these modernists and traditionalists. In Tennessee, the Butler Act had made it illegal to teach any version of creation other than the story found in the Bible. When John Scopes taught Darwin's theory he was arrested.

Great lawyers came to try the case, and although Scopes lost (it was obvious he had broken the law), the nation watched with great interest as the Bible itself seemed to be on trial.

Other leaders tapped into a growing interest in traditional religion. Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson both built large followings as they toured the nation speaking to large audiences.

The 1920s are also remembered as the era of Prohibition. Beginning in 1919, alcohol was illegal in the United States. Preventing people from making, selling, buying and drinking alcohol was incredibly difficult. Although Prohibition was supposed to reduce crime, crime actually became more common as gangs fought each other over control of the making and distribution of illegal alcohol. Most famous of these was Al Capone's gang in Chicago. Police forces, who were supposed to enforce the laws, often were paid by bar owners to look the other way, or simply ignored the law since they wanted to drink also. Finally, after 14 years, the 21st Amendment made alcohol legal again.



KEY CONCEPTS

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.

Theory of Evolution: Theory proposed by Charles Darwin that all life is the result of evolution. Teaching this theory was outlawed in Tennessee by the Butler Act.



PEOPLE AND GROUPS

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.

Anti-Defamation League: Jewish organization that works against anti-Semitism.

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.

Charles Darwin: British naturalist who proposed the Theory of Evolution and wrote the book "On the Origin of Species."

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.

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COURT CASES

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



MOVIES

The Birth of a Nation: 1915 movie by D. W. Griffith that glorified the history of the KKK in the years after the Civil War. It helped revive the KKK during the 1920s.



LOCATIONS

Speakeasy: A bar where illegal alcohol was sold during prohibition.

Q u e s t i o n T w e l v e



a t i m e o f

PROGRESS?

Progress can be tricky to define. While the advent of the automobile industry made road trips and suburbs possible, it also brought about pollution, and changed dating habits. The growth of industry led to new consumer goods that saved millions of housewives time and effort, but led to an emphasis on having things that the authors of the Lost Generation questioned. The Harlem Renaissance, one of the greatest outpourings of racial pride and artistic creativity ever in American history, was precipitated by shocking, openly practiced acts of bigotry, hatred and violence.

The 1920s then, proved to be a time of contradictions, and no single event illustrated that conflict more so than the trial of John Scopes. Was America going in the right direction? Was modernism the way of the future? Was change good? Alternatively, were traditional values the way to preserve the goodness that had made America great? Should the headlong rush to embrace change be halted, questioned, and held in check by the need to preserve tradition?

As historians, our measure of the 1920s is this: was the decade ultimately a time of change, or a time when Americans retreated from change? Did those years of excitement lead to something new and better, or back to something old, or perhaps to something new, but a future that was more dark and sinister?

What do you think? Were the 1920s a time of progress?



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