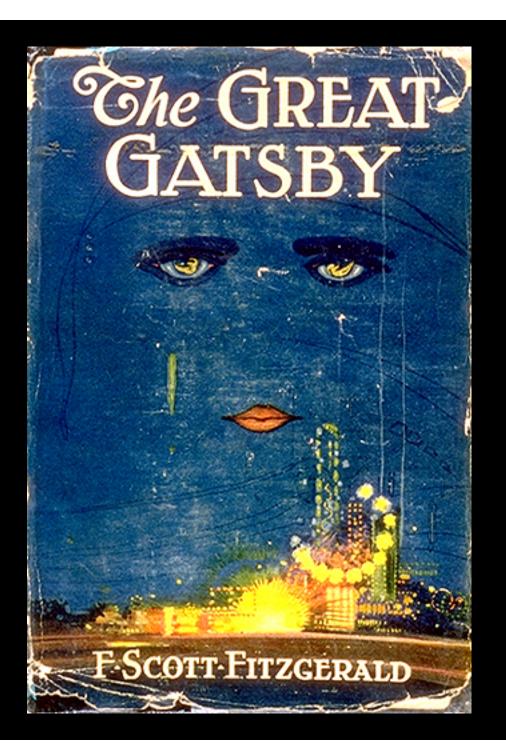
The Great Gatsby

The 1920s and the American Dream



The 20s: an age of transition

World War I and After

"The world must be made safe for democracy" Woodrow Wilson the President had declared, "Its peace must be planted upon the tested foundation of political liberty." --- a spirit of idealism Americans entered the war in 1917.

a general disillusionment among the people which caused nervousness: racism, intolerance, violence, Ku Klux Klan, immigrants, political intolerance "ghost of bolshevism" behind every form of social protest/ strikes.

- •1922 foreign policy of Isolationism
- •1929 Stock Market Crash
- •1932 New Deal era

Roaring Twenties

- Economy booming
- America partied
- Organized crime
- Prohibition Act
- Decline of moral standards

OPTIMISM

- business, change and innovation, laissez faireeconomy
- rapid growth of industry and mechanization: unlimited progress effecting an even wider distribution of the blessing of civilizations: electricity; automobile
- even skeptics believe in progress and in solving of problems: new" Golden Age" for America

CRITICS

- they called the decade "decline and degradation"
- Americans are caught up in a "surge of materialism", people who had failed to grasp the meaning and significance of life.
- they feel disillusioned or disenchanted, they lost faith in life and in the possibility of social progress that caused their absolute lack of interest in politics.

SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE OF CHANGE

- relaxing of structures within the sphere of private and public morality
- relationship between the sexes
- change of the status of women

SPIRIT OF THE 20s

- urbanization and the move away from the land
- fascination with the dream of success
- development of the cinema as a medium of entertainment
- popularity of jazz
- increased mobility brought about by the mass produced automobile

PROHIBITION

- the 18th Amendment(1919)prohibited the sale and consumption of alcohol.
- although alcohol was illegal it was distributed through" bootleggers"
- bootlegging means the production and sale of liquor.
- alcohol was served in illegal night-clubs which were called "speakeasies"
- it was the time of famous gangsters like Al Capone and events like the St. Valentine's Day massacre happened. During that time the Mafia became important in American society.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF WOMEN

- The 19th Amendment(1920) gave women the right to vote.
- during the Twenties 9 million women were employed and earned money on their own, many younger women used their money to enjoy themselves
- women bobbed their hair
- they were able to drink and smoke in public. For the first time female alcoholism is a major problem.
- the liberated young women were called" flappers" In *The Great Gatsby* Jordan Baker is such a new type of woman. She is living alone and has equal relationships to men. She is self-confident in dealing with others. Tom comments on her new freedom as a woman.

Books That Define the Time

- "The Waste Land" by T.S. Eliot: The ultimate indictment of the modern world's loss of personal, moral, and spiritual values.
- The New Negro by Alain Locke: A hopeful look at the negro in America
- Strange Interlude by Eugene O'Neill: A look at 30 years in the life of a modern woman
- The Sun Also Rises by Ernest Hemingway: The lost generation of expatriates
- Babbitt by Sinclair Lewis: A satirical look at small town life
- The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner: Details the moral decay of the Old South
- Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston: Black life in a Black community

HARLEM MOVEMENT

Southern gentle lady, Do not swoon. They've just hung a black man In the dark of the moon. They've hung a black man To the roadside tree In the dark of the moon For the world to see How Dixie protects
Its white womanhood
Southern gentle lady,
Be good!
Be good!

Silhouette by Langston Hughes

FACTS ABOUT THE DECADE

- 106,521,537 people in the United States
- 2,132,000 unemployed, Unemployment 5.2%
- Life expectancy: Male 53.6, Female 54.6
- 343.000 in military (down from 1,172,601 in 1919)
- Average annual earnings \$1236; Teacher's salary \$970
- Dow Jones High 100 Low 67
- Illiteracy rate reached a new low of 6% of the population.
- Gangland crime included murder, swindles, racketeering
- It took 13 days to reach California from New York There were 387,000 miles of paved road.

Flapper Culture and Style

 http://www.chicagohs.org/ exhibitions/flappers/



WHAT IS THE AMERICAN DREAM?

 It describes an attitude of hope and faith that looks forward to the fulfillment of human wishes and desires.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

SPIRITUAL AND MATERIAL IMPROVEMENT

- Materialism achieved too quickly.
- Thus, lacking spiritual life/purpose.

Gatsby is a character that represents this DREAM.

FAILURE OF THE AMERICAN DREAM

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Exploitation
- Hypocrisy
- Corruption
- suppression

The 1920's

- Known by names such as
 - the Jazz Age,
 - the Age of Intolerance,
 - and the Age of Wonderful Nonsense
 - The age that embodies the beginning of Modern America.
 - Post WWI and after pulling through a worldwide Flu epidemic many American's felt hemmed up and the new decade would be a time of change for everyone---not always in a good way.

1920's: Political

- Warren G. Harding, Elected president in 1920
- Overall, Harding's policies reflected a conservative, <u>laissez-faire</u> attitude.
- Harding dies of a stroke in 1921.
- Harding's administration was riddled with numerous scandals; the most notorious of which was the <u>Teapot Dome Scandal</u>,

1920's: Political

- Calvin Coolidge was Harding's vice president (1921-23) and took over the Presidency after Harding's death.
- He was re-elected in 1924
- Coolidge was able to clean up most of the effects of the scandals of Harding's administration.

1920's: Political

- Herbert Hoover was elected to the presidency in 1928.
- Popular with the people.
- He was raised up by the country's prosperity until the beginning of the <u>Great</u> <u>Depression</u> began to carve its trough into the nation's economy early on his presidency.

1920's: Social

- Red Scares refer to the fear of Communism in the U.S. just before and during the 1920s
- Historians often point out that Americans had withdrawn into a provincialism as evidenced by the reappearance of the Ku Klux Klan, restrictive immigration laws, and Prohibition the 18th amendment banning the manufacturing, sale and transport of intoxicating liquor.

1920's: Social

 However, many people disliked the law and imbibed in unlawful nightclubs called speakeasies. Gangsters took control of bootlegging (illegal distribution of liquor) and violent lawlessness erupted. Lacking public support, the federal government was virtually unable to enforce Prohibition.

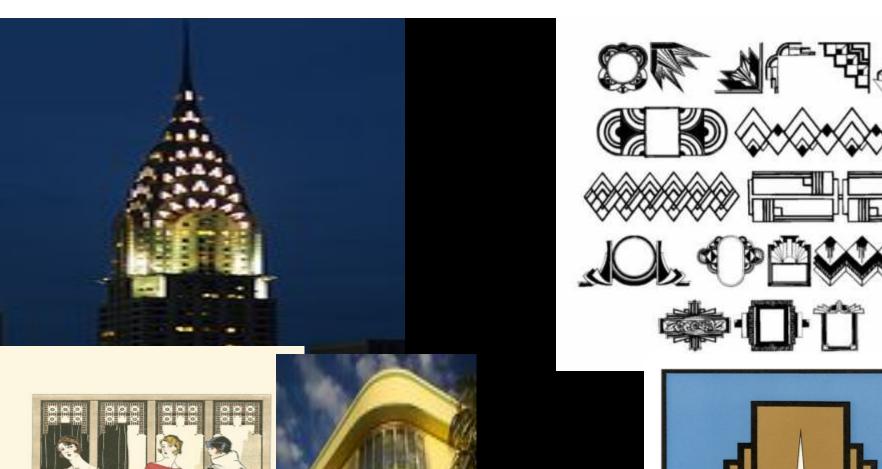
1920's: Social

- Youthful "Flapper" women provoked older people with brief skirts, bobbed hair, and cavalier use of makeup and cigarettes.
- Social crazes such as dances like the Charleston, dance marathons, flagpole sitting and flying stunts erupted.
- Babe Ruth and other sports figures became heroes.

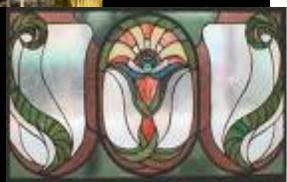


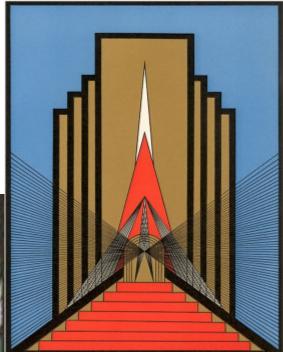
1920's Arts & Writing

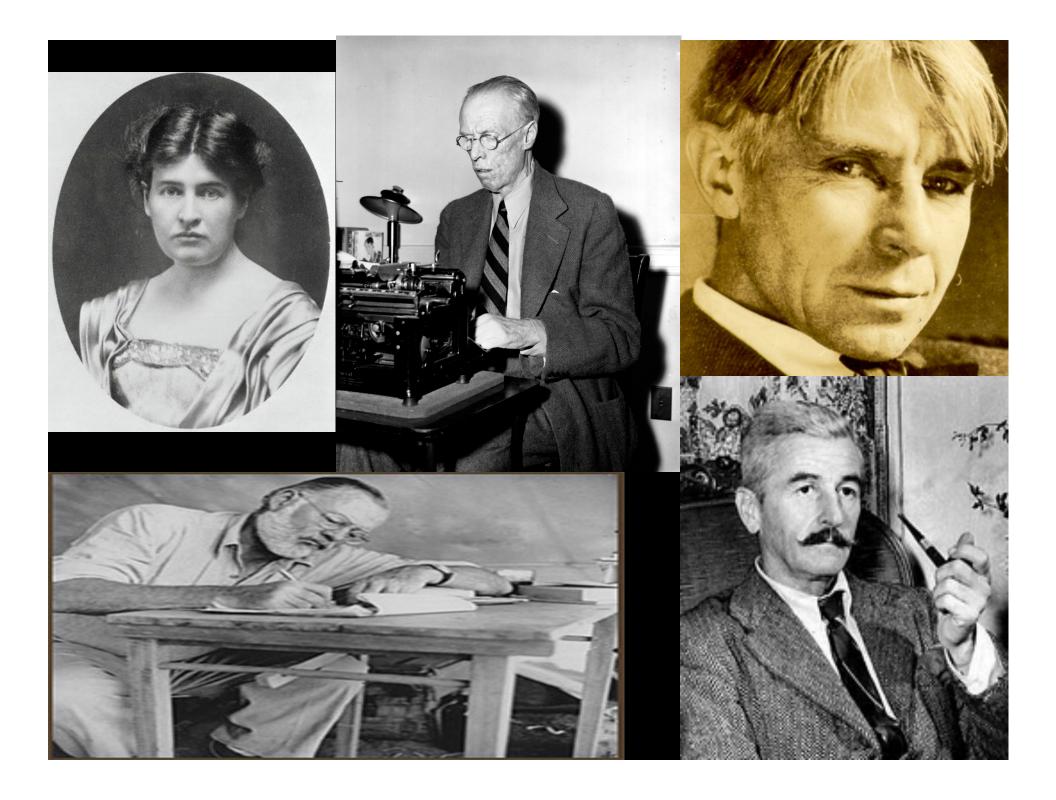
- The lush, ornate style of Art Deco architecture, art, clothing, hairstyles, decor and furnishings flourished
- The Harlem Renaissance
- a rich period of American writing
- Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, William Faulkner,
 F. Scott Fitzgerald, Carl Sandburg and
 Ernest Hemingway were prominent writers of the
 time period
- Will Durant's The Story of Philosophy would sell millions of copies.











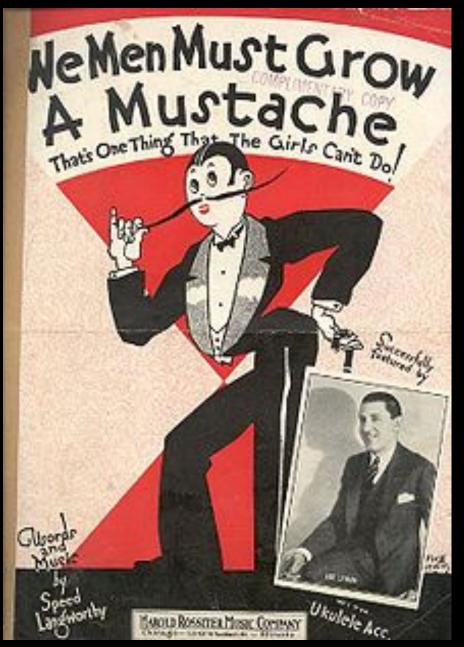
1920's Arts & Writing

- A uniquely American music form, with roots in African expression, came to be known as jazz
- greats such as <u>Louis Armstrong</u>, <u>Duke Ellington</u> and Fletcher Henderson
- George Gershwin, Cole Porter and others would bring jazz influences to Broadway and the concert hall.
- Bessie Smith hallowed the Blues on a sound recordings.
- first movie made with sound, The Jazz Singer, starring Al Jolson



1920's Arts & Writing

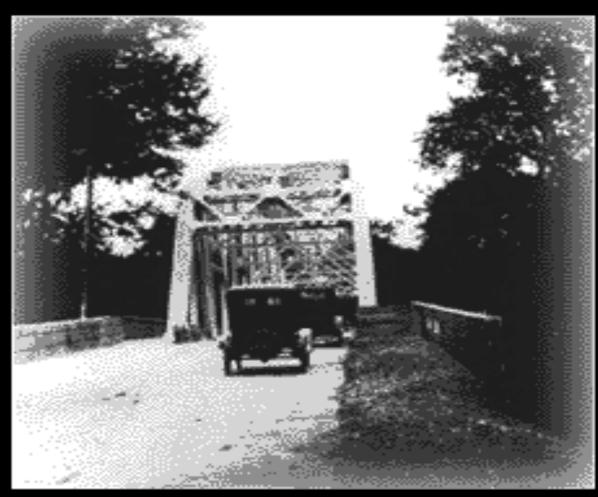
- Walt Disney would produce his first cartoon, *Alice's Wonderland*.
- Charlie Chaplin and Rudolph Valentino were tremendous movie box office hits





- the United States was converting from a wartime to peacetime economy
- Post-war there was a temporary stall in the economy
- In this decade, America became the richest nation on Earth and a culture of consumerism was born
- People spent money for better roads, tourism, and holiday resorts. Real estate booms, most notably in Florida, sent land prices soaring

- Technology played a vital part in delivering the economic and cultural good times
- Henry Ford blazed the way with his Model
 T; he sold more 15 million of them by 1927
- assembly line means of production was the key
- radio found its way into virtually every home in America



Care of the 1920s

- in 1926, the advent of Technicolor made movies more entertaining and memorable; consequently, the movie industry became a major part of American industry in general
- Charles A. Lindbergh's pioneering flight across the Atlantic Ocean in the Spirit of St. Louis in 1927
- Canned foods, ready-made clothing and household appliances emerge liberating women from household drudgery

- The use of machinery increased productivity, while decreasing the demand for manual laborers
- the nation's demand for food remained relatively steady.
 As a result, food prices and profits dropped.
- Machinery was costly. The small farmer was no longer able to cope because he lacked the capital to buy the equipment
- industrial boom lured numerous workers off the farm to the cities
- farmers were compelled to merge in order to compete;
 the lasting effect would be larger, but fewer farms.

- Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921
- Diphtheria became better controlled with an immunization in 1923
- With the Flapper's focus on dieting and her looks came a significant change in the dietary habits of Americans as a whole — less fat and meat, and more fruits and vegetables
- discovery of vitamins and their effects
- However, contradictory habits like cigarette consumption, rose roughly by 43 billion annually, and bootleg liquor became a \$3.5 billion-a-year business

- Stock speculation went sky high in the bull market of 1928-1929. No one suspected that a signal of the end would occur on October 24, 1929, with the infamous <u>stock market crash</u>, and that more than a decade of <u>depression</u> and despair would follow such an era of happiness and prosperity.
- The typical American was still hardworking and sensible