

The Roaring '20s



A Presentation Based on the
Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE)
Objectives for High School History Students

The Roaring '20s

- The decade between the end of World War I and the Stock Market Crash of 1929 is often called the “Roaring ‘20s” or the “Jazz Age.”
- This signifies the idea that after the end of the Progressive Era and World War I, people wanted to have some relaxation and fun.
- President Harding campaigned on a pledge of “return to normalcy,” an awkward but telling phrase.
- Although in many ways this time period reflected such ideas, there were also elements of strife and difficulty, especially in the time period immediately following World War I’s armistice.

SSUSH16 Investigate how political, economic, and cultural developments after WW I led to a shared national identity.

a. Explain how fears of rising communism and socialism in the United States led to the **Red Scare** and immigrant restriction.

Karl Marx and Communism

- **Communism** is a political and economic theory in which the means of production, (factories, land, etc.) is owned by all “communally.”
- **Karl Marx** (1818-1883) is known as the Father of communism.
- Communists believed that one day the workers of the world would rise up in rebellion against the owners of the means of production.
- Communists often advocated violent overthrow of governments and nationalization (government takeover) of private property.
- Many also believed that after some period of government control by communist leadership, the government would no longer be necessary and “wither away.”
- In practice, communist revolutions have generally resulted in totalitarian governments restricting people’s rights and government control of all land, industry and other property.
- **Communism directly contrasts with American beliefs in private property and free enterprise/capitalism.**

Socialism and Communism

- In contrast to communism, ***socialism*** is a belief that democratic means should be used to distribute wealth, goods and services in a society.
- Often this means that income should be redistributed in some manner to help the less fortunate achieve something approaching income equity.
- In some cases, socialists believe the government should own and operate certain industries for the society as a whole.

The Rise of Communism

- Marx viewed the Paris Commune's brief rule in 1871 as a first step in the great struggle of "haves versus have-nots."
- By the early 1900s, a number of countries experienced revolutions, as communism gained a following in Europe and elsewhere.
- Most notably during World War I, the Russian Revolution of 1917 resulted in the communists of the Red Army taking power in that country.
- Since this time, Communism has been associated with the color **red**.

Fear of Communism and Anarchism

- By 1919, many Americans worried that communists were trying to gain influence in the United States.
- The rise of anarchism also stirred fears.
 - **Anarchism** is a belief that government is harmful and unnecessary.
 - Many anarchists, such as Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), advocated terrorism and violent revolution.
 - Anarchist Alexander Berkman attempted but failed to assassinate Henry C. Frick, head of Carnegie Steel Company during the Homestead steel strike of 1892.
 - Berkman's friend Emma Goldman, had become infamous for radical activity and was jailed and eventually deported.
 - In 1901, U.S. President William McKinley was assassinated by anarchist Leon Czolgosz.

Palmer Raids

- In 1919, a number of bombs were sent through the mail by anarchists to government and business officials, including one to Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer.
- In reaction, the government in 1919-1920 carried out the Palmer Raids, a series of investigations and raids of immigrants, radicals and anarchists.
- These raids resulted in mass arrests and **deportations** of thousands, many of whom were never charged and did not receive a fair trial.

Post-World War I Labor Unrest

- During World War I, unions became better organized while employers became more determined to break the power of unions.
- Unions used strikes as a means of trying to gain better working conditions.
- Because strikes were associated with Communist-led uprisings in Europe, many Americans feared that Communism was spreading to the U.S.
- Some Americans believed that labor unions were either backed by Communists or could be manipulated by them to start a revolution.
- The end of rationing led to sharp demand and inflation (as prices were kept low during the war). A “wage-price spiral” led to tensions between employees and employers.

The Red Scare

- In 1919, a wave of strikes and riots also contributed to a “Red Scare,” or fear that communists were trying to start a revolution in the U.S.
 - The Seattle General Strike
 - The Steel Workers’ Strike
 - The Boston Police strike
 - Race riots, which resulted from returning soldiers reclaiming their pre-war jobs and housing.
- Communists were blamed for sending bombs through the postal system as a way of disrupting the American way of life.
- As a way of limiting “radicals” Congress passed a number of laws limiting foreign immigration to the U.S.

The Seattle General Strike of 1919

- The Seattle General Strike started with a walk-out by 35,000 dock workers demanding pay increases and shorter work days.
- Other unions joined the strike and paralyzed the city for over five days.
- This fueled many Americans' fears of communist influence because the general strike was a tactic of European Communists.



The mayor of Seattle believed strikers wanted to “take possession of our American government and try to duplicate the anarchy of Russia.”

The 1919 Steel Workers' Strike

- 350,000 steel workers went on strike in 1919.
- The head of U.S. Steel blamed the unrest on foreign radicals and broke the strike by hiring African Americans and Mexicans to work.



b. Describe the effects of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments.

- The **18th Amendment** was ratified in 1919 and took effect in 1920 banning the manufacturing, sale, and transportation of alcohol.

Some supporters of prohibition thought it would reduce poverty, domestic violence, and unemployment.

Others viewed it as an **anti-German reaction** as many U.S. beer makers were of German origins.

Which groups of people do you think supported prohibition?



Effects of Prohibition

- Prohibition had several negative effects:
 1. “Bootlegging” - some people profited by illegally smuggling and selling alcohol
 2. “Speakeasies” - secret saloons and gambling halls where alcohol was served.
 3. Organized Crime – “The mob” began to run illegal bootlegging and speakeasy activities. Competing mobs resorted to violence in eliminating their competitors.

Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment

Prohibition was unpopular with many people and extremely difficult to enforce. By 1933 (during the Great Depression), the 18th Amendment was repealed by the 21st Amendment.

Why do you think the 18th Amendment was so difficult to enforce? What wasn't banned by the 18th Amendment?



The 19th Amendment (1920)

Women's Suffrage: The right to vote



Women's suffrage movement groups originally tied their cause to that of African-American suffrage

Nineteenth Amendment

- In 1890 the National American Woman Suffrage Association was formed. Carrie Chapman Catt became the leader in 1915 and threw support behind Wilson's 1916 presidential campaign.
- NAWSA encouraged individual states to grant women the right to vote, gaining support for a Constitutional Amendment
- Alice Paul led the more militant National Women's Party (NWP), whose "suffragettes" held protest marches to attract attention to their cause.
- In June 1919, Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, and it was ratified by the states in 1920.



Carrie Chapman Catt

Effects of the Nineteenth Amendment

- The right to vote led greater equality and independence for women.
- This also emboldened their social autonomy. Women began to challenge the moral taboos of the Victorian era through their dress, activities, and attitudes (e.g., smoking in public, risqué dress and dances, etc.).

c. Examine how mass production and advertising led to increasing consumerism, including Henry Ford and the automobile.



Henry Ford and the Ford Motor Co.

- Henry Ford was the first to use mass production to build cars on an assembly line.
- Each worker had a specific job to do, which helped speed up the building process and reduced the cost of building automobiles.



Ford Motor Company

- In 1908, Ford Motor Company began mass producing Model T automobiles priced low enough for the “everyday” person to afford.
- The original “Model T” sold for \$825 in 1908; by 1914 the price was reduced to \$360.
- In 1914, Ford increased workers’ pay from \$2.34 to \$5.00 per day. He believed this would have a positive effect on the economy and on his business.



The Automobile

- The automobile changed how Americans lived, allowing them to travel faster and farther.



- Growth of the automobile industry also spurred growth in other industries such as the rubber, glass, and lead industries.

Consumerism and the Growth of Advertising

- Along with the development of new products and new marketing ideas, such as department stores, mail order catalogs, and installment purchasing/buying on credit, large-scale advertising firms emerged and pioneered new techniques of persuasion such as “**reason why**” campaigns.
- **Standardized packaging** and “**name brand**” images became marketing tools.
- By the end of the 1920s, **commercial spots on radio** had become a common advertising technique.

d. Describe the impact of radio and movies as a unifying force in the national culture.



Advent of Phonographs and Radio



Advent of Phonographs and Radio

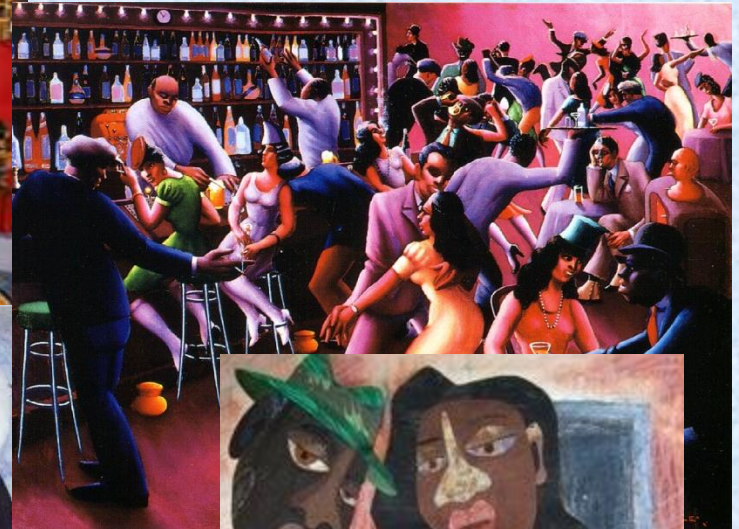
- The Victrola, one of the first commercially successful phonographs became available in 1901.
- Although controversy exists over who “invented” radio and when, commercial stations began appearing in the U.S. during the 1920s.
- With radio, an immediacy arrived: stations could present news nearly instantly.
- Phonograph records played on the air made a wide range of music available in many homes.

Radio and Movies

- Radio companies such as CBS and NBC were formed in the 1920s.
- Radio allowed listeners to hear instant news of events and was a way for families to come together to listen to broadcasts.
- Movies in the 1920s helped show “modern” lifestyles to Americans.
- American films also became popular abroad.



e. Describe the emergence of modern forms of cultural expression including the origins of jazz and the Harlem Renaissance.



The Harlem Renaissance

- Most textbooks describe this era as a “flowering of African American culture.”
- Strictly speaking, “Harlem Renaissance” is a misnomer: it was not limited to Harlem, nor was it a rebirth of interest.
- More correctly, it is a period in which African American arts gained the appreciation of a diverse audience, began to emerge in mass culture, and became a marketable commodity.

The Harlem Renaissance

- This was a boom period of African American creative arts, literature and culture, especially in music, theatre and drama, fiction, poetry, and visual arts.
- Artists portrayed a “Negro” image in contrast to existing stereotypes.
- Although the movement is named for New York City’s Harlem neighborhood, it occurred in other parts of the country essentially simultaneously.
- Louis Armstrong and Langston Hughes are but two of hundreds of artists associated with this movement

• **Louis Armstrong**

- Born in New Orleans and moved to Chicago in his 20s
- Played the cornet and trumpet and played an improvised form of Dixie Ragtime and jazz
- Influential in the New York jazz scene

Link to West End blues sample:

<https://www.npr.org/2000/08/06/1080400/west-end-blues>

Ain't Misbehavin' (orchestra):

<http://www.archive.org/details/Misbehavin>



• **Langston Hughes**

- Born in Mississippi
- Wrote poems describing the disenfranchisement of many African Americans



Poetry of Langston Hughes

Life is Fine

I went down to the river,
I set down on the bank.
I tried to think but couldn't,
So I jumped in and sank.
I came up once and hollered!
I came up twice and cried!
If that water hadn't a-been so cold
I might've sunk and died.

Though you may hear me holler,
And you may see me cry—
I'll be dogged, sweet baby,
If you gonna see me die.

Life is fine! Fine as wine! Life is fine!

I, Too, Sing America

I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.
Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed—
I, too, am America.

Tin Pan Alley

- **Tin Pan Alley** was not an actual place; it was the name given to New York City's songwriters and music publishers during the 1920s
- One of the most famous writers was Irving Berlin, who wrote such songs as "God Bless America", "White Christmas", and "Alexander's Ragtime Band"
- Listen to some samples:
 - Alexander's Ragtime Band: <http://www.archive.org/details/EDIS-SRP-0194-15>
 - White Christmas: <http://www.archive.org/details/CaelaHarrisonWhiteChristmas>