

The Roaring Twenties



Society in the 1920's

- ⊖ The 1920's were a time of rapid change in American society.
- ⊖ A more urban society that developed because of industrialization and urbanization, along with the mass on immigrants began transforming the U.S. into an urban nation.
- ⊖ Soldiers and citizens, affected by the war, began to question the ideas and attitudes that led to war.
- ⊖ Traditional values changed which ignited a re3volution in manners and morals
- ⊖ The *flapper* symbolized this revolution. The term describes young women: rebellious, energetic, fun-loving, and bold.
- ⊖ Older Americans were disillusioned at how these young men and women behaved.

The Changing Role of Women

- ⊖ The war had forced single and married women into the work force with many moving into better and higher paying jobs.
- ⊖ The nineteenth Amendment was adopted in 1920 and gave all women the right to vote.
- ⊖ Women looked for even greater equality with men.
- ⊖ Flappers changed the role of women by having an impact on:
 - Fashion- young women wore dresses more stylish and shorter than their mothers. They had shorter haircuts and wide brimmed hats. They began wearing heavy makeup a practice formerly associated with prostitutes and actresses.
 - Manners changed and the “proper women” who rarely drank or smoked in public was replaced by women who defied prohibition and began smoking cigarettes as well as pipes and cigars. They danced the night away in night clubs.
- ⊖ Not all women embraced the flapper lifestyle. Some adopted the clothing because it was easier to wear because convenience was an issue when women worked.
- ⊖ Women by 1920 made up 23 percent of the workforce. Businesses remained prejudiced against them seeking posts as professionals mostly hiring them for clerical positions, and paying wages much lower than their male counterparts.
- ⊖ Although politicians feared the vote would create a block of women who voted the same this fear did not become a reality with most women voting as their husbands did.

Americans on the Move

- ⊖ Demographics (statistics that describe a population, such as data on race or income) changed in the U.S. as well.
- ⊖ The major demographic change was a move away from the countryside and to the cities.
- ⊖ A split in wealth developed between urban dwellers and farmers. Farmers who had done well during the war were hurt as prices fell and demand weakened.
- ⊖ The industrial economy boomed and many farmers reluctantly left the farms and headed to the cities.
- ⊖ This movement affected society and attendance at public high schools rose from 2.2 million in 1920 to 4.4 million in 1930. On farmers children worked as laborers but in the cities they needed education to compete for jobs.
- ⊖ The change in traditional morals and values took place mainly in the cities.
- ⊖ African Americans moved in a great migration to northern cities.
- ⊖ Immigration was restricted by Congress of people from southern and eastern Europe as well as Japan and China.

- ⊖ American employers turned to immigrants from Mexico and Canada, where immigration was unrestricted, to fill low-paying jobs.
- ⊖ Many of these immigrants moved to cities where they often lived in Spanish speaking communities called **barrios**.
- ⊖ Another result of migration was a growth of **suburbs**.
- ⊖ Cities built trolleys and subways that allowed people to get to work in the cities from their suburban homes.

American Heroes

- ⊖ During the time period many Americans looked with fascination at heroes many of whom were admired for bravery, modesty, and meeting new challenges with spirit and vitality.
- ⊖ “Lucky Lindy” Charles Lindbergh, climbed into the cockpit of his plane “The Spirit of St. Louis”, revved his engine, and took off from Roosevelt Field on Long Island and became the first person to fly non-stop solo across the Atlantic landing in Paris, France.
 - Americans went wild with jubilation upon hearing the news. Lindbergh was returned to the U.S. on a naval cruiser and received the Medal of Honor and was celebrated with a ticker-tape parade in NYC’s canyon of heroes as well as parades across the country.
- ⊖ Amelia Earhart in 1928 became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. She later set another record as the first to fly from California to Hawaii.
 - In 1937, her and her navigator attempted to be the first to fly around the world but after completing 2/3’s of the trip her plane mysteriously disappeared while crossing the Pacific Ocean.
- ⊖ Boxer Jack Dempsey captured the public imagination in the boxing ring while Jim Thorpe, a Native American, captured Gold medals in the Olympics and then moved to the football field.
- ⊖ George Herman “Babe” Ruth became known as the “Sultan of Swat” after his trade from the Boston Red Sox to the NY Yankees. Ruth would hit 714 home runs in his career as well as 60 home runs in a single season.



Impact of the Automobile

- ⊖ In the 1920’s, Americans traveled to more places and moved more quickly than ever before and the reason was the AUTO.
- ⊖ The auto industry played a huge role in the economic boom of the 1920’s.
- ⊖ The auto boom spurred growth in other related industries like tires, steel and glass.
- ⊖ Ford’s “Model T” car lowered the time it took to assemble a car by using the **assembly line**. A car was being produced every 93 minutes by 1913. By 1924 the price of a new car dropped from \$850 to \$290.
- ⊖ General Motors introduced auto financing and people were able to purchase a car and make equal monthly payments to pay them off over time.
- ⊖ Cars had other effects as oil wells were drilled in the Southwest, states and towns paved roads and highways, gas stations, garages, car dealers, motels, and roadside restaurants sprang up throughout the country.
- ⊖ Suburbs moved further from cities as people could now drive from home to work.

Creating a Mass Culture

- ⊖ The movement of people helped different parts of the country learn about each other and spurred a move to a new national culture.
- ⊖ New forms of entertainment also led to a national culture.
- ⊖ In the 1920's rising wages and labor saving devices gave people more money to spend and more time for leisure.
- ⊖ Radio became popular in the 1920's with the first station formed in 1920 and by 1929 over 10 million homes had radios.
- ⊖ Radio listeners enjoyed jazz, comedies, westerns, classical music, news reports and play-by-play sports broadcasts.
- ⊖ In the 1920's the movie industry came of age in southern California with its sunny days and warm weather that allowed year round filming.
- ⊖ Millions of Americans went to the movies at least once a week.
- ⊖ The first movies had no sound and audiences read cards to follow the plot while a piano player added music.
- ⊖ Fans adored Hollywood stars that made comedies, romances, adventures and westerns.
- ⊖ Charlie Chaplin nicknamed The Little Tramp played a comic figure that made audiences both laugh and cry.
- ⊖ In 1927, Hollywood caused a sensation when it produced "The Jazz Singer" and the first "talkie" movie was shown. Soon all new movies were talkies and new stars replaced some of the silent film stars.
- ⊖ Jazz was born in New Orleans and it combines West African rhythms with African American work songs and spirituals as well as European harmonies.
- ⊖ Jazz spread from New Orleans to Chicago, Kansas City and to New York. It took over the country and dance halls and today is considered an original American art form.
- ⊖ A new generation of writers emerged in the 1920's. They often criticized Americans for caring too much about money and fun.
- ⊖ Writers like Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote of their experiences in war and of the new generation of the rich and powerful and the Flapper lifestyle.
- ⊖ The **Harlem Renaissance** began in NYC as African American artists, writers, and musicians settled in Manhattan.
- ⊖ They worked and celebrated their African American heritage, protested prejudice and racism, and made great achievements in the arts.
- ⊖ Langston Hughes and other writers and poets wrote with pride of a newly forming African American Culture.