

CHAPTER 24

The New Era, 1920–1929

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After you have studied Chapter 24 in your textbook and worked through this study guide chapter, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the economic characteristics of the 1920s, and explain the reasons for the economic expansion and recovery that began in 1922.
2. Discuss the relationship between government and business during the 1920s, and indicate the factors responsible for the decline of organized labor.
3. Examine the political, social, and economic characteristics of the Harding and Coolidge administrations.
4. Discuss the nature and extent of reform legislation during the decade of the 1920s.
5. Discuss the federal government's Indian policy during the 1920s, and explain its impact on Native Americans.
6. Examine the social, economic, and political changes in the position and attitudes of women and African Americans in American society during the 1920s.
7. Discuss the expansion of the consumer society in America during the 1920s.
8. Examine the impact of the automobile and modern advertising on American society.
9. Explain both the trend toward urbanization and the growth of the suburbs during the 1920s, and discuss the consequences of both of these factors on American society.
10. Indicate the factors that caused an increase in immigration by Mexicans and Puerto Ricans during the 1920s, and discuss the characteristics of their lives in the United States.
11. Discuss the changes that took place in the way Americans used their time during the 1920s.
12. Discuss the causes and consequences of the 1920s trend toward longer life expectancy, and explain the responses of Americans to the needs of the elderly.
13. Examine the impact of social change during the 1920s on the following:
 - a. Americans' values
 - b. the American family
 - c. women in the American work force
 - d. images of femininity
 - e. views of human sexuality
14. Examine the emergence of the Ku Klux Klan, nativists, and religious fundamentalists, and discuss their impact on American society in the 1920s.

15. Explain the characteristics of each of the following, and discuss the impact of each on American society during the 1920s:
 - a. games
 - b. movies
 - c. sports
 - d. prohibition
16. Examine and evaluate the movements in American literature, art, and music during the 1920s.
17. Discuss the issues and personalities in the 1928 presidential campaign, and explain the election's outcome.
18. Discuss the events that led to the 1929 stock market crash, and examine the causes of the crash and the Great Depression that followed.

THEMATIC GUIDE

The decade of the 1920s began with troubling economic signs but soon became an era of economic prosperity for many Americans. Prosperity was accompanied by pro-business attitudes and unparalleled consumerism. The federal government remained active in its support of business interests, and it became more passive in its regulation of those interests. During this period the Supreme Court handed down antiregulatory decisions and organized labor suffered setbacks. Furthermore, pro-business attitudes reminiscent of the Gilded Age marked the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations. Most reforms took place at the state and local levels. Interest in reform concerning Indian affairs led to the reorganization of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but Indian policy matters continued to be characterized by paternalism. Furthermore, while newly enfranchised women lobbied and gained passage of some legislation helpful to them, women generally struggled to find their political voice.

The consumerism of the age was fueled by the growing purchasing power of many American families and the accompanying ability to acquire the goods associated with a consumer society. Both the automobile and the sophisticated techniques of modern advertising transformed the American lifestyle.

The urbanization of American society continued in the 1920s. Although movement to cities offered opportunities to many, African American migrants found that white racism was as prevalent in urban areas as it had been in the rural South. However, blacks' urban ghetto experience aroused their class and ethnic consciousness, as seen both in Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement and in the cultural outpouring known as the Harlem Renaissance. Racism also shaped the lives of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and other newcomers to American cities and contributed to "white flight" from the inner city and to suburban growth.

The way in which Americans spent their time changed. For instance, labor-saving devices lightened the tasks of women working in the home. But since women were still expected to clothe and feed the family and since few women produced clothes and preserved food at home, they spent their time shopping for these goods and became the primary consumers in society.

Altered attitudes and values brought about by societal changes found expression in new clothing and hair styles and in a new openness about human sexuality. Increased longevity resulting from improved diets and improved healthcare led to an increase in the number of older Americans and to limited attempts to respond to their needs. At the same time, compulsory-school-attendance laws increased the influence of the peer group in the socialization of children. Furthermore, a combination of consumerism and economic necessity caused more women, including married women, to work outside the home. The work they performed and the wages they earned were largely determined by the sex-segregated

characteristics of the labor market and, for nonwhites, by racial bias. In spite of sexism and racism, however, many women placed family needs above individual needs.

Many people felt threatened by change, and some, attempting to protect traditional attitudes and values, reacted defensively, sometimes with attempts to blame change on scapegoats. The emergence of the “new” Klan and the increase in nativism and fear of radicalism (evidenced in the Sacco and Vanzetti case) can be seen in this light. Religious fundamentalism also gained strength, as the Scopes trial revealed.

More leisure time and a search for entertainment meant that spectator sports and the movies became big business. As the conformist aspects of mass culture caused individuality to fade, Americans found heroes in sports figures, movie idols, and media-created personalities. Caught between two value systems, many Americans gave lip service to the old, as evidenced in their professed support of the prohibition experiment, but chose the new, as the breakdown of prohibition in the cities shows.

In literature, the 1920s saw the work of the Lost Generation and of the Harlem Renaissance. In music, it was the age of jazz, America’s most distinctive art form, and of such talented composers as Aaron Copland and George Gershwin. Overall, the period stands as one of the most creative in American history.

In politics, the presidency remained in Republican hands in 1928 as most Americans affirmed their confidence in the building of a new era of prosperity for all. But with the stock market crash of 1929, the optimism of 1928 gave way to concern and ultimately, with the onset of the Great Depression, to despair. The Jazz Age ended. The American economic system would have to be rebuilt.

IDENTIFICATION AND SIGNIFICANCE

After studying Chapter 24 of *A People and a Nation*, you should be able to identify *and* explain fully the historical significance of each item listed below.

- Identify each item in the space provided. Give an explanation or description of the item. Answer the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *when*.
- Explain the historical significance of each item in the space provided. Establish the historical context in which the item exists. Establish the item as the result of or as the cause of other factors existing in the society under study. Answer this question: *What were the political, social, economic, and/or cultural consequences of this item?*

1. Warren G. Harding

2. Charles Forbes

3. the Teapot Dome scandal

4. Calvin Coolidge

5. the flapper

6. automobile culture

7. Ku Klux Klan

8. the National Origins Act of 1924 and 1927

9. Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti

10. the Scopes trial

11. popular heroes of sports and film

12. prohibition

13. Al Capone

14. the Lost Generation and postwar ennui

15. the Harlem Renaissance

16. the Jazz Age

17. the 1928 presidential election

18. Herbert Hoover

19. stock market speculation

20. the stock market crash of 1929

IDEAS AND DETAILS

Objective 2

1. In *Bailey v. Drexel Furniture Company*, the Supreme Court
 - a. demonstrated a pro-business stance by striking down restrictions on child labor.
 - b. demonstrated that it was moving in a liberal direction in the field of consumer protection.
 - c. declared federal aid to a particular industry unconstitutional.
 - d. upheld the right to strike by union members.

Objective 2

2. During the 1920s, organized labor
 - a. received support from many large corporations.
 - b. was encouraged by the rulings of a sympathetic Supreme Court.
 - c. continued to attract members in spite of the hostility of the federal government.
 - d. was hurt by the policy of welfare capitalism adopted by some large corporations.

Objective 3

3. One area of disagreement between President Coolidge and Congress was
 - a. federally funded internal improvements.
 - b. farm policy.
 - c. foreign policy.
 - d. military spending.

Objective 5

4. Reformers were critical of Indian women for which of the following reasons?
 - a. They refused to seek gainful employment.
 - b. They were reluctant to send their children to boarding schools.
 - c. They encouraged their children to abandon their tribes and land and move to urban areas.
 - d. They abandoned their cultural traditions by adopting lifestyles and homemaking methods associated with white middle-class women.

Objective 6

5. Which of the following was true of the National Woman's Party during the 1920s?
 - a. It joined with organizations composed of African American women to fight for the rights of minority women.
 - b. It campaigned tirelessly for enactment of sex-based labor legislation to protect employed working-class women.
 - c. It encouraged women to engage in bloc voting.
 - d. It campaigned for an Equal Rights Amendment to guarantee women's equality with men in all parts of society.

Objective 6

6. Urban blacks were drawn to Marcus Garvey because he
 - a. emphasized racial pride.
 - b. promoted education as the route to assimilation.

- c. preached against the evils of the free enterprise system.
- d. was willing to use military means to achieve his objectives.

Objectives 6, 7, and 11

7. New technology changed the role of housewives in which of the following ways?
- a. Management of the household became a shared family responsibility.
 - b. The housewife became the family's chief consumer rather than its chief producer.
 - c. Fewer child-raising responsibilities were placed on the housewife.
 - d. Housewives were relieved of a wide variety of responsibilities, allowing for increased specialization of tasks.

Objective 13

8. As a consequence of child-labor laws and compulsory-school-attendance laws,
- a. daily newspaper circulation increased dramatically in the 1920s.
 - b. consumption of consumer products began to decline in the 1920s.
 - c. the role of the family in socializing children declined while that of the peer group increased.
 - d. many industries faced a severe labor shortage.

Objectives 6 and 13

9. Which of the following statements concerning women in the work force during the 1920s is correct?
- a. The number of women in factories increased dramatically.
 - b. Sex segregation in the workplace became less noticeable.
 - c. The number of women in the work force declined.
 - d. Married women joined the work force in increasing numbers.

Objective 14

10. During the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan
- a. had little power outside the South.
 - b. lost most of its power in the South because of the new mood of militancy among blacks.
 - c. gained power nationally as an antiblack, anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic movement.
 - d. was outlawed by Congress as a terrorist organization.

Objective 14

11. Which of the following conclusions may be drawn from the Sacco and Vanzetti case?
- a. The fear of radicalism, which caused the Red Scare, had disappeared.
 - b. After the verdict of the case, laws were applied equally to most ethnic groups.
 - c. Blacks could not be guaranteed a fair trial in the South.
 - d. Justice was not necessarily blind to a person's political beliefs or ethnic background.

Objective 15

12. Jack Dempsey, "Babe" Ruth, and Rudolph Valentino demonstrate that the decade of the 1920s was an
- a. age of heroes.
 - b. era of great actors.
 - c. era of great baseball players.
 - d. age of lawlessness.

Objective 16

5. Many writers of the Harlem Renaissance
 - a. rejected the African past of black Americans.
 - b. advocated that black Americans return to Africa.
 - c. rejected white culture.
 - d. were mainly interested in economic issues.

Objective 17

6. The election of 1928 indicated that
 - a. the Democrats were gaining strength in urban areas.
 - b. the Democrats were losing their stronghold in the South.
 - c. the Republicans were making gains in all sections of the country.
 - d. the Republicans had become the minority party.

Objective 18

7. The government contributed to the stock market crash of 1929 and to the depression that followed in which of the following ways?
 - a. Government regulations imposed on businesses reduced profits and investments.
 - b. Tax policies before the crash took large sums of money out of circulation.
 - c. The Federal Reserve Board followed an easy credit-policy in the years prior to the crash.
 - d. Government policies toward organized labor encouraged large wage increases and inflation.

ESSAY QUESTIONS**Objective 1**

1. Discuss the factors responsible for the economic recovery that began in 1922. How long did this economic recovery last? Why is it said that this recovery was “uneven”?

Objective 2

2. Examine the relationship between government and business during the Republican era of the 1920s. What was the philosophy behind this relationship?

Objective 4

3. Examine the attitude toward reform during the 1920s, and discuss and assess the reforms that were achieved during the decade.

Objective 8

4. Discuss the impact of the automobile on American society, American values, and the American family.

Objective 6

5. Explain the emergence and the rise to power of Marcus Garvey.

Objectives 13 and 14

6. Defend the following statement, and explain how it applies not only to the 1920s but to the twenty-first century as well: “The emotional responses that Americans made to events during the 1920s were part of a larger attempt to sustain old-fashioned values in a fast-moving, materialistic world.”

Objective 18

7. Explain why the 1929 stock market crash led to the Great Depression.

Multiple-Choice Answers

1.
 - a. Correct. The judicial branch of the government, along with the legislative and executive branches, took a pro-business, antireform, and antiregulatory stance in the 1920s. The *Bailey* case serves as an example of this stance.
 - b. No. The *Bailey* case did not deal with the issue of consumer protection, and the Court’s stand did not indicate that its views were more liberal.
 - c. No. The *Bailey* case did not deal with the issue of government aid to industry.
 - d. No. The *Bailey* case did not deal with organized labor’s right to strike.
2.
 - d. Correct. Large corporations continued their hostility toward organized labor, but they attempted to neutralize the appeal of unions by offering pension plans and other amenities. This policy is known as welfare capitalism.
 - a. No. Corporations, large and small, continued to see organized labor as a threat to property rights.
 - b. No. The Court continued to demonstrate hostility toward organized labor. In cases such as *Coronado Coal Company v. United Mine Workers* (1922), the Court ruled that a striking union, like a trust, could be prosecuted for illegal restraint of trade.
 - c. No. Union membership fell from 5.1 million in 1920 to 3.6 million in 1929.
3.
 - b. Correct. Coolidge and Congress disagreed over how to respond to the plight of farmers. Coolidge, devoted to the concept of *laissez faire*, twice vetoed bills that would have established government-backed price supports for staple crops.
 - a. No. President Coolidge supported allocation of funds by Congress for construction of a national highway system.
 - c. No. Coolidge and Congress agreed in the area of foreign policy.
 - d. No. Military spending was not a major issue during the Coolidge administration, and Coolidge and Congress did not disagree on this issue.
4.
 - b. Correct. Many Indian women balked at sending their children to boarding schools and were criticized by reformers for that stance.
 - a. No. During the 1920s women were criticized when they sought gainful employment. Indian women were not criticized for refusing to enter the labor force.
 - c. No. Most Indian women attempted to protect and preserve Indian culture. Therefore, they did not encourage their children to abandon their tribes and land and move to urban areas.

- d. No. Most Indian women refused to abandon their cultural traditions and, as a result, were criticized for refusing to adopt lifestyles and homemaking methods associated with white middle-class women.
5. d. Correct. The National Woman’s Party continued to champion feminism. In doing so it campaigned for an Equal Rights Amendment to guarantee women’s equality with men in all parts of American society.
- a. No. The National Woman’s Party did not actively fight for the rights of minority women.
- b. No. The League of Women Voters (which is not mentioned in the text) supported sex-based labor legislation to protect employed working-class women, but such legislation was not supported by the National Woman’s Party.
- c. No. The National Woman’s Party did not encourage women to engage in bloc voting.
6. a. Correct. Marcus Garvey preached the idea that blacks have an African heritage of which they should be proud, and he asserted that blackness symbolizes strength and beauty. He taught racial pride in an era in which white racism found expression in race riots and lynchings.
- b. No. Marcus Garvey was opposed to the assimilation of blacks into white American society.
- c. No. Marcus Garvey encouraged blacks to take advantage of the free enterprise system by sharpening their management skills and opening businesses.
- d. No. Although Marcus Garvey preached that blacks could gain respect by lifting their native Africa to world power status, he did not advocate the use of violence to obtain his objectives.
7. b. Correct. The urban housewife of the 1920s was no longer the producer of food and clothing that her female ancestors had been. However, it was still her responsibility to feed and clothe the family. Therefore, she became the family’s chief consumer.
- a. No. The new technology did not cause a new sense of responsibility toward household management on the part of husbands and children. In fact, by decreasing the need for servants, the new technology placed the burden of household management more squarely on the shoulders of the wife herself.
- c. No. The new technology eliminated the need for servants in many cases. This placed more of the responsibility for childcare on the wife herself.
- d. No. The new technology did not relieve most housewives of a wide variety of responsibilities, and in many cases the “labor-saving” machines added new responsibilities.
8. c. Correct. Children were kept in school longer as a result of child-labor laws and compulsory-school-attendance laws. As a consequence, the influence of the peer group in socializing children increased and the role of the family decreased.
- a. No. Newspaper circulation did not increase in the 1920s as a result of children being kept in school longer.
- b. No. Consumption of consumer goods increased in the 1920s.
- d. No. Child-labor laws and compulsory-school-attendance laws did not cause a severe labor shortage.
9. d. Correct. Largely because of “need,” as defined in the new consumer age, married women joined the work force in increasing numbers during the 1920s. The number of married women who were gainfully employed rose from 1.9 million in 1920 to 3.1 million in 1930.

- a. No. The number of women working in factories showed very little increase during the decade of the 1920s.
- b. No. Sex segregation in the workplace showed no signs of decline during the 1920s.
- c. No. In 1920 there were some 10.4 million women in the work force, and by 1930 there were 10.8 million gainfully employed women. This meant that women constituted 22 percent of the total labor force in 1930, a 1.6 percent increase over 1920.
10. c. Correct. The “new” Klan of the early 1920s was more broadly based than the first Klan, and it also directed its brand of hatred toward groups other than blacks.
- a. No. Although the “new” Klan of the 1920s was founded by William J. Simmons of Atlanta, its power spread into all regions of the country and by 1923 the organization claimed some five million members.
- b. No. The new mood of nationalism and militancy among African Americans in the 1920s was more pronounced in the North than in the South. Furthermore, the “new” Klan of the 1920s gained power in the South.
- d. No. Although the Klan operated through terrorism and fear, it was not outlawed by Congress as a terrorist organization.
11. d. Correct. Modern ballistics studies suggest that Sacco was probably guilty, Vanzetti probably innocent. However, the evidence used in the 1920 trial was questionable, and the conviction and sentencing of the two men was based largely on their immigrant background and anarchist beliefs.
- a. No. The case demonstrates that the fear of radicalism, which was an important aspect of the Red Scare, was still very much alive.
- b. No. The Sacco and Vanzetti case is an indication of anti-immigrant sentiment in the United States during the early 1920s.
- c. No. The case did not involve blacks being tried in the South.
12. a. Correct. The age of mass consumerism robbed experiences and objects of their uniqueness, and as individuals became more anonymous and less significant in the fast-moving, materialistic world, they turned to “heroes” as a way of identifying with the unique.
- b. No. In the first place, how one defines a “great” actor is a matter of judgment. In addition, Rudolph Valentino is the only actor among the three people listed.
- c. No. Although “Babe” Ruth may be considered a “great” baseball player, this is not true of Jack Dempsey (boxer) or Rudolph Valentino (actor).
- d. No. The three people listed were not engaged in “lawless” acts.
13. c. Correct. In addressing identity issues, black writers of the Harlem Renaissance rejected white culture and took pride in their African heritage. Instead of advocating assimilation into white society, they urged blacks to find their identity in the richness and uniqueness of black culture.
- a. No. Many of the writers of the Harlem Renaissance spoke with pride of the African past of black Americans.

- b. No. Most of the writers associated with the Harlem Renaissance were not advocates of black nationalism and did not advocate the return of black Americans to Africa.
- d. No. The black writers of the Harlem Renaissance were concerned with issues relating to the reality of the black experience in white American society. They were not concerned primarily with economic issues.
14. a. Correct. By carrying the nation's twelve largest cities, the Democratic Party demonstrated that it was gaining power in the urban areas of the country.
- b. No. Al Smith, the Democratic presidential nominee in 1928, carried eight states to Herbert Hoover's forty. Six of these were southern states from which he gained 69 of his 87 electoral votes.
- c. No. The election indicated that Republicans had actually lost support in areas that were becoming more important in presidential elections.
- d. No. The Republican Party was still the majority party—that is, a majority of the people who were registered to vote were registered as Republicans.
15. c. Correct. The Board's easy-credit policy before 1931 fueled speculation in the stock market, and its shift to a tight-money policy after 1931 denied the economy of funds needed for economic recovery.
- a. No. The Hoover administration, like the Harding and Coolidge administrations, adhered to the laissez-faire philosophy and did not "impose" regulations on businesses.
- b. No. The government followed a policy of lowering income-tax rates, especially on the wealthy. Therefore, the tax policies of the government did not take large sums of money out of circulation. Furthermore, between 1920 and 1929, the after-tax income of the wealthiest 1 percent rose 75 percent as opposed to the average per-capita increase of 9 percent. This extra disposable income in the hands of the wealthy tended to fuel speculation in the stock market.
- d. No. The government did not give aid to organized labor. Furthermore, economic distress among farmers, factory layoffs, technological unemployment, and low wages caused production to outstrip demand.