

TWENTY-TWO THE "NEW ERA"

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Twenty-Four should enable the student to understand:

1. The reasons for the industrial boom in the 1920s after the initial period of economic readjustment following World War I.
2. The nature and extent of labor's problems.
3. The plight of the American farmer.
4. The changes in the American way of life and American values in the 1920s in the areas of consumerism, communications, religion, and the role of women.
5. The reflection of these changed values in American literature and art.
6. The effects of prohibition on American politics and society.
7. The reasons for xenophobia and racial unrest in the 1920s.
8. The debacle of the Harding administration.
9. The pro-business tendencies of the Republican administration in the 1920s.

Main Themes

1. How the automobile boom and new technology led to the economic expansion of the 1920s.
2. That most workers and farmers failed to share equitably in the decade's prosperity.
3. How a nationwide consumer-oriented culture began to shape society and how the "new woman" emerged.
4. How the changing society disenchanted some artists and intellectuals and led to broad cultural conflict over ethnic and religious concerns.
5. That Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge, despite their dissimilar personalities, presided over ardently pro-business administrations.

Glossary

1. **Behaviorism:** Those who adhere to the basic tenet of behaviorism as promulgated by John B. Watson: That psychology should become a science by using the techniques of objective observation and measurement characteristic of natural sciences such as biology.
2. **"Bohemian":** The term that came to be generally applied to artists, writers, and others who chose to live unconventional lifestyles that often shocked traditional society. Bohemia is a region of the Czech republic associated with gypsies.

Pertinent Questions

THE NEW ECONOMY (650-655)

1. Outline the causes of the economic boom of the 1920s. What impact did the spectacular growth of the automobile industry have on related business activities?
2. What was the New Era trend in business organization? What sort of firms were less likely to consolidate?
3. What were the elements of "welfare capitalism"? To what extent did the average worker benefit from welfare capitalism and from rising production and profits?
4. To what extent was the lag in union membership due to the unions themselves? What were the other causal factors? How did the unions serve African Americans and other ethnic minorities? What was the largest immigrant group during the 1920s? Where did they concentrate? What was their economic status?
6. What caused the big drop in farm prices and income in the 1920s? Explain how parity was designed to solve the problem. What happened to parity?

THE NEW CULTURE (655-665)

7. Describe the new urban mass consumer culture. How did advertising help shape it?
8. How did newspaper chains, mass-circulation magazines, movies, and radio serve as unifying and nationalizing forces in America? What was unique about radio?
9. What new attitudes toward work, motherhood, sex, and leisure developed in the 1920s, especially among middle-class women? Was the new woman mostly a figure of myth?
10. What effect did women's suffrage have on the politics of the 1920s?
11. What changes in high-school and college attendance occurred during the 1920s? How did these changes contribute to the recognition of the distinct stage of adolescence? What else helped change attitudes toward youth?
12. How did the adoration of Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and, especially, Charles Lindbergh illustrate the ambivalence with which many Americans regarded the decline of the "self-made man"?
13. What social forces combined to alienate the members of the so-called Lost Generation? What did these people attack? Who were the main attackers?
14. What was the Harlem Renaissance? What was its effect?

A CONFLICT OF CULTURES (665-669)

15. What more basic conflict in society did the controversy over the "noble experiment" of prohibition come to symbolize? What were the results of prohibition?
16. Explain the changes in immigration laws brought about by the National Origins Act and subsequent legislation. What ethnic groups were favored?
17. How did the resurrected Ku Klux Klan of the 1920s differ from the Reconstruction-era Klan? How influential was the new Klan?
18. Compare and contrast the views of the modernists and the fundamentalists. How did Darwinism and the Scopes trial symbolize the conflict between the two? How has the conflict persisted?
19. How were the cultural tensions of the 1920s reflected in the Democratic Party?

REPUBLICAN GOVERNMENT (669-672)

20. What features of President Warren G. Harding's personal background led to his political repudiation? What was the biggest of the various Harding-era scandals?

21. Contrast the personal lives of Harding and Calvin Coolidge. Did their politics and policies differ as much as their personalities?
 22. Why did Herbert Hoover push so strongly for the creation of trade associations?
- PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: DANCE HALLS (660-661)**
23. What led to the dance craze of the 1920s and 30s? To what extent did the dance halls threaten traditional values?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. "normacy"
2. General Motors
3. "pink collar" jobs
4. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
5. "American Plan"
6. *The Man Nobody Knows*
7. *Time* magazine
8. *The Jazz Singer*
9. Harry Emerson Fosdick
10. Margaret Sanger
11. "flapper"
12. Alice Paul
13. League of Women Voters
14. Charles Lindbergh
15. H. L. Mencken
16. Sinclair Lewis
17. Langston Hughes
18. "Fugitives/Agrarians"
19. the "noble experiment"
20. Al Capone
21. "wets" and "drys"
22. *The Birth of a Nation*
23. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
24. Alfred E. Smith
25. John W. Davis
26. Andrew Mellon

Document

Read H. L. Mencken's obituary for Calvin Coolidge, noting Mencken's commentary for politics and his sarcasm concerning Coolidge's lack of aggressiveness. Mencken's iconoclastic style was extremely popular with young intellectuals, but, in fact, his *American Mercury* was not a mass-circulation magazine, and Mencken's comments reached a relatively small portion of the general public. In contrast to the often vicious and biting satire of Mencken, humorist Will Rogers poked gentle fun at American life, including politics. Rogers's

"daily telegrams" appeared in hundreds of newspapers, including the *New York Times*. Read Rogers's obituary for Calvin Coolidge, and consider the following questions: How do Mencken's and Rogers's contrasting views of Coolidge reflect their differing attitudes toward American politics in general? Which column probably came closer to reflecting the American people's feelings toward Coolidge? How do both selections show how politics in 1933 was defined in terms of the Great Depression?

In what manner he would have performed himself if the holy angels had showed the Depression forward a couple of years—this we can only guess, and one man's hazard is as good as another's. My own is that he would have responded to bad times precisely as he responded to good ones—that is, by pulling down the blinds, stretching his legs upon his desk, and snozing away the lazy afternoons. . . . He slept more than any other President, whether by day or by night. Nero fiddled, but Coolidge only snored. . . . Counting out Harding as a cipher only, Dr. Coolidge was preceded by one World Saver and followed by two more. What enlightened American, having to choose between any of them and another Coolidge, would hesitate for an instant? There were no thrills while he reigned, but neither were there any headaches. He had no ideas, and he was not a nuisance.

H. L. Mencken, *American Mercury*, April 1933.

Beverly Hills, January 5.

Mr. Coolidge, you didn't have to die for me to throw flowers on your grave. I have told a million jokes about you but every one was based on some of your splendid qualities. You had a hold on the American people regardless of politics. They knew you were honest, economical and had a native common sense. History generally records a place for a man that is ahead of his time. But we that lived with you will always remember you because you was "with" your times. By golly, you little red-headed New Englander, I liked you. You put horse sense into statesmanship and Mrs. Coolidge's admiration for you is an American trait.

January 7.

Did Coolidge Know the Dust was Coming?

Well we just cant hardly get over the shock of the death of Mr. Coolidge.

I have had many Republican politicians tell me, "Well, you are one of Mr. Coolidge's best boosters." Well I did like him. I could get a laugh out of almost all the little things he said, but at the same time they were wise. He could put more in a line than any public man could in a whole speech.

Here is a thing do you reckon Mr. Coolidge worried over in late years? Now he could see further than any of these politicians. Things were going so fast and everybody was so cuckoo during his term in office, that lots of them just couldn't possibly see how it could ever do otherwise than go up. Now Mr. Coolidge didn't think that. He knew that it couldn't. He knew that we couldn't just keep running stocks and everything else up and up and them paying no dividends in comparison to the price. His whole fundamental training was against all that inflation. Now there was times when he casually in a speech did give some warning but he really never did come right out and say, "Hold on there, this thing cant go on! You people are crazy. This thing has got to bust."

But how could he have said or done that? What would have been the effect? Everybody would have said, "Ha, what's the idea of hunting into our prosperity? Here we are going good, and you our President try to crab it. Let us alone. We know our business."

There is a thousand things they would have said to him or about him. He would have come in for a raft of criticism. The Republican Party, the party of big business, would have done their best to have stopped him, for they couldn't see it like he did, and they never could have understood until a year later.

Later in his own heart did Calvin Coolidge ever wish that he had preached it from the housetops regardless of what big business, his party, or what anybody would have said?

Now here is another thing too in Mr. Coolidge's favor in not doing it. He no doubt ever dreamed of the magnitude of this depression. That is he knew the thing had to bust, but he didn't think it would bust so big, or be such a permanent bust. Had he known of the tremendous extent of it, I'll bet he would have defied hell and damnation and told and warned the people about it. Now in these after years as he saw the thing overwhelm everybody, he naturally thought back to those hectic days when as President the country was paying a dollar down on everything on earth.

But all this is what they call in baseball a "Second Guess." It's easy to see now what might have helped lighten or prolong the shock, but put yourself in his place and I guess 99 out of a 100 would have done as he did.

Now on the other hand in saying he saw the thing coming, might be doing him an injustice. He might not. He may not have known any more about it than all our other prominent men. But we always felt he was two jumps ahead of any of them on thinking ahead.

Excerpt from *The Autobiography of Will Rogers*, edited by Donald Day. Copyright 1949 by Rogers Company. Copyright renewed 1977 by Donald Day and Beth Day.

Map Exercise

Fill in or identify the following on the blank map provided. Use the map in the text as your source.

1. Ignoring small enclaves, circle the general areas that had 50 percent or more farm tenancy in both 1910 and 1930.
2. Again ignoring small enclaves, circle the general areas that had less than 50 percent tenancy in both 1910 and 1930.



Interpretive Questions

Based on what you have filled in, answer the following. On some of the questions you will need to consult the narrative in your text for information or explanation.

1. What forces caused farmers to go from ownership to tenancy?
2. Compare this map with the discussion of southern agriculture in the Reconstruction era. What persistent pattern of tenancy is evident in the South?

Summary

Through the mid-1920s, America enjoyed unparalleled prosperity fueled by a great boom in automobiles and related businesses. Many people believed that the progressive ideal of an efficient, ordered society was at hand. The boom, however, masked problems. The prosperity was not equitably distributed through society; many workers and farmers, including most minorities, were left out. The new ways forged by economic and technological advancement brought an unprecedented cultural nationalism, but they also aroused serious conflicts as both intellectuals and traditionalists attacked elements of the New Era culture. Presidents Harding and Coolidge, despite their contrasting styles, personified the pro-business policies of the Republican Party, which dominated American politics throughout the 1920s.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. Many people gained from the boom of the New Era, and others fell through the economic cracks. But the prosperity was widespread enough to usher in a modern consumer society. Who gained? Who did not? What were the main elements of the national consumer-based society?
2. One of the questions that has troubled historians concerns the legacy of progressivism. Looking at the 1920s, would you argue that progressive thought had died or triumphed? Why?
3. Impressions of the 1920s vary, according to which vision one accepts—that of members of the ruling elite, such as Andrew Mellon and Herbert Hoover, of self-made men, such as Charles Lindbergh; of the disenfranchised, such as H. L. Mencken and Ernest Hemingway; of provincial traditionalists, such as William Jennings Bryan; of the blacks in the Harlem Renaissance; or of the white Fugitives. Briefly describe each of those visions, and tell how one or several capture the real significance of the decade.

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. There was a dramatic increase in three of the following economic indicators during the mid 1920s. Which is the exception?
 - a. output per worker
 - b. per capita income
 - c. rate of inflation
 - d. gross national product
2. America's economic boom in the 1920s resulted from:
 - a. the debilitation of Europe after World War I.
 - b. the rapid pace of technological innovations.
 - c. the expansion of the automobile industry.
 - d. all of the above.
3. Which of the following industries seemed *least* affected by the trend toward consolidation in the 1920s?
 - a. steel
 - b. automobiles
 - c. cotton textiles
 - d. public utilities

The "welfare capitalism" of the 1920s did *not* provide American workers any:

 - a. tangible economic gains.
 - b. real control over their own fates.
 - c. psychological comfort.
 - d. opportunities for organization.
4. The essence of welfare capitalism was:
 - a. company-provided benefits for workers.
 - b. company-provided bonuses for management.
 - c. government-provided unemployment benefits for workers.
 - d. government-provided financial aid for troubled industries.
5. Which of the following did *not* contribute to the weakness of the organized labor movement in America in the 1920s?
 - a. The radical leadership of the AFL.
 - b. Hostility of the courts and the Justice Department to union activities.
 - c. The propaganda promoted by corporate leaders that unionism was un-American.
 - d. The large numbers of unskilled workers who found no place in the craft orientation of the AFL.
6. In the 1920s and after, the term "party" was used to refer to:
 - a. a fair exchange price for farm crops.
 - b. equal pay for union and non-union workers.
 - c. equal pay for equal work for males and females.
 - d. equal employment opportunities for blacks and whites.
7. Which of the following industries was most closely associated with the rise of consumerism in America in the 1920s?
 - a. banking
 - b. insurance
 - c. advertising
 - d. fast-food chains
8. Margaret Sanger was significant to American social and cultural life in the 1920s as a promoter of:
 - a. temperance.
 - b. the "debunkers."
 - c. progressive education.
 - d. the birth-control movement.
9. Three of the following were manifestations of changing cultural values among Americans in the 1920s. Which is the exception?
 - a. There was an increase in secularism.
 - b. Many women enjoyed a less inhibited lifestyle.
 - c. The national divorce rate climbed dramatically.
 - d. Birth-control devices were legalized in all states, and abortion was legalized in some states.
10. According to the text, which of the following had the greatest influence in producing the sense of disillusionment characteristic of the Lost Generation?
 - a. The decline of organized religion.
 - b. The moral relativism of pragmatism.
 - c. The widespread acceptance of evolution.
 - d. The traumatic experience of World War I.
11. H. L. Mencken was significant to American social and cultural life in the 1920s as:
 - a. a leading advocate of temperance.
 - b. a sarcastic debunker of traditional culture.
 - c. an influential proponent of progressive education.
 - d. a prominent opponent of the birth-control movement.
12. A principal theme of Sinclair Lewis's novels in the 1920s was:
 - a. utopian optimism for the future.
 - b. romantic idealization of the past.
 - c. contempt for modern American society.
 - d. acceptance of modern American society as the best of all possible worlds.
- 13.

14. The Harlem Renaissance referred to:
- a movement in black literature, art, and music.
 - the spread of jazz to the cities of the North.
 - a movement in New York to improve the conditions of recent immigrants to the United States.
 - a back-to-Africa movement among black intellectuals who had repudiated American values.
15. Three of the following statements accurately describe the "noble experiment" of prohibition. Which is the *exception*?
- Enforcement was ludicrously ineffective in some areas.
 - It stimulated the growth of organized crime.
 - The Great Depression hindered efforts to repeal prohibition.
 - Begun as a middle-class progressive reform, prohibition was later supported largely by rural Protestant Americans.
16. Which of the following was *not* a provision of the immigration laws passed in 1921 and 1924?
- The number of immigrants allowed into the country was reduced.
 - Restrictions on Japanese, Chinese, and Korean immigration were eased.
 - The number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States was expressed as quotas based on a percentage of the number of each national group already in the country at a base year.
 - The provisions favored immigration from northwestern Europe.
17. Which of the following does *not* describe the new Ku Klux Klan (1915)?
- Extended its membership outside the old Confederate states.
 - Confined its activities to protests and symbolism rather than violence.
 - Extended its attack to include immigrants, Catholics, and Jews.
 - Assumed the role of self-appointed guardian of traditional values.
18. A Christian fundamentalist is one who:
- believes in the fundamental inerrancy of the New Testament.
 - wishes to base morality on secular rather than religious fundamentals.
 - accepts the basic or fundamental truths of all the world's religions in the spirit of ecumenicism.
 - believes in the basic or fundamental general ideas of the Bible but not in the literal truth of every statement.
19. John T. Scopes was accused of the "crime" of teaching:
- the advantages of labor union membership.
 - that Christianity should dominate America.
 - that communism had advantages in some societies.
 - that Darwinian evolution best explains the origins of humans.
20. The most important problem faced by the Democratic Party in the 1920s was:
- a serious split between urban and rural wings of the party.
 - the party was losing its traditional strength in the South.
 - the fact that recent immigrants no longer tended to support the party.
 - the restriction of immigration reduced the number of recruits to the party.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read each statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

- The phrase, return to "normalcy" was used by Republicans to capitalize on public discontent with the diplomatic, racial, and economic disruptions associated with World War I and its aftermath.
- The "American Plan" was a nickname given by corporate leaders to the open-shop concept, which held that no worker could be required to join a union to get or keep a job.
- The economic sector most responsible for the prosperity of the 1920s was agriculture.
- The trend toward business consolidation that had begun in the 1890s began to slow during the 1920s.
- During the 1920s, membership in labor unions declined significantly compared to the World War I years.
- During the 1920s, advertising expanded rapidly and advertisers were increasingly trying to identify their products with a modern lifestyle.
- The "flapper" nickname was given to women who tried to hold on to traditional female roles and who criticized the wild ways of the youth of the decade.
- H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis were among the authors whose writings were critical of the dominant middle-class values of the 1920s.
- The New York City-based flourishing of African American culture in the 1920s was given the nickname "Gotham Revival."
- Support for the prohibition of liquor was strongest in the provincial, largely rural, Protestant-dominated areas of the country.
- The literary group known as the "Igitives" or the "agrarians" vividly articulated the stifling and backward nature of rural and small town life and urged intellectuals to celebrate northern industrial life.
- The effect of the immigration laws of 1921 and 1924 was to increase foreign, especially Asian, immigration following the restrictive period around World War I.
- In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan grew rapidly in some midwestern states as well as in the South.
- Within American Protestantism, the so-called modernists tended to be urban, middle-class people who attempted to adapt religion to the teachings of modern science.
- The Republican administrations of the 1920s accomplished notable reductions in taxes on corporate profits, personal incomes, and inheritances.
- During most of the 1920s, the Democrats controlled Congress and the Republicans controlled the presidency.
- The nickname "Ohio Gang" was given to several advisors of Calvin Coolidge.
- The Teapot Dome Scandal in the 1920s involved corrupt leasing of government oil reserves to private business.
- The scandals during the Harding administration caused little if any political harm to the Republican Party in the 1920s.
- Calvin Coolidge was more popular than Warren Harding because he was more personable and gregarious.

The Jazz Age (1921-1929)

The Jazz Age can be considered a "Decade of Contradictions" because of the differing opinions as to what should be the most important aspect of Americans' lives. Should Americans focus on *New Values* or should they be worried about losing their *Traditional Values*. It is our job to discover the two contradicting aspects of American Society and decide for ourselves which aspect of the Jazz Age lays a stronger foundation for America's future.

You should list the events, ideas, innovations, etc. and give a brief description of how they impact America.

New American Values

(Aspects of the Jazz Age that create a freer lifestyle and a pursuit of individual goals)

Traditional Values

(Aspects of the Jazz Age that are actions taken to preserve values and previous attitudes)

TERMS, CONCEPTS, NAMES

"Normalcy"	Harlem Renaissance	"Self-made man"
"Little Steel"	Langston Hughes	Thomas Edison
General Motors	<i>I'll Take My Stand</i>	Charles Lindbergh
Trade Association	The Noble Experiment	"Lost generation"
"Welfare Capitalism"	Al Capone	D. W. Griffith: <i>Birth of a Nation</i>
William Green	"Wets and dries"	The New Klan
A. Phillip Randolph	National Origin Act of 1924	"Fundamentalists"
Bartons	Leo Frank	"Modernists"
"The American Plan"	<i>The Jazz Singer</i>	Billy Sunday
"Party"	Will Hays	American Civil Liberties Union
McNary-Haugen Bill	"New professional woman"	The Scopes Trial
Bruce Barton: <i>The Man</i>	"Behaviorists"	Al Smith
<i>Nobody Knows</i>	"Companionate marriage"	Herbert Hoover
Henry Ford	Margaret Sanger	Warren G. Harding
Ernest Hemingway	The "Hisper"	Calvin Coolidge
H. L. Mencken	National Women's Party	The Ohio Gang
Sinclair Lewis	Alice Paul	Teapot Dome Scandal
F. Scott Fitzgerald	League of Women Voters	Andrew Mellon
John Dewey	Skeppard-Tower Act	<i>Lochner v. New York 1905</i>