

# The 1920s

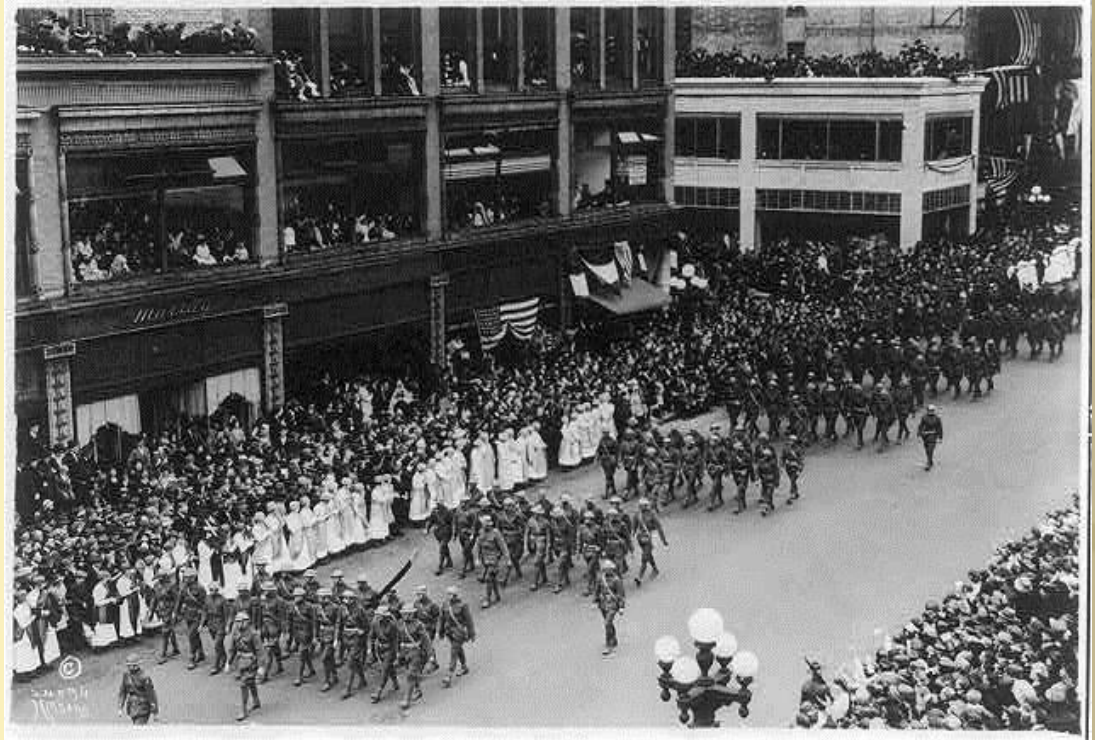


# Essential Questions

- Why did the U.S. experience so much political and social change during the 1920s?
- Why did the 1920s see the emergence of the “consumer society”?
- What issues led to Prohibition in the 1920s, and what problems contributed to its failure?
- Why did many see the 1920s as a period of rebellion by American youth?
- What changes occurred to marriage and the American family structure in the 1920s?
- How did government economic policies during the 1920s lead to the Great Depression?

# America at the Start of the Decade

- Victorious in World War I
- Treaty of Versailles defeated
- Period of isolationism
- Republican ascendancy



Returning WWI soldiers parading in Minneapolis

# The Election of 1920

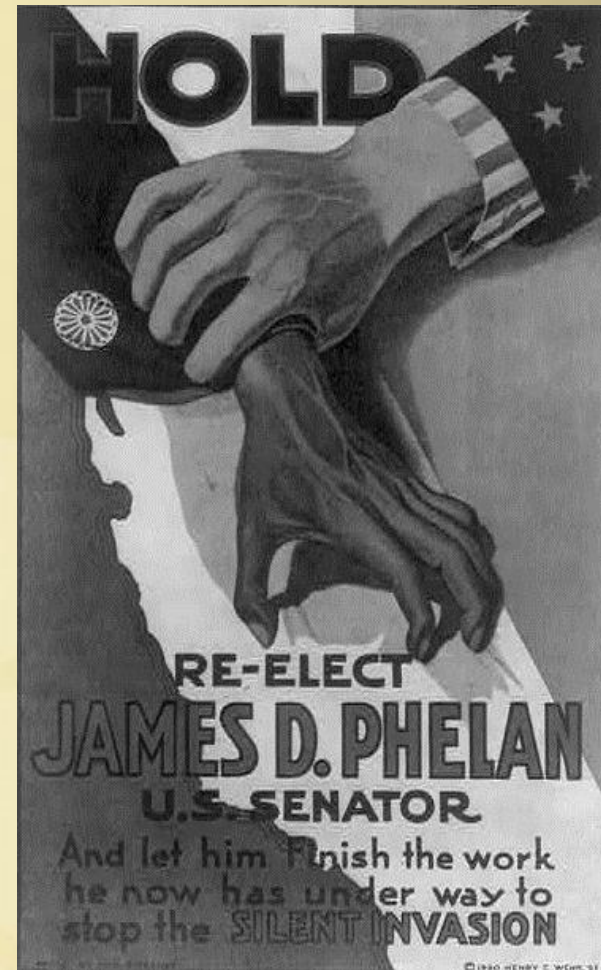


Warren G. Harding

- GOP nominated Ohio Sen. Warren G. Harding
- “Normalcy”
- Democrats ran Ohio Gov. James M. Cox
- Coolidge as GOP VP candidate
- FDR as Democratic VP candidate
- Republican landslide

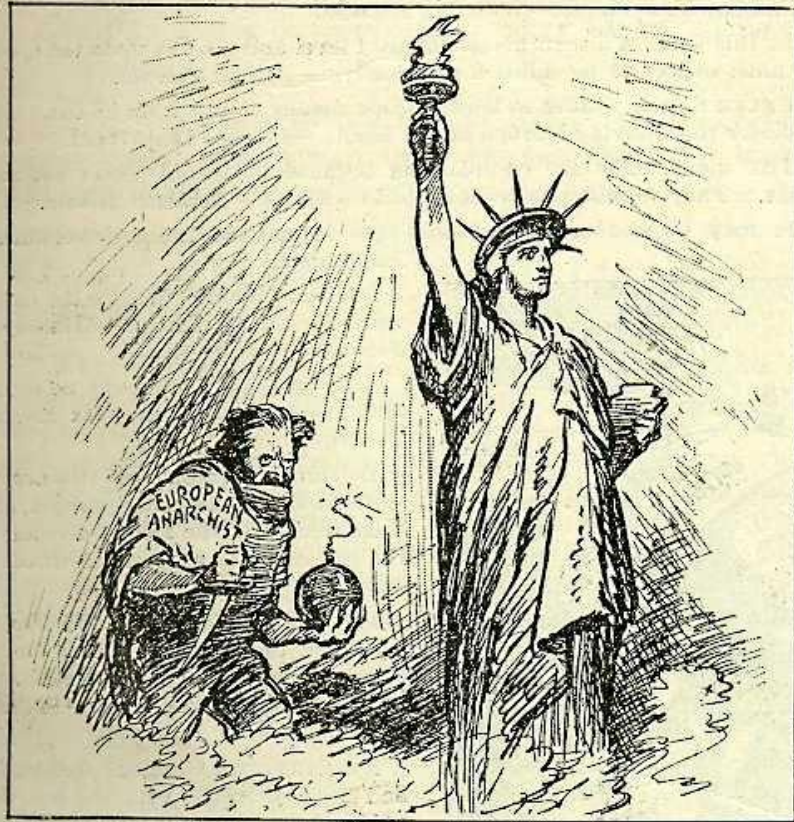
# Nativism

- Came out of various worries following WWI
- Prejudice against foreign-born people
- Evident in immigration quotas, rise of the Ku Klux Klan
- Also led to “Red Scare”



An anti-immigrant poster from California Senator James Phelan's campaign, 1920

# The “Red Scare”



“COME UNTO ME, YE OPPREST!”

—Alley in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*.

- Begun by Russia’s Bolshevik Revolution (1917)
- Fear of communist revolution in the U.S.
- Heightened by 1919 anarchist bombings
- Passage of various sedition laws

# The Palmer Raids

- U.S. Attorney General  
A. Mitchell Palmer
- Sought to eliminate radical influence in the U.S.
- Appointed J. Edgar Hoover to lead investigations
- Many persons jailed or deported illegally
- Rights of many suspects violated



A. Mitchell Palmer

# Immigration Quotas

- Emergency Quota Act (1921)
- Immigration Act of 1924
- Limited annual number of immigrants from a nation to 2% of number of immigrants living in the U.S. in 1890
- Immigration from most Asian nations stopped
- Some groups given preference over others



A cartoon satirizing the quota system



# Sacco & Vanzetti



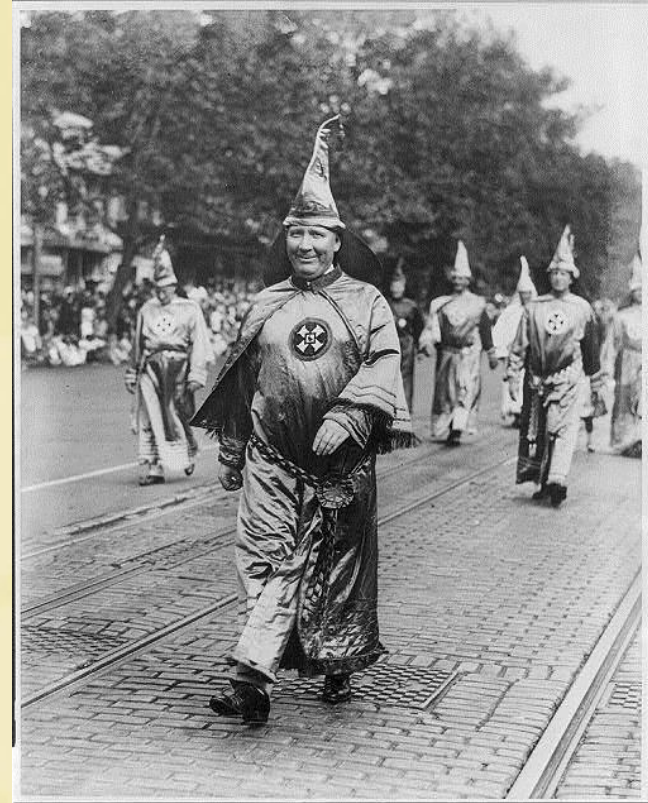
Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco

- Charged with robbery and murder
- Convicted on highly circumstantial evidence
- Sentenced to death
- Many protested convictions and sentence
- Both executed in 1927

1920s

# Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan

- Promoted “100% Americanism”
- Opposed Catholics, Jews, immigrants, unions, and socialists, as well as African Americans
- Membership swelled to nearly 4.5 million by 1924
- Leadership paid Klansmen to recruit new members



Dr. Hiram Wesley Evans, an Atlanta dentist, headed the resurgent KKK

# The Klan in Indiana

- Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson
- Helped the Klan control state politics and government
- Boasted, “I am the law in Indiana”
- Klan lost influence after his conviction for rape and murder



Klan Grand Dragon D.C. Stephenson poses for his mugshot upon beginning a sentence at the Indiana State Prison for rape and murder

# Discussion Questions

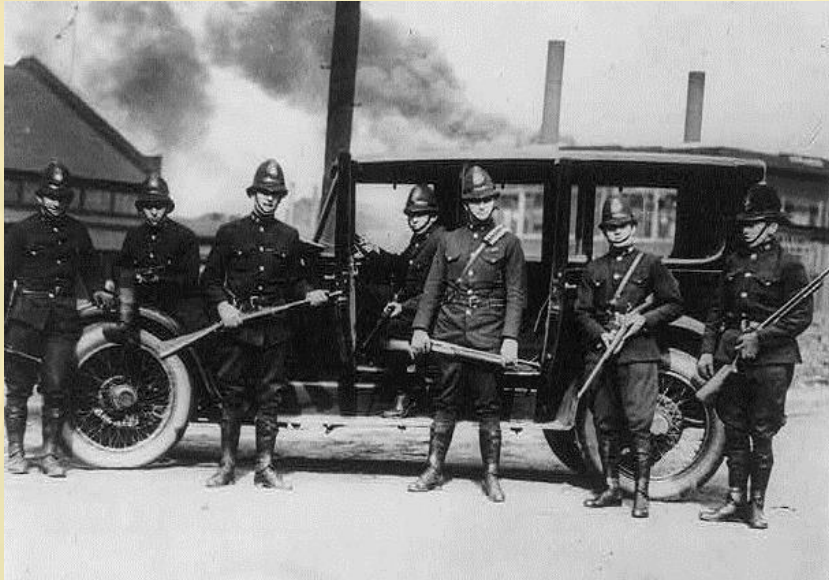
1. Why did Harding win the election of 1920 in a landslide? How did his election reflect changing American values and ideals?
2. Why did the Red Scare take hold in the U.S. in the years following World War I? What events helped to sustain it?

# Discussion Questions (continued)

1920s

3. Why did the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti generate such protest in the U.S. and around the world? In your view, did they get a fair trial? Why or why not?
4. Why might the Ku Klux Klan have enjoyed such popularity all over the country (i.e., not just in the South) in the 1920s? Why do you think many did not oppose the Klan and its policies at the time?

# An Era of Strikes



State troopers stand ready to confront striking workers outside a mill in Pennsylvania, 1919

- Strikes not permitted during World War I
- Several strikes occurred soon after
- Nationwide steel strike
- Coal strike
- Some management officials tried to portray strikers as revolutionaries
- Labor unions in decline

# The Boston Police Strike



Copyrighted, 1919, by John T. McCutcheon.

HE GIVES AID AND COMFORT TO THE ENEMIES OF SOCIETY.

- Boston police sought raise
- Officers' representatives fired; police went on strike
- Governor Calvin Coolidge called out National Guard to patrol city
- Coolidge became famous; nominee for VP in 1920

# Foreign Policy in the 1920s

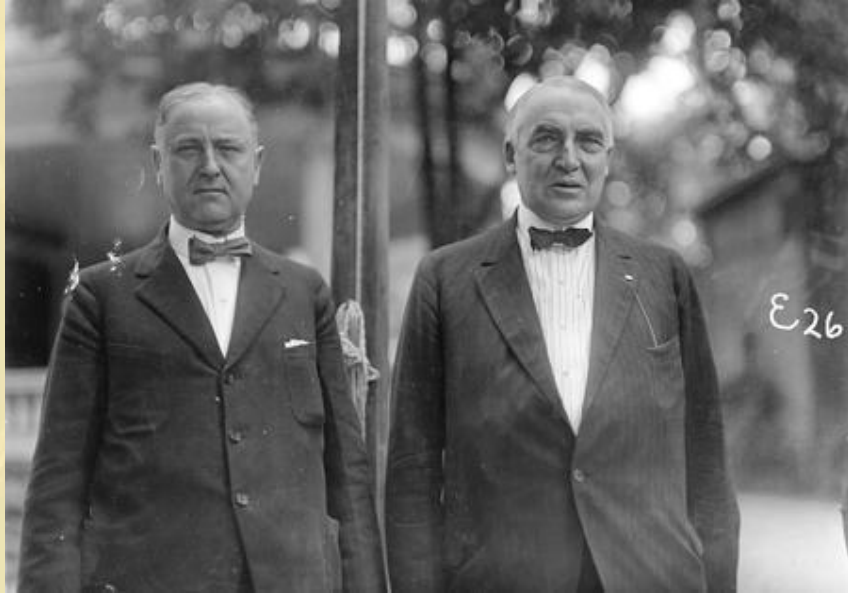
- Washington Naval Conference
- Fordney-McCumber Tariff
- Dawes Plan
- Kellogg-Briand Pact



Coolidge, Hoover, and Kellogg (standing) pose with the negotiating commission for the Kellogg-Briand Pact



# Harding Administration <sup>1920s</sup> Scandals

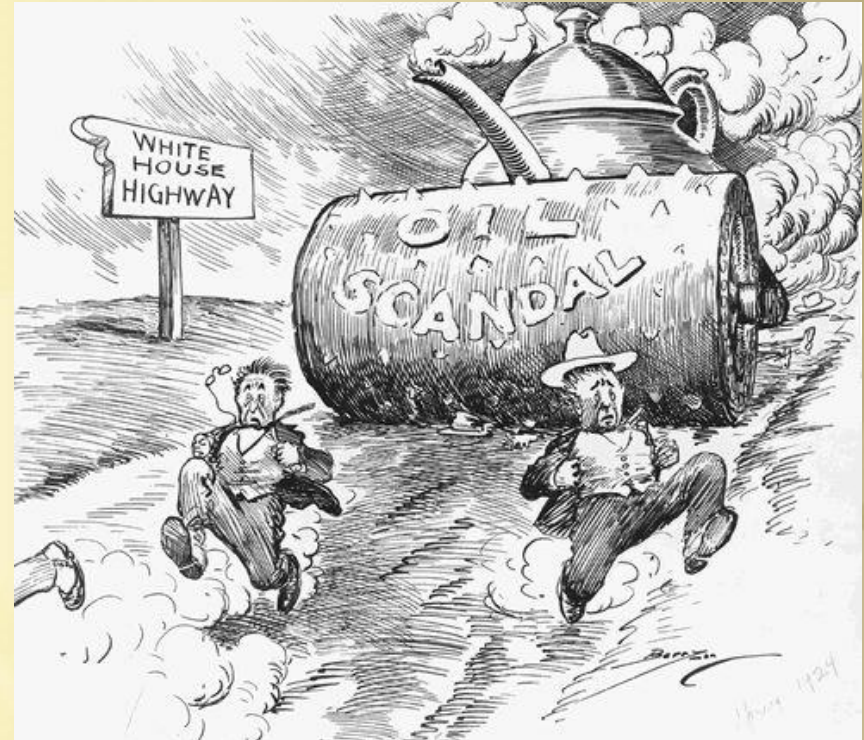


Harding with Attorney General Harry Daugherty (left), who resigned under corruption charges

- “Ohio Gang”
- Harding too trusting and disconnected from complex issues
- Several advisers and Cabinet members deeply involved in corruption and graft

# The Teapot Dome Scandal

- Naval oil reserve in Wyoming
- Interior Secretary Fall illegally sold reserves to private companies
- Fall found guilty of accepting bribes
- Harding died before scandal became public



A political cartoon depicting the scandal as a steamroller

# Harding Dies, Coolidge Takes Office



Harding's body leaving the  
White House after lying in state

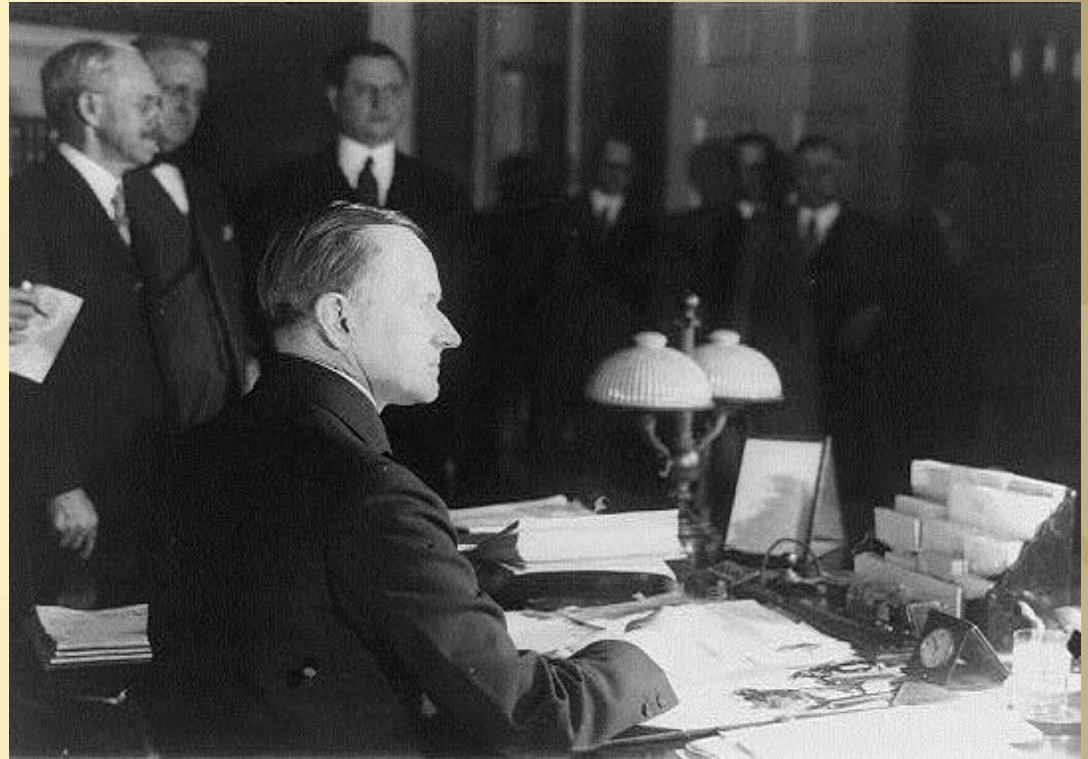
- August 1923, in San Francisco
- Died before scandals broke; reputation soon destroyed
- Coolidge notified at his father's home
- His father, a notary public, swore him in

# Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think management tried to portray union members as communists during the steel strike? Was this approach effective? Why or why not?
2. Why did the U.S. want to limit the building of its and other nations' naval vessels during the 1920s? How successful was this plan? Explain.
3. Why do you think so many high-ranking members of the Harding Administration were involved in scandals? Who should take the blame, Harding or his appointees? Explain.

# Coolidge as President

- Pro-business economic policies
- Continued high tariff rates
- Wanted to give businesses tax credits to spur growth
- “Silent Cal”



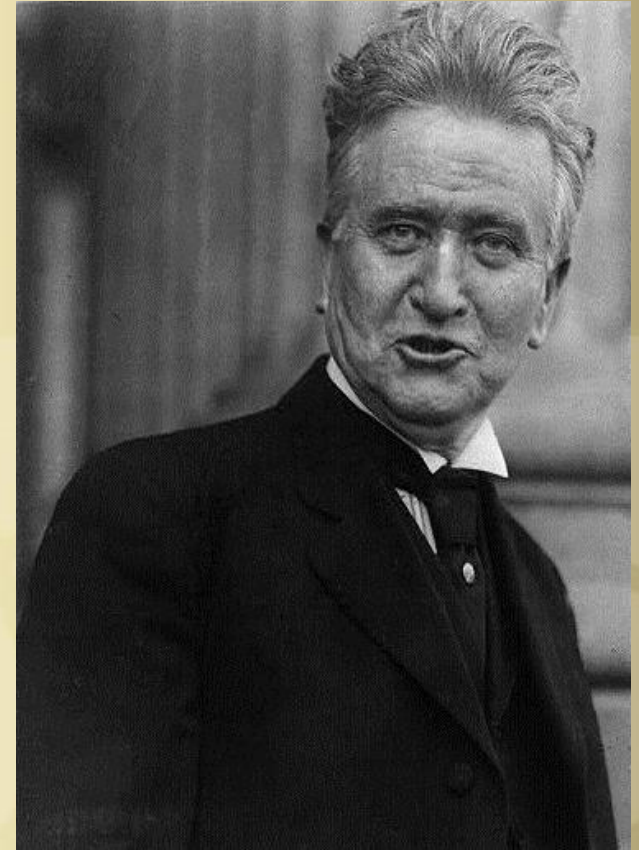
Coolidge signing a tax bill, 1926

# The Election of 1924



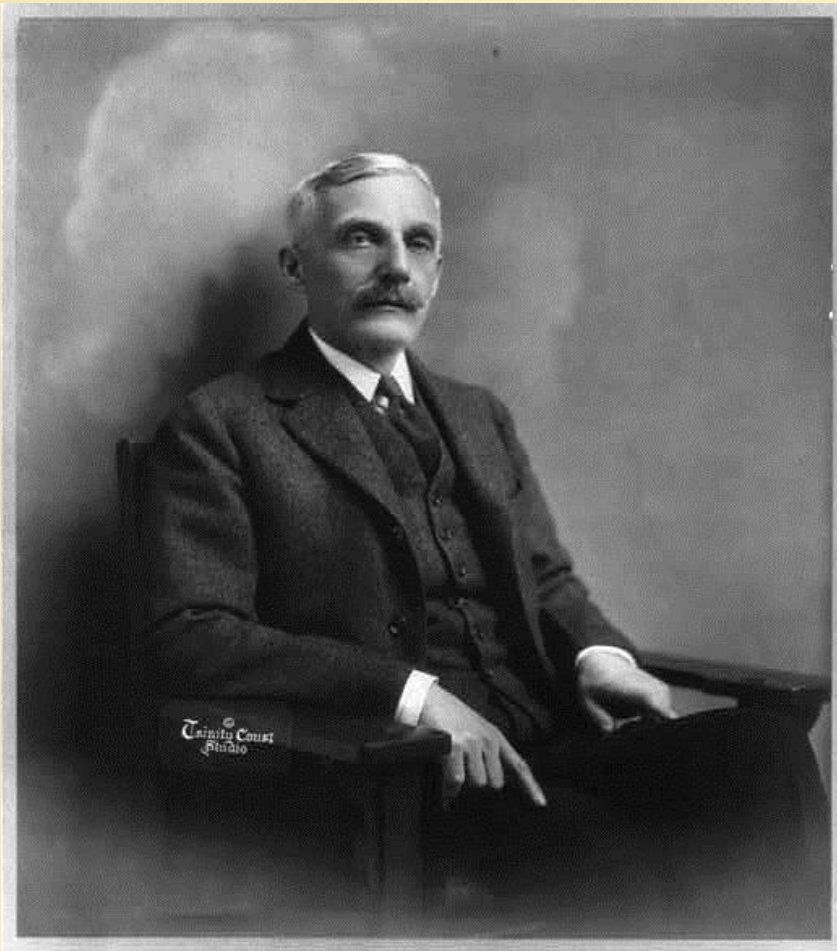
John W. Davis

- Republicans nominated Coolidge
- Democrats ran John W. Davis
- La Follette named as Progressive candidate
- Coolidge won handily without the Southern vote



Robert M. La Follette

# Mellon's Economy

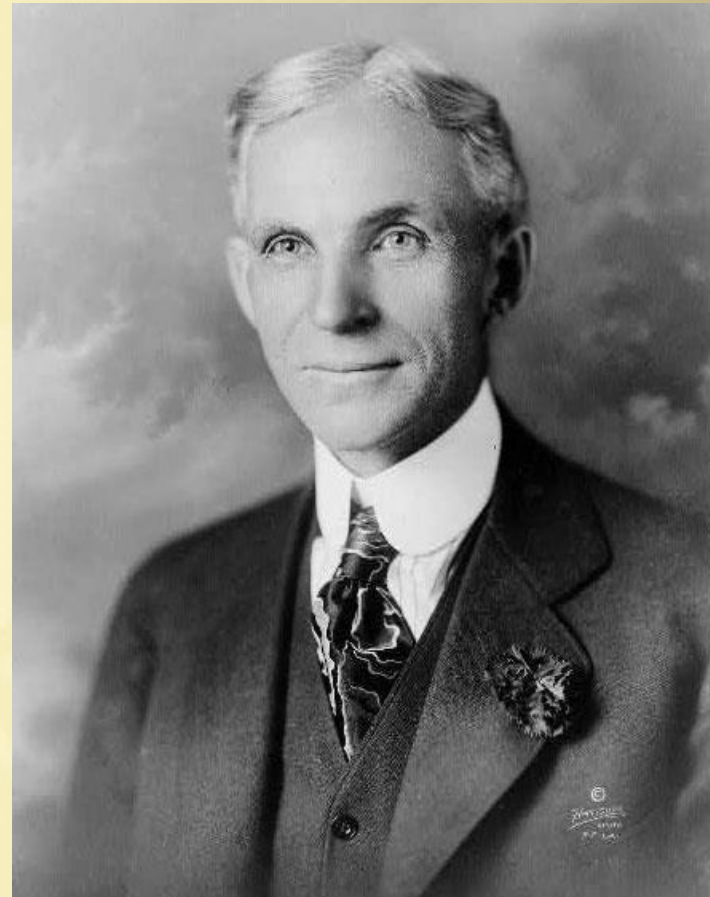


Andrew W. Mellon

- Served as Treasury Secretary under three presidents
- Sought to increase revenue and cut spending
- Pushed through substantial tax cuts
- Became unpopular at start of Depression

# Henry Ford

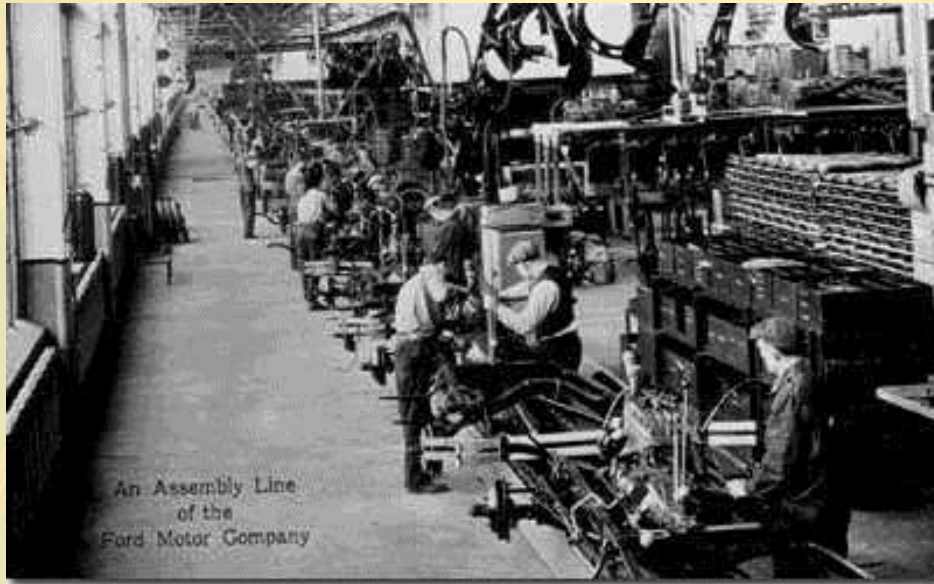
- Introduced mass-production techniques to auto industry
- Could produce more cars for less money
- Anti-union
- Used thugs and spies to enforce plant discipline



Henry Ford



# The Assembly Line

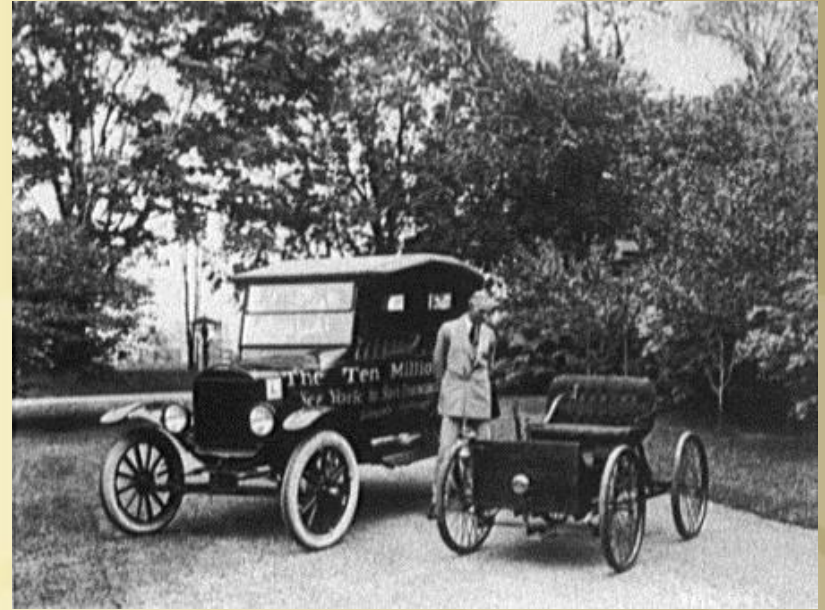


Workers at individual stations on an assembly line at Ford Motor Company

- Became widespread due to its success in the auto industry
- Improved efficiency by breaking tasks into small steps
- Industry itself created specialized divisions
- Productivity increased dramatically

# “Welfare Capitalism”

- Many industrialists worried about creation of unions
- Created programs to give workers mostly non-wage benefits
- Ford’s “\$5 per day” plan
- Reduced absenteeism and employee turnover



Henry Ford standing between the first and ten millionth Fords produced, 1924

# The Automobile: Positive Effects

February, 1926

AMERICAN MOTORIST

37



THE COUPE  
\$520

## Easier to handle - safer to drive

The driving control of the Ford car is exceedingly simple, yet always dependable. It effectively reduces the possibilities of accidents — particularly in crowded city traffic. Foot pedal gear changing, powerful brakes, short wheelbase and full visibility, afforded by the all-steel body construction with narrower pillars and large plate-

glass windows, are important reasons why Ford owners enjoy such security. Let the nearest Authorized Ford Dealer explain the many features of Ford cars and demonstrate their easy handling. Get full particulars about convenient time payment plans.

RUNABOUT, \$260 • TOURING, \$290 • COUPE, \$520  
TUDOR SEDAN, \$580 • FORDOR SEDAN, \$660  
Closed cars in colors. • Demonstrable fins and heater  
extra on open cars. • All prices F. O. B. Detroit

FORD MOTOR COMPANY, DETROIT, MICH.



BEAUTY .. COMFORT .. CONVENIENCE .. UTILITY

- Created jobs; spawned related industries
- Tourism
- Sense of freedom
- Allowed rural people to connect with towns and cities
- Helped to create suburbs

A typical Ford advertisement

# The Automobile: Negative Effects

- Increased accident rates
- Traffic jams
- Decline of public transportation systems in cities
- Air pollution from auto exhaust
- Cluttering of roadsides with billboards



An early 1920s automobile accident

# Discussion Questions

1. What characteristics of Calvin Coolidge do you think helped make him an effective candidate for his own term as president? Explain.
2. From the results of the election of 1924, what conclusions can you make about the effectiveness of the Harding and Coolidge administrations? Why do you think the areas that voted for the Democrats or Progressives did so?
3. How did Henry Ford help make the automobile obtainable for so many more people? Why do you think the automobile essentially became a necessity in American life?

# Consumerism

- Economic boom due to mass production
- Increase in per capita income; cost of living still low
- Appliances
- Installment plan
- Rising demand for electricity



Consumer items from the 1920s

# Advertising of the 1920s

THE DELINEATOR PAGE 77



Organdies—linens—  
fine lawns and batistes  
*Laundry them the same way you do your silk things*

**W**HERE lawns are green and  
ices are served, the cool  
frocks of midsummer gather.  
Fly-away, frilly organdies; saucy Eng-  
lish prints that play at being quaint.  
Fine blouses of handkerchief linen  
and French voiles. And always rows  
on rows of tiny tucks and soft ruffles  
of real lace.

To keep them so daintily fresh, so  
charmingly new, how often and how  
carefully they must be washed.

Not ordinary scrubbing—their frills  
would never stand up again!

But the Lux way will not harm them,  
the careful way you do your silks and  
satins. In this heavenly lather they will  
be cleansed so carefully, so gently that

not a single ruffle could complain.  
There's no rubbing to separate the  
sheer threads, to work havoc among  
the dainty colors. Just sousing and  
pressing of the rich sach through the  
soiled spots. Every bit of expensive  
lace will stay soft and white. Their  
sashes will tie just as perkily, their  
colors look as merrily as though they'd  
never just been worn and washed.

Have as many of these frail sweet  
summery frocks as your heart desires.  
You can launder them perfectly—  
yourself. The finest fabrics will last  
when they are washed in the delicate  
Lux suds. Your grocer, druggist or  
department store has Lux.—Lever  
Bro's. Co., Cambridge, Mass.

**LUX**

How to launder fine lingerie fabrics

**L**UX is not responsible for loss in a gallon of water.  
Which has a rich lather to save hot water. Lux  
—the clothes soak for a few minutes, then the suds are  
used down. Press the suds through again and again. Do  
not rub. Rinse in three hot waters and dry in the sun.  
For all colored fabrics add cold water till suds are lake-  
water. Wash quickly and close in three lukewarm waters.  
Dry in the shade.



Copyright © 1920  
by Lever Bros. Co.

10176

- Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*
- Color printing, glossy paper, radio, and TV
- Soap operas
- Brand recognition

An ad for Lux soap flakes typical 1920s  
magazine ads

# *Middletown*



Robert Lynd

- Robert and Helen Lynd
- 1924 sociological study of a “typical” American town
- Actually Muncie, Indiana
- Pioneered use of social surveys
- Studied impact of modern living on residents
- Follow-up study in 1935



# Urban vs. Rural Life

- For the first time, urban dwellers outnumbered rural ones
- Ethnic and social differences
- Rural and urban dwellers clashed on issues such as religion and alcohol consumption



New York City in the 1920s

# Fundamentalism



A Fundamentalist service

- Refers to elements “fundamental to belief” in a religion
- Frequently dealt with literal interpretation of an inerrant Bible
- Tent shows and religious revivals

1920s

# Fundamentalist Preachers

Billy Sunday



Aimee Semple  
McPherson



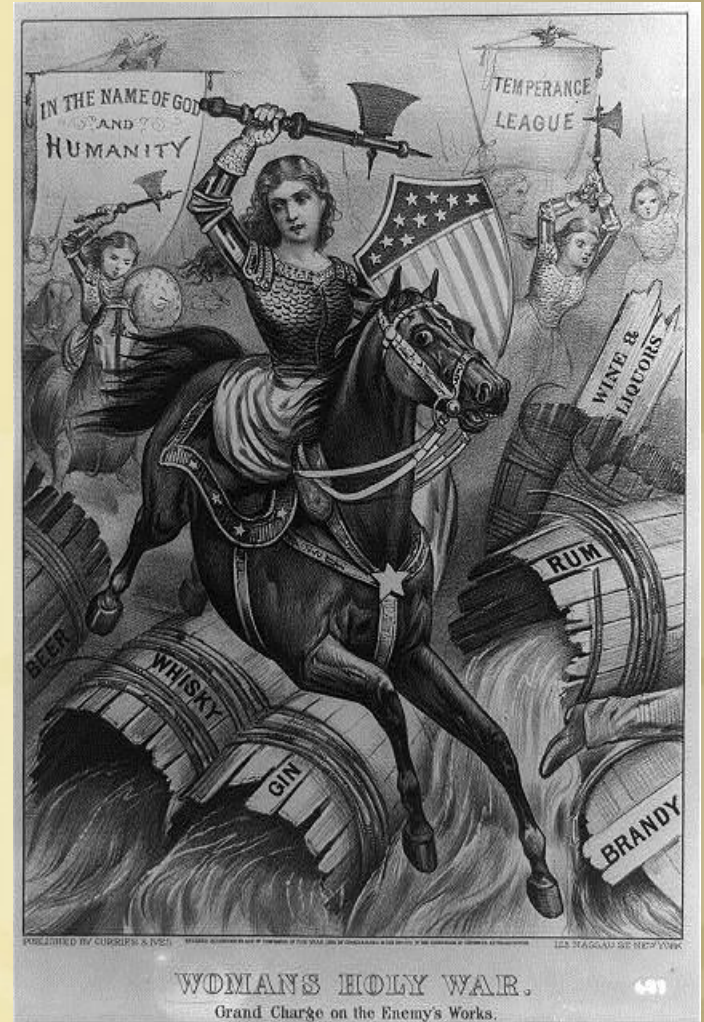
# Discussion Questions

1. How might the introduction of various home appliances have changed family life during the 1920s? Explain.
2. What role did advertising play in consumerism and the American economy of the 1920s?
3. Do you think the conclusions of the *Middletown* study were representative of life in a typical 1920s town? Why or why not?
4. Why do you think Fundamentalism found so wide an audience in the 1920s? What aspects of it might have made it so appealing?

# Prohibition: Origins

1920s

- Origins in Jacksonian era
- Anti-Saloon League, Temperance League, Women's Christian Temperance Union
- Influence of WWI
- State and local prohibition laws
- The 18th Amendment (1920)



An 1874 cartoon about the Temperance League

# The 18th Amendment



*Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.*

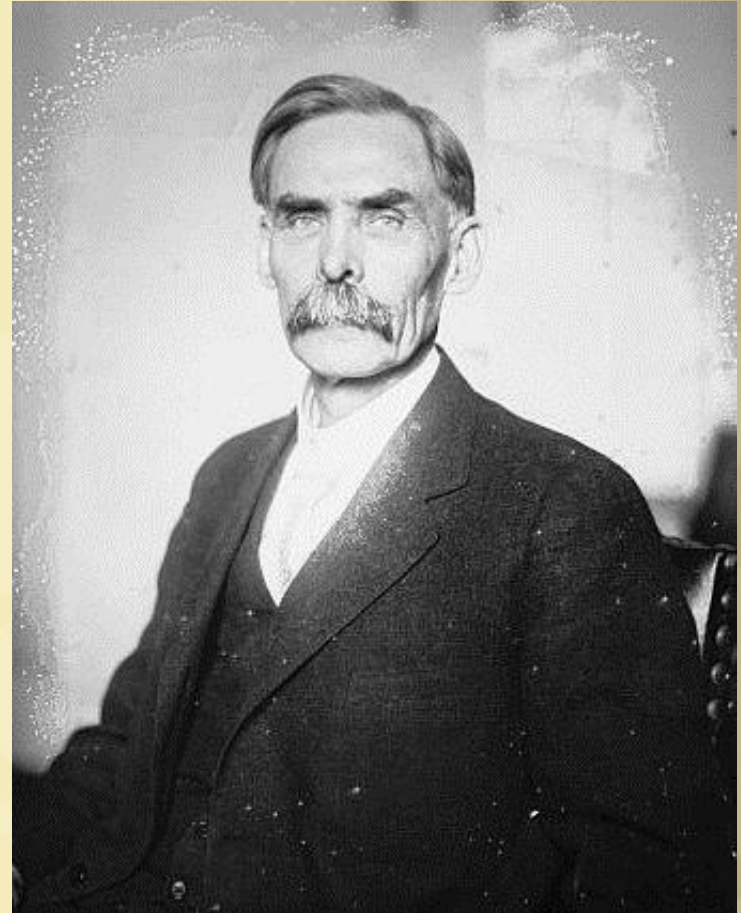
*Section 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.*

*Section 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.*

A newspaper announces ratification of the amendment

# The Volstead Act

- Also known as the “National Prohibition Act”
- Sponsored by Rep. Andrew Volstead
- Defined an “intoxicating liquor”
- Set penalties for violation of the act



Representative Andrew Volstead

1920s

# Speakeasies



Patrons bellying up to the bar for illegal intoxicants

- Establishments that sold illegal liquor
- Highly profitable
- “Blind pigs”
- Law enforcement often bribed



# Prohibition: Enforcement

- Bureau of Prohibition
- Originally a division of the Treasury Dept., later moved to Justice Dept.
- Enforcement proved nearly impossible
- Underfunded
- Use of alcohol for medicinal and religious purposes still legal



Plainclothes and uniformed officers posing with an illegal still

# Al Capone



Capone's mugshot

- Chicago “furniture dealer”
- Headed the Chicago Outfit
- Powerful bootlegging empire
- Believed to have masterminded St. Valentine’s Day Massacre
- Eventually convicted of income-tax evasion

1920s

# St. Valentine's Day Massacre

- February 14, 1929
- Murder of seven members of the rival Moran gang
- Turned public support against organized crime
- Capone never directly implicated
- Prosecutors began to go after Capone



A Thompson submachine gun (“Tommy gun”), similar to those favored by 1920s gangsters

# “The Untouchables”



Elliot Ness

- Special federal Prohibition-enforcement group in Chicago
- Led by Elliot Ness
- Group destroyed over two dozen breweries and distilleries
- Called “Untouchables” because of their incorruptibility
- Helped to secure indictments against Al Capone

# Prohibition: Successes and Failures

## Successes:

- Per capita consumption of alcohol decreased
- Public drunkenness arrests declined
- Deaths from alcoholism dropped
- Fewer workers squandered paychecks on drinking

## Failures:

- “Drys” insisted on abstinence, forcing many moderates to become lawbreakers
- Strict enforcement nearly impossible
- Skyrocketing enforcement costs
- Rise of organized crime
- Some poisoned by homemade liquor

# Repeal of the 18th Amendment



A “wet” poses with an anti-Prohibition sign

- An election issue in 1928 and 1932
- Wickersham Commission
- 21st Amendment ratified in 1933
- Federal prohibition laws repealed
- State laws remained “local options”

# Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons for Prohibition's popularity in the early 1920s?
2. In your view, would Prohibition's successes have been reason enough to continue it? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think Prohibition led to the rise of organized crime during the 1920s?

# The Scopes Trial: Origins

- Tennessee's Butler Act (1925) prohibited teaching Darwinian evolution
- ACLU offered to defend any teacher who violated the law
- Biology teacher John Scopes agreed to test the law
- Scopes taught evolution in class and was arrested



John T. Scopes

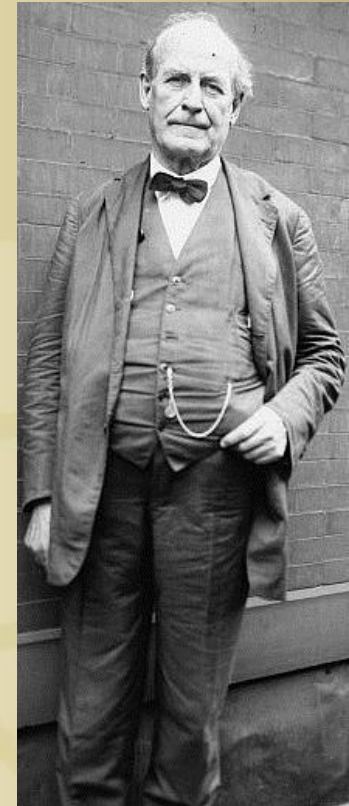


# Scopes: The Attorneys



Clarence Darrow

- William Jennings Bryan for the prosecution:
  - Former Secretary of State and three-time presidential candidate
  - “Expert witness” on the Bible
- Clarence Darrow for the defense:
  - Noted defense attorney
  - Staunch agnostic



William Jennings  
Bryan

# Scopes: The Trial



A scene from the trial

- Extensively covered by newspapers and radio
- Trial held on courthouse lawn
- Circus-like atmosphere; prosecution frequently the butt of jokes
- High point of trial occurred when Darrow questioned Bryan as “expert witness” on Bible

# Darrow Questions Bryan

**DARROW:** Do you claim that everything in the Bible should be literally interpreted?

**BRYAN:** I believe everything in the Bible should be accepted as it is given there. Some of the Bible is given illustratively; for instance, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” I would not insist that man was actually salt, or that he had flesh of salt, but it is used in the sense of salt as saving God's people.

**DARROW:** Does the statement, “The morning and the evening were the first day,” and, “The morning and the evening were the second day,” mean anything to you?

**BRYAN:** I do not think it necessarily means a 24-hour day.

**DARROW:** You do not?

**BRYAN:** No.

**DARROW:** What do you consider it to be?

**BRYAN:** I have not attempted to explain it. If you will take the second chapter—let me have the book. The fourth verse of the second chapter says, “Those are the generation of the heavens and of the earth, when they were erected in the day the Lord God made the earth and the heavens.” The word “day” there in the very next chapter is used to describe a period. I do not see that there is necessity for considering the words, “the evening and the morning” as meaning necessarily a 24-hour day in the day when the Lord made the heavens and the earth.

# Scopes: Verdict and Aftermath

- Trial lasted eight days
- Jury found Scopes guilty in nine minutes
- Scopes fined \$100
- Verdict overturned on technicality in 1927
- Butler Act repealed in 1967
- Supreme Court ruled laws against teaching evolution unconstitutional in 1968



A historical marker in Dayton,  
Tennessee

# Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the Scopes trial generated so much national attention?
2. What impact do you think the trial's publicity and its verdict had on Fundamentalism? Explain.

# Flappers



1920s actress Louise Brooks poses in typical flapper attire

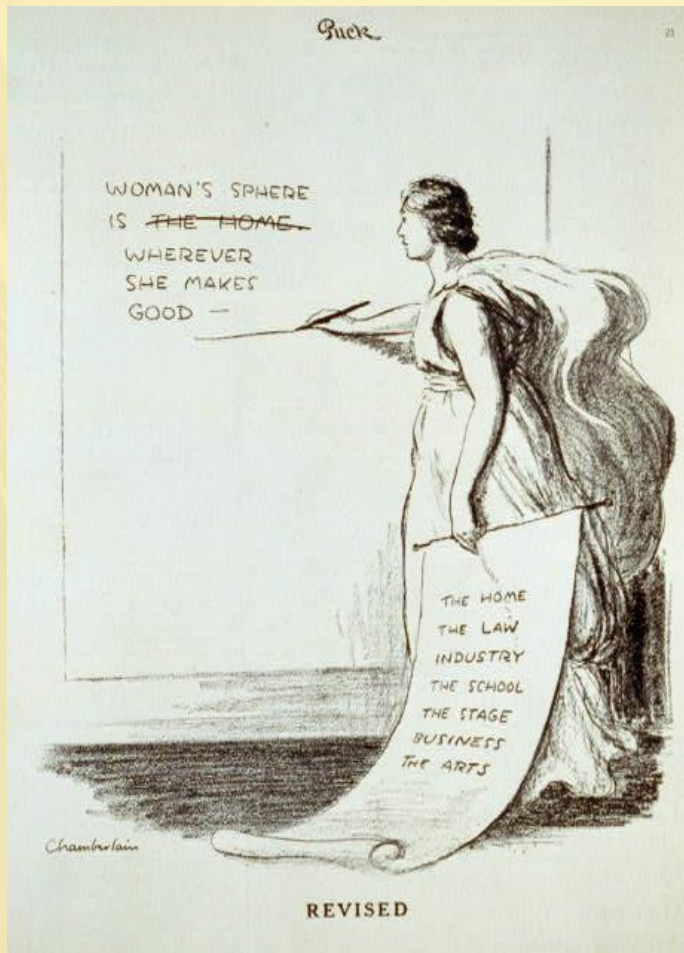
- Symbolic “new woman” of the 1920s
- Called “flappers” after their unbuckled galoshes
- Bobbed hair, makeup, short skirts
- Smoked and drank in public
- Frequently featured in 1920s literature, such as Fitzgerald

# The Double Standard

- Relationships between the sexes evolved
- Society's "double standard" gave men more sexual freedom than women
- Women frequently found themselves pulled between Victorian morals and 1920s lifestyles



# Feminism in the 1920s

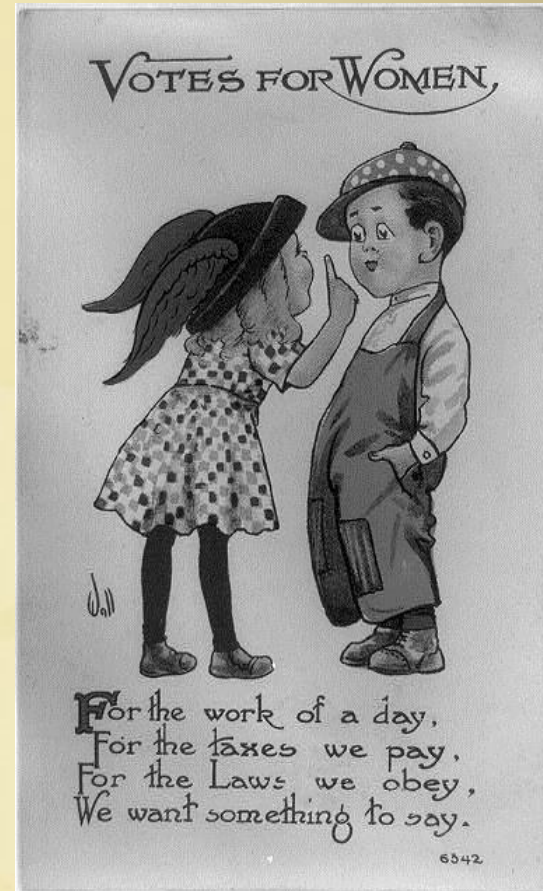


- More women worked outside the home
- Feminists worked for laws benefiting women
- Sought to gain voting rights
- Fought for an equal rights amendment



# The 19th Amendment

- Several states granted women suffrage in late 19th and early 20th centuries
- Constitutional amendment proposed in 1918
- Ratified in 1920
- Guarantees the right to vote regardless of gender



Cartoons such as this one highlighted the arguments of woman suffrage leaders

# Women and Politics



1920 magazine cover urging women to vote

- Male dominance of political parties
- Lack of female political candidates
- Lack of voting experience
- African American women kept from voting in the South
- Feminist groups had divergent goals

# Changing Family Life

- Birthrate declines due to birth control
- Marriages based more on love
- Technology made household labor easier; most household necessities “ready-made”
- Public agencies began to care for elderly
- New labor laws allowed children to stay in school



Margaret Sanger

# The “Great Migration” **1920s** and the “New Negro”



Alain Locke

- Many blacks moved to Northern cities for better opportunities
- Tended to live in ghettos
- Many saw just as much discrimination in the North
- Alain Locke
- Described changes in attitudes and beliefs of African Americans

# The “Back to Africa” Movement



Marcus Garvey

- Marcus Garvey
- Founded Universal Negro Improvement Association
- Black separatism
- Many “mainstream” blacks saw Garvey as too flamboyant
- Black Star Line

# Discussion Questions

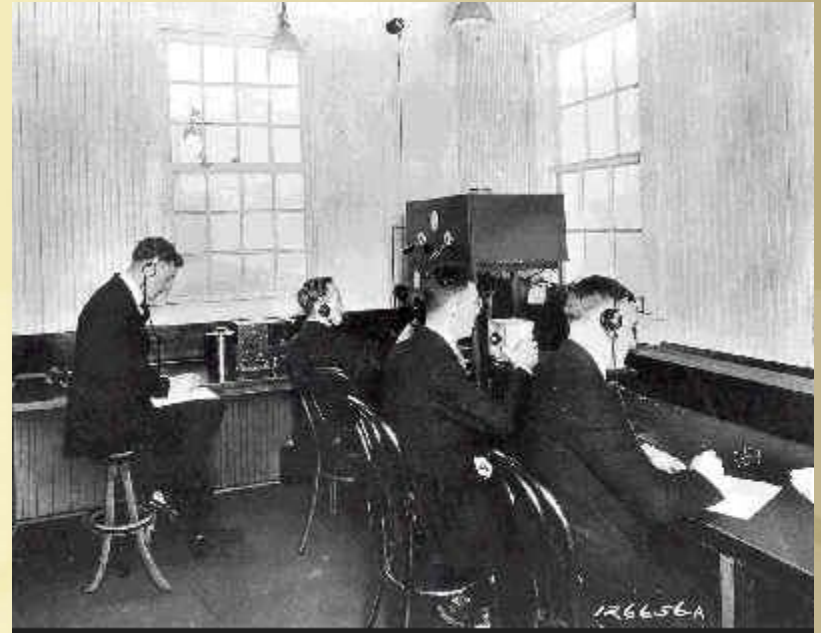
1. What elements of the flapper lifestyle did older Americans and Fundamentalists object to most? Is the flapper a fitting symbol of the 1920s as a whole? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think national women's suffrage became a reality during the 1920s? Why did women still hold little political power? Explain.

# Discussion Questions (cont.)

3. What significant changes occurred to the family structure in the 1920s?
4. Do you think Marcus Garvey and his “Back to Africa” movement benefited African Americans in the 1920s? Why or why not?

# The Advent of Radio

- Pittsburgh's KDKA began broadcasting in 1920
- More than 500 stations operating nationwide by 1922
- National Broadcasting Company formed in 1926
- News, music, sports, and live comedies and dramas



Broadcasting from the KDKA studios, 1920



# The First Commercial Radio Broadcast

1920s



Westinghouse engineer Frank Conrad founded KDKA, the first radio station. Its first broadcast gave results of the 1920 presidential election.



# Radio Programming

- Early broadcasts featured live music
- By 1924, news events and election coverage
- Later, comedies, dramas, and sports
- Major corporations sponsored programming
- Federal regulation



# Charles Lindbergh



Charles A. Lindbergh

- Wanted to win Orteig Prize for first nonstop transatlantic flight
- *Spirit of St. Louis*
- Flew solo from New York to Paris in 33½ hours
- International celebrity

# Sports' "Golden Age"



Babe Ruth shakes hands with  
President Harding on Opening Day, 1921

- Baseball, football, and golf extremely popular
- Radio made professional sports accessible
- Pro athletes became heroes
- Endorsement deals

# Movies



Foreground, from left: D.W. Griffith,  
Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, and  
Douglas Fairbanks

- Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*
- Enormous popularity
- Big budgets
- *The Jazz Singer*: the first sound film
- Concern about impact of movies on society

# Jazz

- Originated in New Orleans
- Roots in ragtime and blues
- Considered the only truly “American” music
- Frequently played in speakeasies; many saw it as corrupting youth



Louis “Satchmo” Armstrong, considered one of the finest jazz musicians of the era

# Literature

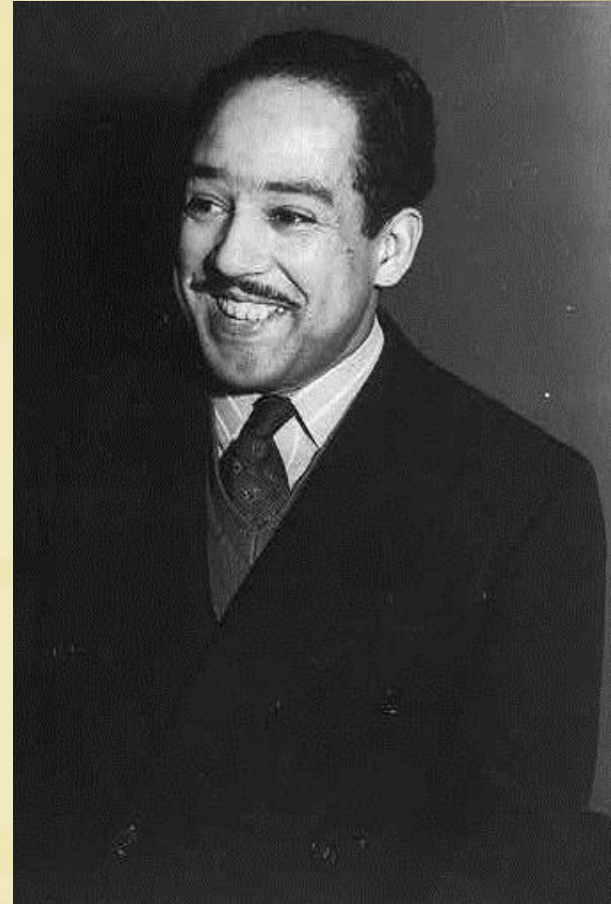


F. Scott Fitzgerald

- Many 1920s authors disillusioned by WWI
- The “Lost Generation”
- Ernest Hemingway
- F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Other authors included Wharton, Mencken, and Lewis

# The Harlem Renaissance

- Flourishing of African American musical, literary, and artistic talent
- Centered in black district of New York City
- Changed many Americans' perception of blacks
- Major figures included Hughes, Johnson, Hurston, Cullen, and McKay



Langston Hughes



# Discussion Questions

1. Why did radio become the dominant medium of the 1920s?
2. Why do you think Charles Lindbergh became such a major celebrity? Why might many have seen him as more of a hero than the great athletes of the era?

# Discussion Questions (cont)

3. What drove movies' popularity in the 1920s?
4. What influenced the trend of white American writers relocating to Europe? How did the tone of their work differ from the writers of the Harlem Renaissance?

# The Election of 1928



Herbert Hoover

- Coolidge chose not to run
- Republicans nominated Herbert Hoover
- Democrats ran Al Smith
- Many suspicious of Smith for being “big city” and Catholic
- Hoover landslide, but Smith proved Democrats still strong



Al Smith

# Economic Problems

- Decline in agriculture, textiles, coal
- High tariffs and poor European economic policies
- Uneven distribution of wealth
- Overproduction
- Overuse of credit
- Overspeculation in real estate and stocks



An ad for real estate during the Florida land boom of the 1920s

# The Stock Market Crash



A crowd gathers outside the New York Stock Exchange following the crash

- Panic started on October 24
- Biggest decline on October 29
- \$14 billion lost that day; \$30 billion that week
- A mostly steady decline until 1932
- Businesses began to lay off workers
- Many banks failed

# The Depression Begins

- Hoover believed in limited government involvement
- Opposed direct aid in favor of charitable organizations
- “Trickle-down” economic theory
- Unemployment skyrocketed
- Economy continued to decline



Children in front of signs blaming Hoover for the country's economic woes

# Discussion Questions

1. Why did Hoover win the election of 1928 so easily? What inroads against Republican dominance did the Democrats make?
2. What underlying economic problems did the nation face in the last years of the 1920s? Why do you think so many allowed these problems to worsen?
3. What caused the stock market to crash in 1929? What immediate impact did it have on the nation's economy?