

Information on Increasing Consumerism

After the thriftiness of World War I, the 1920s saw a burst of personal prosperity and consumer spending unrivaled in decades past. In 1850 the national annual income per capita (per person) was \$95. In 1918 it had risen to \$586, an increase far greater than the rate of inflation. In 1900 the average family had to spend 60 percent of its income on basic necessities; this figure dropped to 50 percent by 1920. More than the roar of sports crowds or the melodies of jazz music, the sounds that marked the decade were the hum of factories producing millions of consumer goods and the clattering of busy cash registers. And behind the scenes, a powerful new business—modern advertising—steadily grew to help sell this outpouring of products to American consumers.

One reason consumerism became more prominent in the 1920s was the introduction of a huge number of new goods. Automobiles led the way, as the early horseless carriages gave way to Henry Ford's Model T and Model A. But the motorcar was merely the first of many new ideas that found willing buyers during the decade—vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, electric irons, and electric fans all began to be mass-marketed during the twenties. In addition, inexpensive items such as wristwatches, cigarette lighters, and cameras competed for consumers' dollars.

Consumerism was also greatly influenced by the massive growth of the U.S. economy—between 1922 and 1929, total national production increased 34 percent. With more consumer money available, manufacturers needed to find a way to make traditionally thrifty American consumers buy products they did not necessarily need or even want. To do so, they had to somehow convince Americans that spending for the present was preferable to saving for the future. Manufacturers found their answer in advertising. Before 1910 advertising had been fairly straightforward and was usually reserved for department stores and products that offered physical remedies. But as industrial production boomed, advertisers became much more sophisticated—and much more successful.

Advertising prospered in the 1920s by focusing on the psychology of buying, and ads soon appeared that appealed to people's needs, frustrations, and anxieties. The Jordan Motor Car Company, for example, said nothing about engine size or brakes in its ad—instead, the advertisement told a story that focused on pleasant feelings of freedom, excitement, and adventure. Listerine mouthwash pledged to save people, including an old widow and a handsome young man named Marvin, from the loneliness caused by unpleasant breath. Palmolive soap urged women to keep “that schoolgirl complexion.” Consumers were often coaxed to buy a certain product because it was fashionable and preferred by people of wealth and position. The Crane plumbing company, for example, described its bathrooms as “defining the true meaning of the word *chic*.” Other ad campaigns urged buyers to keep up with their neighbors, who would otherwise own more and live better than they. Advertisers also learned that sex sells. For example, the Holeproof Hosiery Company featured what

were, for the time, rather scantily clad young women wearing the company's silk stockings. "Make the public want what you have to sell," said one advertising executive, summing up the era. "Make 'em pant for it."



- **How did consumerism change in the 1920s? Why?**
- **How did advertising change in the 1920s?**
- **What were some of the modern techniques used by advertisers?**

The psychological plays used by advertisers worked. As one General Motors Company executive explained, advertising was essential because it made people feel "healthily dissatisfied with what they have," and they responded by buying everything they thought they needed. The result was boom times for U.S. companies. For instance, the Lambert Company, makers of Listerine, saw profits rise from roughly \$100,000 in 1920 to more than \$4 million in 1927.

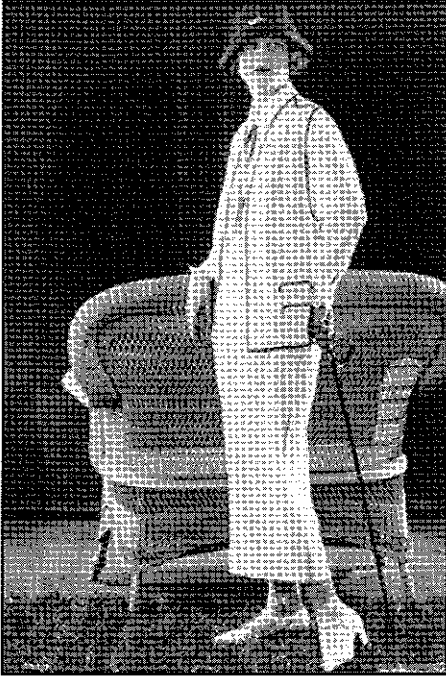
Despite the power of advertising, another economic change was the real fuel behind consumerism: the growth of the installment plan. Installment plans allow consumers to buy goods on credit by paying a small amount of money initially and then paying off the remainder in monthly installments. With these plans, people with modest incomes could buy goods that would otherwise have been beyond their reach. And almost every conceivable good could be purchased on credit in the 1920s—a \$43.50 phonograph was \$5 down, \$5 a month; a \$445 piano was \$15 down, \$12 a month; a \$28.95 vacuum was \$2 down, \$4 a month. But Americans could not agree on how much credit was too much. Some argued that Americans needed to stop living beyond their means, while others said the installment plan was helping to create the economic boom times the country was enjoying and should be encouraged. Regardless, throughout roaring 1920s, many Americans indulged in buying a seemingly limitless number of products on the installment plan, egged on by irresistible advertising.



- **Explain how the installment plan worked for American consumers.**
- **How did easy credit contribute to the boom times in the 1920s?**
- **What problems might easy credit have caused in the decades following the 1920s?**

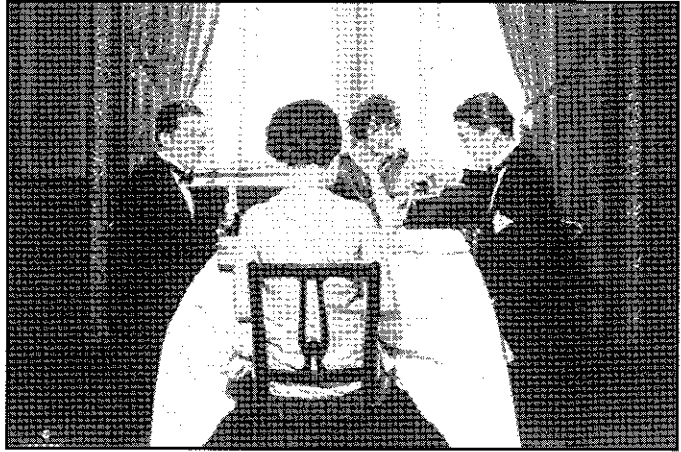
Pictures for Presentation on Increasing Consumerism

Transparency 1.4A



Model posing for a clothing advertisement

Transparency 1.4C



Advertisement for bottled water

Transparency 1.4B



Advertisement featuring a bathing beauty with a permanent wave

Transparency 1.4D



Billboard advertising a popular candy bar

Information on the Harlem Renaissance

The 1920s saw a great flourishing of culture within the African-American community. This cultural renaissance (rebirth) was centered in New York's Harlem district and brought together a cadre of talented writers, composers, musicians, artists, and entertainers who broadened and redefined American culture. Blacks trumpeted the cause of the "New Negro," one who was assertive and proud of his or her African heritage. Langston Hughes, a poet prominent during this period, wrote, "We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame. If white people are pleased we are glad. If they are not, it doesn't matter. We know we are beautiful." Evidence that Hughes was not alone in his thoughts could be found in the music, literature, and art of the Harlem Renaissance.

One of the most powerful aspects of the Harlem Renaissance was its music: jazz. Jazz had its beginnings in New Orleans, a cosmopolitan southern city where African, French, Spanish, and English peoples created a potent cultural milieu (mix). Jazz is a uniquely American music, a combination of rhythmic African drumbeats and European instruments, influenced by the traditional spirituals of black churches, and then blended together in improvisational jam sessions by talented musicians. In the 1920s the lively sounds of jazz moved with the migration of African Americans to cities in the north, first to Chicago and then to New York, and then across the country and around the world.

Among the greatest jazz performers was Louis Armstrong, originally a cornet player who traded that instrument for a trumpet. Armstrong was nicknamed "Satchmo," short for Satchelmouth, because his cheeks puffed up so large when he played. His great soaring solos and magnificent trumpet tone re-made jazz. The famous Duke Ellington, an artist turned pianist, composer, and band leader, got his start at Barron's Cabaret, a Harlem joint where jazz flourished in part because of Ellington's musical excellence. Many others, such as Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton, were also very talented, though they never became as well-known.

As musical and artistic creativity blossomed, Harlem became popular and lively, and not just for African Americans. African-American entertainers wowed audiences of all races. Whites flocked to clubs like Connie's Inn and the Cotton Club, where most patrons were white and most entertainers were black. Some white musicians, including Paul Whiteman and his orchestra, adopted jazz as their own, and many made far more money than the black musicians who were playing real jazz. Whiteman, for example, eventually made \$125,000 a year. But it was the black jazz players, musicians who traced their heritage to the crazy-quilt racial and ethnic stew of New Orleans, who made a lasting mark on American music.



- What was the Harlem Renaissance?
- Where did jazz come from, and what was its appeal?

Although the sounds of jazz were heard throughout the decade, the Harlem Renaissance was more than just a musical awakening. Playwrights, poets, writers, artists, and actors of every kind made Harlem an artistic mecca that vibrated with creativity during the 1920s and helped firmly establish a growing sense of black pride the United States.

Perhaps the most talented Harlem writer and poet of the decade was Langston Hughes. Hughes was working as a busboy at a Washington, DC, hotel when he was discovered by Vachel Lindsay, a popular American poet at the time. Hughes left some of his own poetry at Lindsay's table in the hotel restaurant, and Lindsay shared his admiration of the work with reporters. Suddenly, Hughes was no longer unknown, and he became an articulate and passionate spokesman for African Americans in the 1920s and beyond. His poetry ranged from deeply moving pieces that flushed with black pride to poems that told stories of the most lowly walks of life. He also wrote novels, short stories, experimental theater pieces, and an autobiography.

Artists, too, made significant contributions that focused on the culture and history of black Americans. Laura Wheeler Waring painted scenes from the lives of the small number of upper-class African Americans, while Edward A. Harleston focused on the African-American servants, soldiers, hired hands, and day laborers who worked in quiet anonymity. Aaron Douglas, another talented artist, became known for his illustrations and black-and-white drawings. His work was abstract and two-dimensional, for he wanted his viewers to see his human figures as symbolic of all African Americans. His goal was to interpret what he understood to be the spiritual identity and African roots of blacks in the United States through his art. Many of Douglas's later murals, painted during the Great Depression with government support, have survived in excellent condition.



- **What are some of the cultural accomplishments of the Harlem Renaissance?**
- **How did these accomplishments increase the pride of African Americans?**

Pictures for Presentation on the Harlem Renaissance

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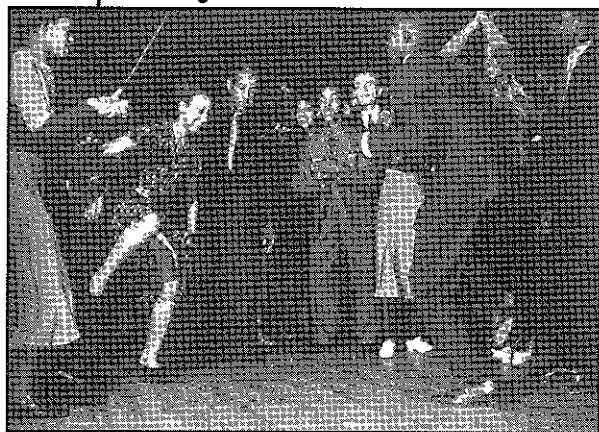
Harlem Renaissance jazz musician
Duke Ellington and his band 'NUF said

Transparency 1.4G



Harlem Renaissance writer
Langston Hughes

Transparency 1.4F



People dancing at a Harlem night club
in New York City

Transparency 1.4H



"The Negro in an African Setting," part
of a mural called "Aspects of Negro Life"
by Harlem Renaissance painter Aaron
Douglas

Information on Prohibition

Prohibition, the outlawing of alcohol sales and consumption, had its roots in the U.S. temperance movement that arose in the mid 1800s. Led by social reform groups composed primarily of white, middle-class women, this movement called for Americans to temper, or moderate, their consumption of alcohol. Temperance activists believed that American families were being torn apart by men's excessive drinking and condemned such effects of alcohol consumption as violence, unemployment, and economic and moral bankruptcy. Temperance leader Eliza Stewart stated: "No power on earth...has such influence to terrorize and make cowards of men as the liquor power. Satan could not have fallen on a more potent [powerful] instrument with which to thrall [enslave] the world."

Over time, an increasing number of politicians and citizens agreed with Stewart. By 1916 over 21 states had banned saloons, and many people supported prohibition. In 1919 Congress approved the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which outlawed the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors" within the United States. Although the amendment did not make it illegal to buy, possess, or consume alcohol, it was fully intended to halt America's drinking. During Prohibition, America's drinking dropped from 2.6 gallons to less than a gallon per person per year. However, Prohibition also had the opposite effect: many people's drinking surged upward, taking on an intense, exciting edge as they devised ingenious ways to get around the law.

Americans acquired alcohol—commonly referred to as *giggle water* or *hooch*—in a variety of ways. Many drank in illegal saloons known as *speakeasies*, which numbered about 220,000 by 1929. Speakeasy owners typically concealed their establishments with false business fronts and required special passwords or membership cards for entry. The liquor they sold was often of substandard quality. Bootleggers—so-called after smugglers who hid bottles of whiskey in their boots—used a variety of vile products to produce liquor, such as fusel oil, a poisonous liquid sometimes found in explosives. Many Americans also made "moonshine" from corn and potatoes in their own homemade stills. Others obtained alcohol from government-approved suppliers, such as producers of wine for church services and doctors, who wrote over 10 million "medicinal" prescriptions per year recommending such cures as drinking 5 gallons of beer per month. Finally, drinkers could sometimes obtain alcohol smuggled in from neighboring countries like the Bahamas and Canada. Many people carried their liquor in a concealed flat, thin bottle known as a hip flask. Others hid alcohol in canes, shoe heels, hot-water bottles, and curved flasks that slid under a woman's silk garter.



- What was the U.S. temperance movement? What did its supporters believe?
- What did the Eighteenth Amendment outlaw? How did it affect society?
- How did Americans acquire and conceal alcohol during Prohibition?

Despite the proclaimed moral foundation of Prohibition, it led to a nationwide increase in crime and lawlessness. Everyday citizens who wished to drink were now lawbreakers, and many began to enjoy the thrill of defying the law. They even attributed a certain glamour to criminals who surfaced during the period: rum runners, hired gunmen, and crime lords like Al “Scarface” Capone. Balding, with dark eyebrows slashed into a puffy, round face, Capone headed a gang on the west side of Chicago. His gang fought rival gangs to control Chicago’s illegal liquor trade and other high-profit “rackets” such as drugs, gambling, prostitution, and paid protection for speak-easies and other businesses. Capone eventually oversaw a vast crime empire, which he maintained by hits, or hired killings, on his rivals. By the end of the 1920s, Chicago had seen about 500 gang killings, almost half of which were of Capone’s enemies. Violence went hand in hand with the enormous profits generated by illegal trade; by the mid 1920s, the illegal alcohol trade was bringing in over \$3.5 billion a year for bootleggers and their associates. Capone alone amassed a personal fortune of \$40 million and made \$100 million for his crime organization.

Prohibition was exceedingly difficult for law authorities to enforce. First, the number of Americans defying the law was enormous, and local law authorities were no exception: 1923 figures show that 60 percent of the Chicago police force were profiting from the liquor trade. Despite spending about \$13 to \$15 million per year, the U.S. government simply did not have enough Prohibition agents or money to pursue every lawbreaker. Second, the public was overwhelmingly in favor—over 80 percent in 1926—of changing or repealing the law. Prohibition agents, or “dry snoops,” were often ridiculed. Agents’ methods—smashing in speak-easy doors with axes, bursting into people’s houses with guns to search for illegal stills and liquor, sniffing restaurant-goers for the telltale scent of alcohol—further infuriated the public. By the end of the 1920s, Prohibition agents averaged about 75,000 arrests per year and had killed over 160 people, some of whom were innocent victims wrongly suspected of being bootleggers.



- How did Prohibition affect law and order in American society?
- What role did organized crime play during the 1920s?
- Why was Prohibition difficult to enforce?

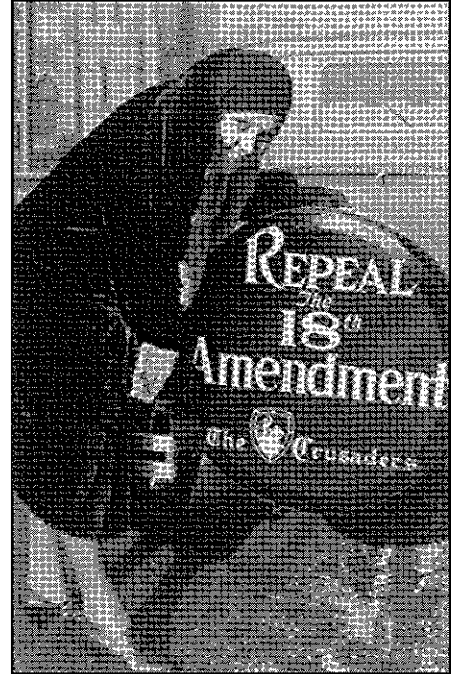
Pictures for Presentation on Prohibition

Transparency 1.4I



Federal agents gathered around an illegal distillery

Transparency 1.4K



Woman protesting against prohibition

Transparency 1.4J



Federal agent inspecting illegal liquor

Transparency 1.4L



Federal agent destroying several barrels of moonshine

Information on the Popularity of Radio and Movies

Along with sports industry, the entertainment industry took advantage of Americans' increased leisure time and income during the 1920s. Radios became more affordable, and quickly became a staple in working-class and middle-class homes alike. Movies became a new craze, as people escaped the postwar recession and then celebrated postwar prosperity with indulgence in entertainment.

Though radios were invented much earlier, cheaper prices and increased consumerism led to a huge surge in radio popularity and innovative radio broadcasting in the 1920s. The first licensed radio station was KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which broadcast the 1920 presidential election results. More and more stations were established, and as stations used studio cloths to muffle background noise and improve the quality of their sound, radio coverage gained popularity. At the end of 1922, three million Americans owned radios and could listen to 508 stations. By 1929 the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) was making \$150 million a year.

Radio programming brought dramatic changes to ordinary people's lives. Live broadcasts instantly connected Americans with nationwide events, including orchestra performances, soloist concerts, sports events, and politicians' speeches. Comedies like "Amos and Andy" and dramatic series like "The Shadow," featuring the deep-voiced Orson Welles, became a part of the lives of millions. In particular, churchgoers appreciated the flexibility radio afforded their lifestyles and religious practices. In 1922, for example, one modern preacher broadcast his Easter Sunday sermon from an airplane, enabling golfers to hear his message while they played. Unified by radio transmission, Americans together enjoyed the drama of news and the pleasure of cultural trends.



- Why did radio broadcasting become widespread during the 1920s?
- How did the radio industry grow?
- In what ways did radio broadcasting transform American lifestyles?

Like radio broadcasting, the motion picture film industry's growth during the 1920s revolutionized American entertainment. Earlier film successes were profitable—*The Birth of a Nation* made \$18 million in 1915—but producers limited actors' success by keeping them anonymous and modestly paid. Critics also warned that films would decrease church attendance and increase materialism, immorality, and marital tensions. However, American moviegoers, eager to escape the postwar recession, flocked to theaters in the early twenties to drink in the melodramatic love and fight scenes offered by romance films and Westerns. Films created fantasies that the "poorest Cinderella" could become rich and glamorous like onscreen stars. The movie industry also created thousands of jobs, attracting politicians' support. Advertisements also enticed the public by glorifying sex in movies, promising

“champagne baths...petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one terrific smashing climax that makes you gasp.”

In the face of increasing demand, small production companies soon combined to form giant industries that produced hundreds of films, making movies rival sports, music, and reading as the top-grossing forms of American entertainment. By 1922 almost every community in America had at least a 100-seat movie theater for a total 40 million weekly moviegoers. Both middle-class and working-class Americans sought leisure in these theaters for 10¢ to 75¢ per picture. Movie theater “palaces” in larger U.S. cities such as San Francisco and New York boasted opulent interiors including red carpet, gilded ceilings, crystal chandeliers, and Renaissance statues to welcome up to 5,000 wealthier moviegoers. By 1929 movies, theater, and spectator sports brought in 21 percent of the nation’s total \$4.3 billion in amusement revenues.

Mesmerized by theater magic, many Americans worshipped movie stars and modeled their personal lives after onscreen heroes. Rudolph Valentino, an Italian actor who played an Arab “sheik” who stole women into his tent, was emulated by male fans, who grew slick sideburns and pouted like “Latin lovers.” When Valentino died suddenly at age 31, mourners lined up over one mile to pass by his coffin, and some women even committed suicide. Composers wrote songs honoring Valentino’s machismo: “I’m the sheik of Araby, your love belongs to me. At night when you’re asleep, into your tent I’ll creep.” When “America’s sweetheart” actress Mary Pickford married actor Douglas Fairbanks in 1920, fans followed the wedding as if it were part of their own personal lives. Clara Bow, “The Hottest Jazz Baby in Films,” bared her legs onscreen and induced heartache in her real-life lovers, and comedian Charlie Chaplin made America both laugh and cry. Lillian Gish, a supremely talented character actress, drew huge audiences when she convincingly played a 15-year-old girl in the film *Broken Blossoms*. Her salary matched her acclaim at \$400,000 per year. On October 6, 1927, movies became even more lifelike with the film “The Jazz Singer,” the first movie with sound. Called “talkies,” speaking movies made Warner Brothers’ producers instantly successful for its Vitaphone wax recording device, and ushered in a new era of more realistic acting. “The Jazz Singer” grossed over \$2 million and paved the way for an era of new movie stars.



- What were some of the limitations and criticisms of the movie industry before the 1920s?
- What was responsible for the growth of the movie industry?
- How did fans idolize movie stars?
- What were talkies, and how did they change the movie industry?

Pictures for Presentation on the Popularity of Radio and Movies

Transparency 1.4M



Women listening to a radio in a store

Transparency 1.4O



Actress Lillian Gish

Transparency 1.4N



Actress Mary Pickford knitting a sweater

Transparency 1.4P



Actor Rudolph Valentino

Information on Sports Mania

America fell in love with organized sports during the 1920s. New laws limiting working hours and increased national productivity led to significant increases in people's leisure time and income. People filled their leisure hours with new forms of entertainment, and sports became a national passion. During what some have called the "Age of Play," participation in sports like golf and tennis boomed, and attendance at sporting events skyrocketed.

One sport, baseball, became so popular that it soon became known as America's pastime. Crowds of baseball fans descended on the stadiums to see their favorite teams play. Enthusiastic fans elevated sports stars like New York Yankees' Babe Ruth to the level of American heroes. Ruth didn't look much like a hero—in fact, he didn't look much like an athlete. He had a barrel-shaped body perched on two spindly legs, but he could hit a baseball harder and farther than any other player. Ruth was originally a pitcher for the Boston Red Sox, but was placed in the outfield after his contract was sold to the Yankees. Able to play every day instead of pitching every three or four days, Babe began hitting home runs at an incredible rate—in 1920 he hit 54 home runs, twice the major league record for a single season. A year later he hit 59. In 1927 he hit 60, a record that stood for more than 30 years. New York's attendance doubled in a single year, and the team built big, beautiful Yankee Stadium—nicknamed "The House That Ruth Built"—from the increased profits.

There were other baseball players in America who were perhaps just as talented but were far less well-known than Babe Ruth. Satchel Paige, James "Cool Papa" Bell, and Josh Gibson were among the stars of the Negro Leagues. Jim Crow laws mandated that much of the country—from schools to restaurants to buses—be separated by race, and baseball was no exception. Prohibited from playing in the major leagues, African-American players formed their own. It was not easy—money was tight, the equipment was worn, the travel was exhausting, and it was especially difficult to find hotels and restaurants that would accommodate blacks. Still, these players entertained a wide range of fans and built a solid foundation for African-American baseball.



- What factors allowed sports to flourish in America in the 1920s?
- How did fans view sports stars?
- How did a segregated America deal with popular sports like baseball?

Football, too, was hugely popular in America in the 1920s. And while football players were not as well-known as baseball players, Harold "Red" Grange showed how even a brief flash of sporting brilliance could grab America's attention. Grange was a running back for the University of Illinois who was nicknamed the "Galloping Ghost" for his power and speed.

In 1924 he cemented his reputation with four consecutive touchdown runs for a total of 263 yards in the first 12 minutes of a game against a strong Michigan team. Shortly after his last college game, he became a professional player and the first athlete to make the cover of *Time* magazine. Supported by millions of fans, Grange was a millionaire within three years.

Boxing, once outlawed in America, became both respectable and hugely popular during the 1920s. Two prizefights brought America's mania for sports to a climax—the Jack Dempsey–Gene Tunney fight in Philadelphia in 1926, and the rematch in Chicago in 1927. More than 130,000 people saw Tunney beat a tired Dempsey in Philadelphia, and they paid more than \$2 million for the privilege. More than 145,000 saw the rematch in Chicago, and the proceeds from the match totaled more than \$2.6 million. Though carrying a big lead from earlier rounds, Tunney almost lost when he was knocked down in the seventh round. In a controversial move, the referee waited to start the fateful 10-count until Dempsey returned to the correct corner. During what became known as the famous “long count,” Tunney struggled to his feet at the count of nine. He then spent the rest of the match backing away from Dempsey's flailing punches, and ultimately won the match based on his early points. More than 40 million people listened to the match on the radio, and as many as 10 Americans dropped dead of heart failure in their living rooms during the bout's broadcast.

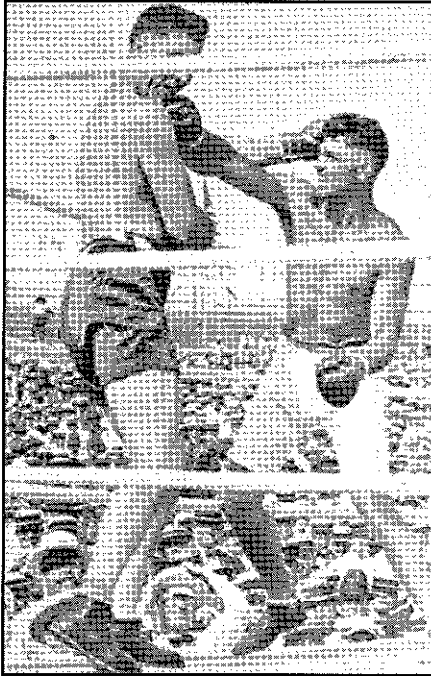
Even the stars of so-called minor sports captured America's attention. In 1926 Olympic gold medalist Gertrude Ederle was the first woman to swim across the English Channel. Her extraordinary time—14 hours 31 minutes—was almost 2 hours faster than the men's record. Fans welcomed home “Our Trudy” with a huge ticker-tape parade in New York. In golf, Bobby Jones played flawlessly game after game, winning tournament after tournament. Tennis star William “Big Bill” Tilden became the first American to win the men's singles tennis title at Wimbledon, and Helen Wills won every match she played from 1927 to the end of the decade. Amateur American athletes relished their heroes' victories, then flocked themselves to a rapidly growing number of public and private golf courses and tennis courts.



- What sports became popular during the 1920s?
- Who were some of the people who made these sports so popular?
- How did sports mania change the average American's involvement in sports?

Pictures for Presentation on Sports Mania

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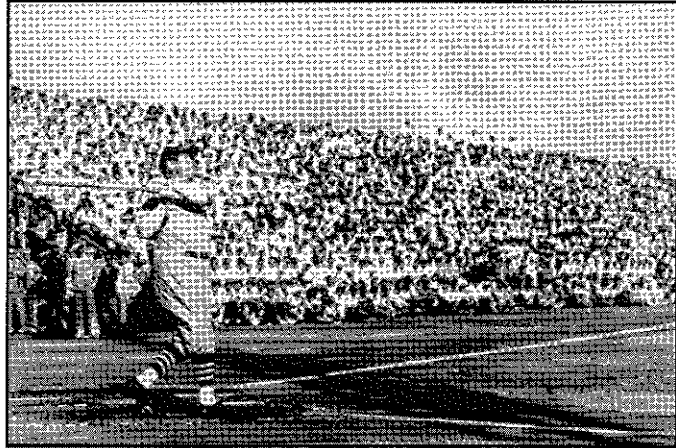
Boxers Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey during their re match in Chicago, 1927

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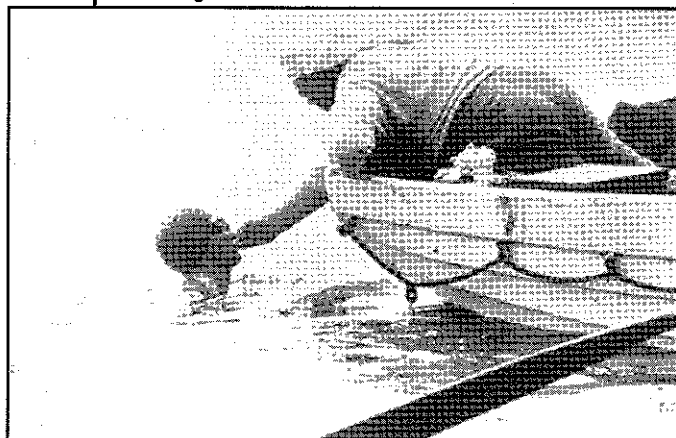
Football player Harold "Red" Grange

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Baseball player Babe Ruth

Transparency 1.4T



Swimmer Gertrude Ederle during her swim across the English Channel, 1926

Information on Improved Transportation

Two new forms of transportation—the automobile and the airplane—dramatically changed the American way of life in the 1920s. At the turn of the century, the “horseless carriage” was still a rare sight—one state law, for example, required an automobile driver to send a flagman an eighth of a mile ahead to warn horses and pedestrians of a car’s approach. By 1918, however, more than seven million cars were on the road, and Americans had begun a long love affair with the automobile. Orville and Wilbur Wright had made their first engine-powered flight in late 1903, and by 1929 American, United, and Trans-World Airlines had all started using airplanes to carry passengers for profit.

Henry Ford, more than any other person, was responsible for the explosion in the number of automobiles in the United States in the 1920s. In 1913 Ford decided to apply the “scientific management” ideas of Frederick W. Taylor to the production of automobiles. Scientific management engineers studied even the simplest jobs to find a better way to do them and soon developed a whole new way of organizing factories. Ford applied those ideas to the automobile-production process. His assembly-line system reduced the amount of time it took to produce a finished Model T automobile from 14 hours to 93 minutes. By 1925 a new Ford automobile was coming off the assembly line every 10 seconds.

Because of Ford’s genius, the automobile was priced low enough—\$260 for the Model T in 1925—that it was affordable for a huge number of ordinary Americans. The economic impact was enormous, and mobility brought by the new automobiles created a revolution in American life. By the late 1920s, 23 million cars were registered in the United States, and the automobile industry became the biggest in the country. And the cultural impact was just as significant. The automobile allowed isolated farmers to travel to the city, and urban skilled workers to find cheaper housing beyond walking or streetcar distance of their jobs. In addition, courtship among young people moved from the controlled environment of the family parlor to the back seat of the family vehicle, much to the dismay of conservative parents. In fact, cars in the 1920s were nicknamed “struggle buggies” because they were so often used as places where boys tried to seduce girls.

The widespread use of the automobile changed the United States in other significant ways as well. Roads, which before 1920 had been haphazardly built and rarely paved, began to spider-web their way across the country. The 1921 Federal Highway Act resulted in as much as 10,000 miles of new highway construction a year during the ensuing decade. Along this network of roads and highways arose gas stations, hot dog stands, restaurants, campgrounds, and “motor hotels” to serve cars and their passengers. Billboards were erected, narrow city streets were widened, parking lots were built, and green and red traffic signals were put up. Better roads and facilities encouraged a new mobility and spirit of adventure across the United States.



- How did Henry Ford change the way automobiles were produced?
- How did automobiles change the lives of ordinary Americans?

While the widespread use of airplane travel did not evolve until much later, flying became an object of national attention during the 1920s. World War I had pushed forward the development of airplanes as fighting machines, and many Americans were thrilled by the wartime exploits and successes of U.S. flyers. But once the war ended, few people paid much attention to airplanes. For example, even leading U.S. World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker could not get a job in aviation after the war and ended up selling cars.

Those pilots who wanted to keep flying—including famous flyer Amelia Erhart—took up barnstorming, or touring and performing in small towns and rural districts. At least 10 million Americans got their first taste of flying by paying \$5 for a five-minute joy ride in a barnstorming airplane. To entice customers to the airstrip, the barnstormers put on a show—standing on upper wings, dangling from lower wings, parachuting, or clowning—featuring the talents of the most skilled pilots of their time.

The pilot who impressed aviation on the popular American imagination was Charles A. Lindbergh. Lindbergh was a one-time barnstormer who had worked as an air-mail pilot, a dangerous occupation. A daring man, Lindbergh had bailed out of airmail planes four times without being seriously injured. In 1927 he took off alone in a single-engine airplane from tiny Roosevelt Field in New York, and headed out over the ocean to France. Thirty-three hours and 30 minutes later, Lindbergh landed his plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, among a mob of Parisians who greeted him with hysterical acclaim. Lindbergh was, in an age that blew up middling accomplishments into larger-than-life fantasies, a genuine hero. On his return to New York, he was showered with 1,800 tons of paper in a ticker-tape parade down Broadway and a \$25,000 prize. After this famous flight, many Americans began to consider flying in a new light.

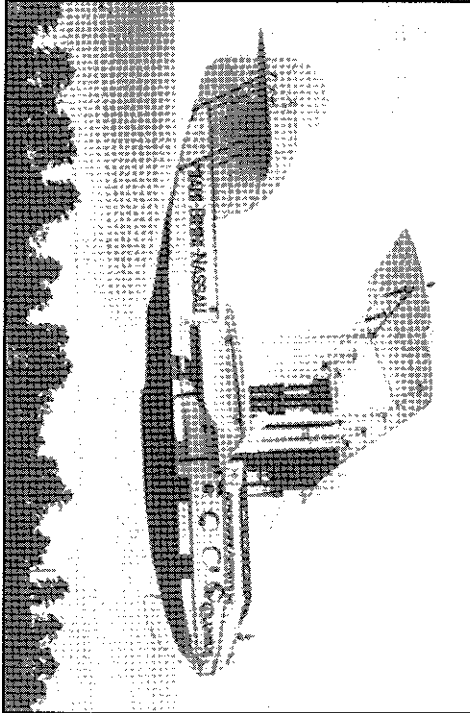


- How did World War I affect the development of aviation?
- How did aviators capture the attention of the American people?
- What did American aviation gain from Lindbergh's flight to Paris?

Pictures for Presentation on Improved Transportation

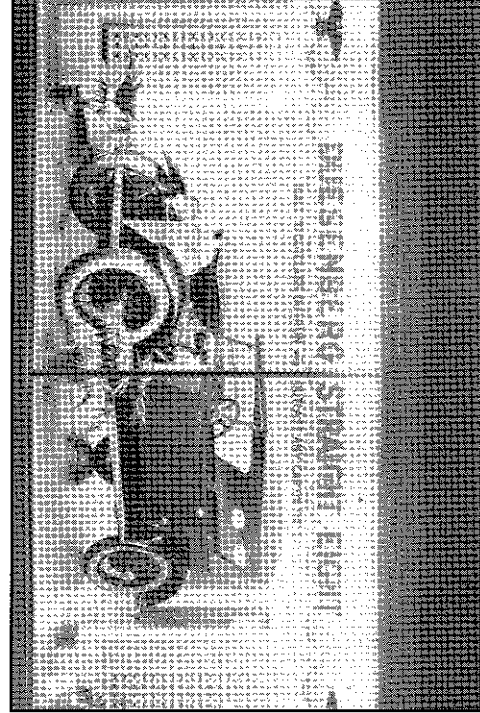
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Amphibious passenger plane



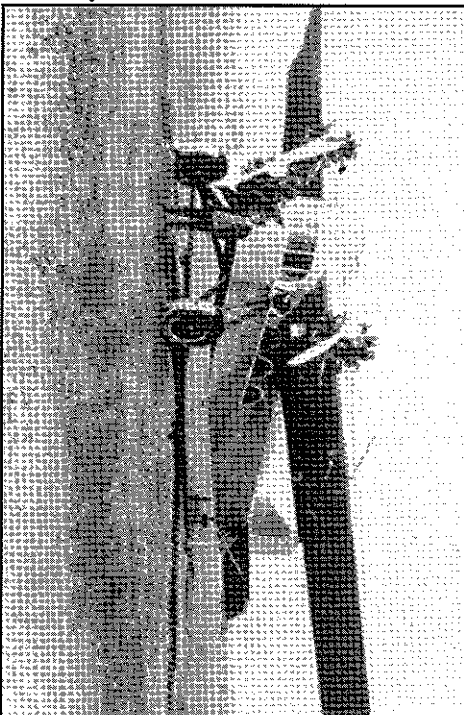
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Luxury automobile in a showroom



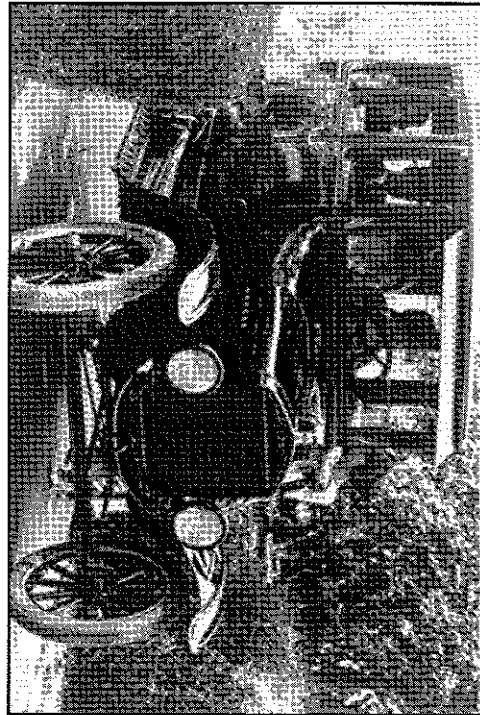
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1925 passenger plane



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Family outing in a Ford automobile



Information on the Changing Role of Women

Women's roles in society changed a great deal during World War I and throughout the 1920s. Before the war, many women, particularly white women, did not work outside the home. Like their working counterparts, many of whom were poor or women of color, these women performed traditional domestic responsibilities of conserving food and fuel resources in the early part of the war. However, as the war continued and more men were drafted to serve in the military, over 23,000 women entered wartime industrial plants for the first time. They took jobs as shipment collectors, accountants, telephone operators, and even steel mill workers. Women who had already been working outside the home found greater employment opportunities, and many were able to move from domestic service to industry jobs.

Women's success in traditionally male jobs increased their motivation to be treated as equals with men. As a result, women demanded better wages from their employers and rallied for more political rights. Begun in 1848, the women's suffrage movement (fight to gain women the vote) gained steam in the late teens. After decades of speaking at outdoor meetings and even painting "Votes for Women" on their backs as propaganda, suffragists finally won. The Nineteenth Amendment, ratified in 1920, gave women the right to vote and sparked a new era in women's political participation.

After winning suffrage, however, women's political interests splintered and faded in the light of the exciting 1920s cultural innovations. Feminists argued over the goals of feminism, and women of different races tended to believe unified female political participation was impossible. Most of all, in light of new fashion trends and movies, politics seemed boring to many women. Swayed by societal pressure and consumer advertising for new products and sexier images, many women channeled their attention away from politics and into social life.



- **How did World War I change women's roles in society?**
- **What was the Nineteenth Amendment? How did women help achieve its ratification?**
- **Why did many women lose interest in politics during the 1920s?**

For many women the 1920s brought newfound freedom and independence. Empowered from political successes, and entering an era when people had more leisure time to spend, women began to challenge traditional ideas of women's role in society. Unmarried working women had their own money to spend, and access to automobiles brought greater mobility. In addition, sexual mores were changing, influenced by the work of psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Many people believed that Freud promoted uninhibited sexual expression as a means for curing a multitude of ills. Margaret Sanger, a birth control advocate who had been shunned in the past, became respected and admired during the twenties. Attention to female sports stars, like tennis champion "Queen Helen" Wills, encouraged women to prize a combination of health and femininity. Women's fashions became an outlet for personal

expression, and women's focus on body image became more prominent. Ads for cigarettes promoted smoking as a sign of sophistication, and also promised to help women stay thin, claiming, for example, "Light a Lucky and you'll never miss sweets that make you fat."

Embracing widespread societal changes, women engaged in practices that their Victorian mothers and grandmothers labeled as shockingly "immoral." Women's clothing fashion styles became less modest, beginning with shorter hemlines. One researcher charted the "rise" of women's skirts from 1919, when the long dresses uncovered only 10 percent of women's bodies, to 1927, when knee-length flashy wraps left 25 percent of their bodies bare. Many women also cut their hair short, wearing "shingle bob" hairstyles cropped at men's barber shops, and covering them with close-fitting hats. Disapproving elders nicknamed these daring young women *flappers*, rebellious young women who wore short skirts, smoked, danced wildly in new dances like the Charleston, joined the Communist Party, and used cosmetics and birth control. Indeed, many flappers, usually young, upper-middle-class white women, proudly displayed the signs of their independence, sexuality, and energetic youth. Image-conscious women took up smoking, and the number of women smokers doubled during the decade. Many flappers also painted their faces with rouge, powder, and lipstick, practices that society had earlier assigned to prostitutes.

Reflecting looser attitudes toward sex, many women in coeducational colleges sought to become "the cat's meow" with "s.a.," or sex appeal. They told more off-color jokes, and snuck away from romantic movies to "park" and "pet" in automobiles, devoid of chaperones. One 18-year-old female announced, "If I see any more of these passionate fiery movies I will not be able to resist the plan to become a wife before next quarter....when I first entered high school these scenes gave me unpleasant and guilty feelings....[now] in such a different light....I actually want to experience these scenes, and see beauty in them." Despite the changes and trends in sexuality, however, few women during the 1920s considered sex outside of marriage. Only a few bold women openly declared a commitment to their autonomy, such as African-American singer Bessie Smith, who sang, "I ain't gonna marry, ain't gonna settle down."

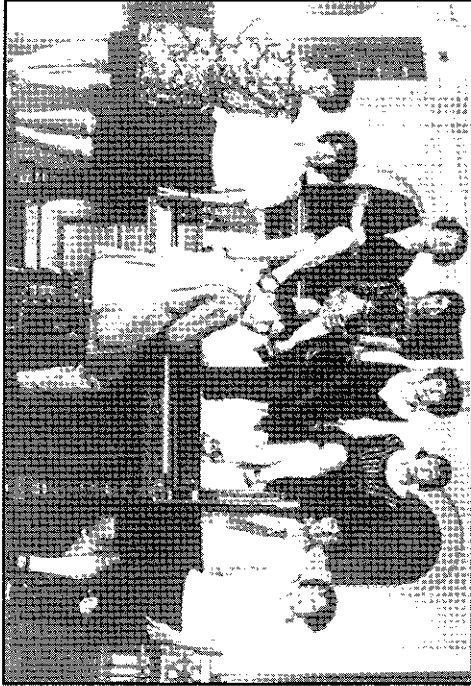


- **How did 1920s social changes affect women?**
- **What fashion and social trends did young women embrace during the twenties?**
- **Who were flappers, and what kind of reputation did they carry?**
- **How did women's sexual ideas and practices change during the decade?**

Pictures for Presentation on the Changing Role of Women

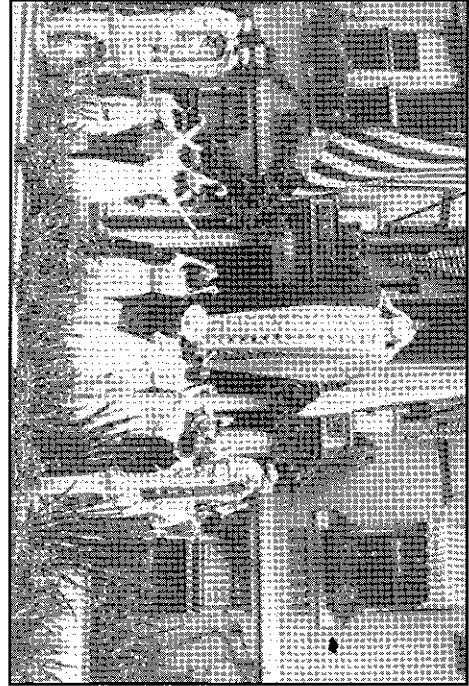
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Flappers around a piano player



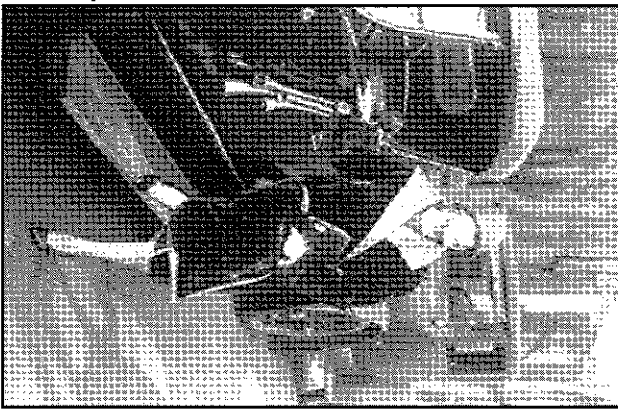
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National Women's Party headquarters



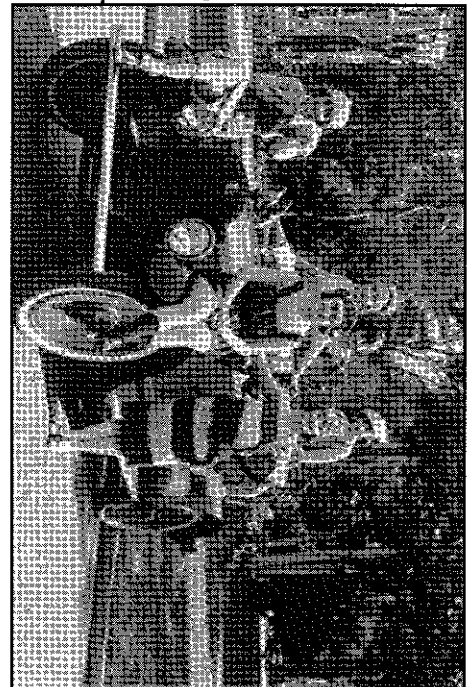
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Flapper with short skirt and close-fitting stylish hat



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Flappers sitting atop a roadster



Notes on Social Change in American Society

Directions: As you watch each presentation, record key points about the 1920s social change in the appropriate space. Then, during the class discussion, record notes about corresponding social changes in modern American society.

Social Change in 1920s	Key Points About 1920s Social Change	Social Change in Modern American Society
Increasing Consumerism		
Harlem Renaissance		
Prohibition		

Social Change in 1920s	Key Points About 1920s Social Change	Social Change in Modern American Society
Popularity of Radio and Movies		
Sports Mania		
Improved Transportation		
Changing Role of Women		