Postwar Social Change
The Roaring Twenties
1920-1929

Society in the 1920s
• In the late 1800s, industrialization and immigration began transforming the US into an urban nation. The Great War accelerated these changes.
• Questioning traditional values helped ignite a revolution in manners and morals.

- Women stood at the center of much of the social change of the 1920s.
  - “Flappers” (a term probably coined from their energetic dancing) symbolized this change.
  - Relatively few women became “flappers,” but they came to symbolize the decade.

Women’s Changing Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Shorter, more revealing dresses; smaller hats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hairstyles</td>
<td>Cut short</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Makeup</td>
<td>Worn heavily in spite of prior association with actresses and prostitutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Drank more and stronger drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>Smoked publicly in greater numbers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• The majority of working women tended to be single and white, and many employers expected them to quit if they became married or pregnant.
  - About 35% of wage-earning women became professionals (i.e. teachers), and about 20% held clerical positions (i.e. secretaries).
  - Many hospitals and law firms refused to hire female doctors and lawyers.
  - Men were usually paid better than women because they were assumed to be supporting a family.

• From 1920 to 1930, the percentage of the female workforce that was married increased from 23% to 29%.
• Few women were given opportunities to advance to leadership positions.
• After the Nineteenth Amendment was adopted in 1920, all American women could vote.

Why did many women choose not to vote?
• Only an estimated 35% of eligible women voted in the 1920 Presidential Election.
• Women who lived in rural areas or had child-care duties had to make special arrangements to go vote.
• Sometimes their families discouraged them from voting.
• Some women were uncomfortable or uninterested.
• Jeannette Rankin of Montana became the first woman to serve in Congress in 1916.

• Miriam A. Ferguson and Nellie Tayloe Ross became the first women to serve as Governors in 1924.

“Ma” Ferguson, Texas Governor from 1925 to 1927 and 1932 to 1935, was the wife of former Governor James Ferguson (who was impeached and barred from holding public office in 1917). She ran on the Democratic ticket promising to follow her husband’s advice. There were many allegations of corruption against her.

Nellie Tayloe Ross

- Governor of Wyoming from 1925-1927
- First woman to be elected governor of a state (she took office 2 weeks before Ma Ferguson)
- Her husband, Governor William Ross, was elected in 1922 but died in 1924
- The Democrats nominated her to replace him
- She continued her late husband’s progressive policies
- She later served as Director of the US Mint (1933-1953)

The 1920 Census showed that for the first time in our nation’s history, more Americans lived in urban areas than rural areas.

Contrasting Urban and Rural Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Prosperity</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industrial and commercial economy</td>
<td>boomed</td>
<td>remained stagnant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Attendance</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More children stayed in school longer, needing education for future jobs; Americanizing immigrants</td>
<td></td>
<td>More children quit school to labor for family income</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manners and Morals</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shifted away from traditional values</td>
<td>Wanted to preserve traditional values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The “Great Migration” described the movement of southern blacks to northern cities.

The Great Migration was caused by the passage of Jim Crow laws and new job opportunities in the North.

After WWI, masses of refugees applied for entry into the United States.

Congress imposed limits on immigration from Europe, China, and Japan, but not for immigrants from the Americas; many came from Mexico and Canada.
• Mexicans developed a distinct Spanish-speaking neighborhood (“barrio”) in Los Angeles, while Puerto Ricans did the same in New York.

• American suburbs grew significantly due to advances in transportation that allowed people to commute to jobs in the cities. The modes included trolleys, buses, and ultimately automobiles.

  – The growth of suburbs will be slowed by the Great Depression, but then accelerate after WWII.

Why did so many Americans become fascinated with heroes in the 1920s?

• The changing morals of the 1920s made many Americans hungry for the values of an earlier time.

• Some heroes were admired for their bravery and modesty, others for the way they showed Americans how to meet new challenges with spirit and vitality.

Charles “Lucky Lindy” Lindbergh

• On May 20, 1927, 25-year-old Lindbergh flew from New York to Paris, non-stop, without an auto-pilot or advanced navigation equipment.

• He received numerous honors but declined many opportunities to profit from his celebrity.

Amelia Earhart

• In 1928 she became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean.

• In 1932 she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic.

• She was the first person to fly solo from Hawaii to California.

• She disappeared in 1937 while attempting to fly around the world.

Jack Dempsey

• Heavy-weight champion of the boxing world from 1919 to 1926.

• 1921 match against French boxer Georges Carpentier had the largest prize in boxing history to that time.

• Dempsey, a 50-1 underdog, beat Carpentier.

1920 Ford Model T

• Charles “Lucky Lindy” Lindbergh flew non-stop from New York to Paris in 1927 on the 1920 Ford Model T, which had the largest prize in boxing history to that time.

• He received numerous honors but declined many opportunities to profit from his celebrity.
Jim Thorpe
- Native American from Oklahoma, spent some of his school years at the Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, PA
- 1912 Olympic gold medalist*
- Professional football player
- First president of what became the NFL
- Jim Thorpe, PA, was named in his honor
- Considered by many to have been the greatest athlete in history

George Herman “Babe” Ruth
- The “Great Bambino” and “Sultan of Swat”
- Hit 714 home runs in his career, 60 in 1927 alone

Gertrude Ederle
- Olympic gold medalist in swimming in 1924
- First woman to swim across the English Channel (1926) and she beat the men’s record by over two hours

Before the 1920s, the United States had been largely a collection of regional cultures. Interests, tastes, and attitudes varied widely from one region to another. In the 1920s, films, nationwide news gathering, radio broadcasting produced the beginning of a national culture.

Though always popular, by 1929 moviemaking had become the nation’s fourth largest business.
- Between 1910 and 1930 the number of movie theaters increased by more than 400%
- In 1929 theaters sold about 80 million tickets each week to a population of just 125 million
- Hollywood, with advantages in weather, cheap labor, and easy access to varied terrain, overtook New York as the nation’s moviemaking center in the early 1900s

The first sound film, or “talkie,” debuted in 1927. It was called The Jazz Singer and starred Al Jolson.
- Many thought talkies would prove a passing fad; they were more expensive to make, would be incomprehensible to foreign audiences, and many actors with European accents didn’t like them.

Charlie Chaplin (aka “The Tramp”)
- Chaplin was a popular entertainer in England before moving to the US for movies
- He was the first actor to secure a $1 million deal
- He was the biggest silent movie star and initially resisted acting in talkies
- Unpopular political opinions led to his exile from the US after WWII

Other film stars of this era included Greta Garbo, Lilian Gish, and Charlie Chaplin.
• Between 1914 and 1927, the use of **newspaper** in the United States roughly doubled. **Profit** – not quality – drove most newspaper chains, so many published **tabloids**, that focused on entertainment. One famous newspaper publisher of this period was **William Randolph Hearst**.

• **By 1929, Americans were buying more than 200 million copies of popular magazines such as Saturday Evening Post, Reader’s Digest, Ladies’ Home Journal and Time.**

• **In 1920, Frank Conrad set up the nation’s first commercial radio station, KDKA, in Pittsburgh.**

• **To reach larger audiences, radio networks such as NBC linked many different stations together.** Between 1922 and 1929, the number of households with radios increased 16.983%.

• **By 1929, two-thirds of all radio air time was devoted to jazz.**

• **Not everyone was a fan of radio.** British author H. G. Wells (War of the Worlds) described it as useful only to “very sedentary persons living in badly lighted houses or otherwise unable to read...and who have no capacity for thought or conversation.”

• **The Sound of Music, Pre-Jazz**

  - Billy Murray, Camptown Races, 1911

  - Al Jolson, Alexander’s Ragtime Band, 1911

**JAZZ**

- **Origins:** Southern African-American music, especially New Orleans
- **Positive Reaction:** Young people loved to dance to its wild, energetic rhythms
- **Negative Reaction:** Too suggestive of free manners and morals (loose living)
- **Associated Places:** Harlem and New Orleans
- **Famous Artists:** Jelly Roll Morton, Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington
- **Associated Dance:** Kicks, twists, and pivots
Edward Kennedy Ellington
“Duke”
- 1899-1974
- Began playing in Washington DC nightclubs as a teenager
- Moved to New York in 1923
- Famous hits included:
  - Mood Indigo
  - Solitude
  - In a Sentimental Mood
  - Bojangles

Benny Goodman
“The King of Swing”
- 1909-1986
- Started playing jazz in the 1920s
- Helped to make jazz more of a mainstream sensation in the 1930s

Louis Armstrong
“Satchmo”
- 1901-1971
- Raised in New Orleans
- Made his first recording in 1923
- Famous for his showmanship
- Improvised long solos
- Pioneered “scat” singing

A Sample of Louis Armstrong’s Songs
- It Don’t Mean a Thing (If it Ain’t Got that Swing)
- Duke’s Place

The jazz spirit ran through all of the ______ arts ______ of the 1920s, but it most strongly influenced other forms of ______ music ______. Jazz and symphony were blended by ______ George Gershwin ______ in 1924 in ______ Rhapsody in Blue ______.

Painters such as ______ Edward Hopper ______ and ______ Rockwell Kent ______ showed the nation’s rougher side, while ______ Georgia O’Keeffe ______ painted natural objects such as flowers.

Automat (1927)
by Edward Hopper

The Trapper (1921)
by Rockwell Kent

Petunia (1924)
by Georgia O’Keeffe
- **Sinclair Lewis** became the first American to receive the Nobel Prize for literature in 1930.
  - Born in 1885, died in 1951
  - Author of *Babbitt*, *Elmer Gantry*, and other books

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Lost Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American writers who rejected the quest for material possessions and popular culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prominent Writers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sherwood Anderson, Archibald MacLeish, Hart Crane, e.e. cummings, John Dos Passos, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contribution to Broader Society</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped to inspire the flapper culture, normalizing rebellion against the culture of their time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Ernest Hemingway**
  - Volunteered as an ambulance driver in WWI
  - Author of *The Sun Also Rises*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*
  - Won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954

- **F. Scott Fitzgerald**
  - Author of *The Great Gatsby*
  - Helped to create the “flapper image” in *This Side of Paradise*

- **Edna St. Vincent Millay**
  - What does this poem reveal about the attitude of the Lost Generation?
  - *My candle burns at both ends; It will not last the night; But ah, my foes, and oh, my friends – It gives a lovely light!*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Harlem Renaissance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An African-American literary awakening of the 1920s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Prominent Writers</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, Zora Neale Hurston, Dorothy West, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contribution to Broader Society</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helped people to realize that African and American cultures could be enriching, not conflicting; protested the sufferings of African Americans</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Gertrude Stein**
  - An American writer who lived in Paris and became associated with many famous artists and authors
  - Coined the term “Lost Generation”

- **Zora Neale Hurston**
  - Journalist and author of several short stories and novels
  - Most famous for 1937’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

- **Countee Cullen**
  - Poet of the Harlem Renaissance
Langston Hughes

- Poet, short story writer, journalist, and playwright of the Harlem Renaissance

Prohibition

Goals of Prohibition

1. Eliminate drunkenness and the resulting abuse of family members and others
2. Get rid of saloons, where prostitution, gambling, and other forms of vice thrived
3. Prevent absenteeism and on-the-job accidents stemming from drunkenness

Congress passed the Volstead Act to enforce the 18th Amendment, but it was widely ignored.
- Even President Harding kept alcohol in the White House
- There were many ways, both legal and illegal, to avoid prohibition
- Prohibition sharpened the contrast between urban and rural moral values.

- The bootlegger, a new type of criminal, provided illegal liquor, beer, and wine.
- Speakeasies were illegal bars, but proved more numerous than the legal bars they replaced.
- Gangsters created large organizations that clashed with each other to control territory. They branched out into other illegal activities, including gambling, prostitution, and racketeering.
• The most notorious of the gangster organizations operated in Chicago and was led by Al Capone, a.k.a. “Scarface”.

• Another issue that tended to split Americans was the teaching of evolution.

• Even before this issue arose, challenges to traditional beliefs came from several directions:
  1. Science and technology were taking a larger role in everyday life
  2. War and modern problems caused more people to question whether God took care of people or even existed
  3. Scholars criticized the Bible for contradictions and historical inaccuracies

• In response, religious traditionalists rallied around a set of beliefs known as fundamentalism. They declared that the Bible is literally true.

• The most famous preacher of the time was Billy Sunday. A former baseball player, known for his dramatic preaching style.

• In 1925, a Tennessee teacher, John T. Scopes, challenged a law preventing the teaching of evolution. Clarence Darrow, a famous attorney, agreed to defend him, while William Jennings Bryan, a former presidential candidate, volunteered to help prosecute.
• The summer of 1919 became known as the **Red Summer** because of the blood spilled by racial violence. The worst race riot occurred in **Chicago** that left 38 dead and hundreds homeless.

– Racial violence erupted in at least 25 other cities, including Omaha, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C.

• In 1915, Colonel William J. Simmons revived the **Ku Klux Klan** and it ballooned to **4 million** members in 1924. No longer just a Southern organization, the state with the most members was **Indiana**

– Racial violence erupted in at least 25 other cities, including Omaha, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C.

• The organization vowed to defend their **white-Protestant** culture against any group that seemed **un-American**. During the 1920s they targeted **African Americans, Catholics, Jews, immigrants**, and others.

• Some African Americans led by **Marcus Garvey** worked to create a new African homeland for themselves. Born in Jamaica in 1887, Garvey came to the US in 1916 and visited prominent black leaders. He spread his UNIA organization and incorporated several businesses, but legal trouble plagued him until he was imprisoned in 1925 and deported in 1927.

• The **NAACP** worked to pass **anti-lynching** laws and protect the **voting** rights of blacks.

• Many respected African American leaders, such as **W.E.B. Du Bois**, criticized the movement for its call for **separation** of the races.

– “Garvey is, without a doubt, the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world. He is either a fanatic or a traitor.”

---

**Garvey and the KKK**

• “I regard the Klan… as far as the Negro is concerned, as better friends of the race than all other groups of hypocritical whites put together. I like honesty and fair play. You may call me a Klansman if you will…..”
• When its founder was jailed and deported for fraud, the **UNIA** collapsed. Nevertheless, it inspired later “black pride” movements.