

THE 1920s

1/2 = RETURN TO NORMALCY

“America’s present need is... normalcy....”

 Inaugural Address (1921)

- ✓ The United States entered World War I reluctantly, but hopeful.
- ✓ But alas, emerged from World War I disillusioned with results.
- ✓ America wanted to forget its unhappy experience.

1/2 = THE ROARING TWENTIES

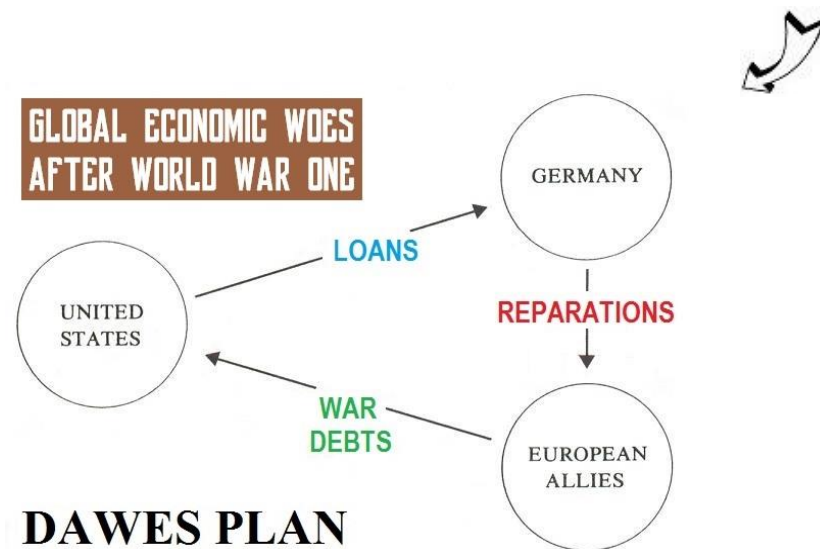
“The party has begun.”

 *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

- ✓ The 1920s was a decade of social irresponsibility & divergence.
- ✓ Yet, America experienced social growth & reform in the 1920s.
- ✓ Americans focused heavily on America.

RETURN TO NORMALCY

- ◆ World War I ended in 1918
 - ✓ No worldwide peace, disarmament, democracy
 - ✓ Bitter feelings & huge disillusionment amongst Americans
- ◆ America refused to join League of Nations
 - ✓ General isolationism restored
 - ✓ Traditional unilateralism maintained
 - ✓ Described by some historians as “independent internationalism”
 - ✓ Represents rejection of global responsibility
 - ✓ Embarked on strong pacifist movement
- ◆ Specific actions & policies
 - ✓ Fordney-McCumber Tariff (1922) = highest tax on imports ever ☹️
 - ✓ 9 countries at Washington Conference (1921) = naval restraint ☹️
 - ✓ Geneva Conference (1927) & London Conference (1930) fail ☹️
 - ✓ 60+ nations signed Kellogg-Briand Pact (1928) = condemned war ☹️
 - ✓ Dawes Plan (1924) & Young Plan (1928) = European war debts ☹️



- ◆ Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer's raids (1919)
 - ✓ Fear of communism resulted in "Red Scare" paranoia
 - ✓ Loosely associated w/ anarchists & striking workers (unionism)
 - ✓ Immigrants . . . radicals . . . urbanites . . . workers . . . strikers
 - ✓ Convenient way to express anti-Catholicism & anti-Semitism
 - ✓ Several bombs mailed to prominent citizens
 - ✓ Palmer later discredited w/ mistaken uprising prediction for May 1, 1920

- ◆ Nicola Sacco & Bartolomeo Vanzetti case (1920)
 - ✓ Xenophobia = unwarranted fear of foreigners
 - ✓ Trial much publicized; unfairly adjudicated ("those anarchist bastards")
 - ✓ Most recent evidence = Sacco guilty; Vanzetti maybe not

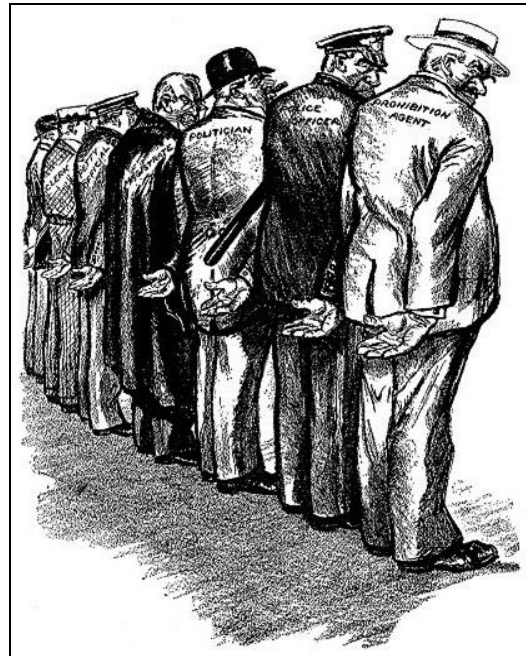
- ◆ Immigration restrictions based on quota system
 - ✓ Emergency Quota Act (1921) & National Origins Act (1924)
 - ✓ Nativism = general rejection of immigrants
 - ✓ Southern & eastern Europe targeted; barred East Asians entirely
 - ✓ Unrestricted immigration from Latin America & Canada



- ◆ Resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan (1915)
 - ✓ Stupid organization of "white male . . . native-born gentile citizens"
 - ✓ William Simmons (Georgia), then Hiram Wesley Evans
 - ✓ Influenced politics in many states, inc. Indiana & Oregon
 - ✓ Membership peaked in 1924; pronounced decline thereafter
 - ✓ Politically undone by sex scandals & financial corruption

THE ROARING TWENTIES

- ◆ Prohibition → 18th & 21st Amendments (1919 & 1933)
 - ✓ So-called “noble experiment” = wholesome country vs. decadent city
 - ✓ Maine #1 (several states prior to amendment)
 - ✓ Volstead Act = legal enforcement of prohibition
 - ✓ Speakeasies (surreptitious bars) & bootleggers (illegal dealers)
 - ✓ Enforcement ☹; lawlessness up; alcohol consumption down
 - ✓ Organized crime flourished (Al Capone vs. Eliot Ness saga)

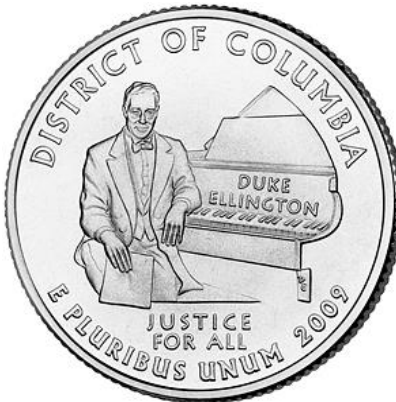


- ◆ Monkey Trial (1925) → John T. Scopes coerced by ACLU
 - ✓ Fundamentalism = conservative Christianity
 - ✓ Evolutionism (Clarence Darrow) vs. creationism (Wm. Jennings Bryan)
 - ✓ Guilty of violating Tennessee statute (fined \$100); law remained

- ◆ Women's movement → 19th Amendment (1920)
 - ✓ Wyoming #1 (actually New Jersey by mistake)
 - ✓ Symbolized by “flappers” = challenged gender-based “double standard”
 - ✓ Margaret Sanger = birth control (dual goals of feminism & poverty)
 - ✓ Jeanette Rankin = first female member of Congress (Montana)
 - ✓ Gertrude Ederle = first woman to swim English Channel
 - ✓ Generally, feminism plateaued after ratification of Anthony Amendment

- ◆ Black Americans → the Progressive Era's ghost
 - ✓ Great Migration = shift from South (agriculture) to North (industry)
 - ✓ William E. B. Du Bois = Niagara Movement (1905) & NAACP (1909)
 - ✓ Marcus Garvey = Back to Africa campaign (“black is beautiful”)
 - ✓ Harlem Renaissance = flourishing of black artistic activities

- ◆ Jazz → improvisation + vocal blues
 - ✓ Originated in New Orleans
 - ✓ Chicago, Kansas City, New York (Savoy Ballroom & Cotton Club)
 - ✓ Louis Armstrong, W. C. Handy, Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway



- ◆ Entertainment & sports → “ballyhoo”
 - ✓ KDKA in Pittsburgh (1920 presidential election results)
 - ✓ Hollywood = *The Jazz Singer* (Warner) & *Steamboat Willie* (Disney)
 - ✓ Babe Ruth (New York Yankees) & others

- ◆ Literature (aka “lost generation”) → grim view of shallow high society
 - ✓ F. Scott Fitzgerald = *This Side of Paradise* & *The Great Gatsby*
 - ✓ Sinclair Lewis = *Babbitt* & *Main Street*
 - ✓ Ernest Hemingway = *The Sun Also Rises* & *A Farewell to Arms*
 - ✓ T. S. Eliot = *The Waste Land*

PRESIDENTS OF THE 1920s

Warren G. Harding



"I have no trouble with my enemies But my damned friends . . . they're the ones that keep me walking the floor nights!"

- ▶ Inept, limited mind, partier, womanizer
- ▶ Ranked low, low, low by historians

“Ohio Gang”

- Sec. of Interior Albert Fall → Teapot Dome naval oil reserves
- Veterans Bureau chief Charles Forbes → funding of gov't hospitals





"The chief business of America is business The man who builds a factory builds a temple—the man who works there worships there."

- ▶ Passive, reserved, uninspiring, honest
- ▶ Lucky enough to be in right place at right time

Automobile industry

- Henry Ford perfected "assembly line" production
- Ford's chief competition → Chevrolet & Dodge
- "Economic multiplier" (steel, rubber, glass, textiles, petroleum) 😊
- Alfred P. Sloan (GM) credited w/ concept of "planned obsolescence"
- Route 66 → 2,500 miles from Chicago to Los Angeles thru 8 states
- Billboards, traffic jams, accident injuries, polluted air 😞

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1928

- * Coolidge to news reporters in Rapid City: "I do not choose to run for President"
- * Sec. of Commerce Herbert Hoover (R) vs. New York Gov. Alfred Smith (D)
- * Smith defeated due to Catholicism, big-city ties, & existing national prosperity
- * Formation of new Democratic alliance of urban workers & disgruntled farmers
- * Smith won 12 largest cities (all Republican in 1924) + western farmers & South



"We in America are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before."

- ▶ Capable, trustworthy, dignified, stiff
- ▶ Unlucky to be in wrong place at wrong time

Great Depression

- October 29, 1929 → "Black Tuesday"
- Sec. of Treasury Andrew Mellon advocated inaction/patience
- Ramshackle communities referred to as "Hoovervilles"
- Bonus Army incident (1932)
- Unemployment peaked at 25% during 1932-33

1920s REPUBLICAN WHITE HOUSE

Evaluate each of the defining 1920s characteristics below as 😊 or ☹ . . .

FOREIGN POLICY ≈ “independent internationalism”

Global isolationism & pacifism . . . nationalism
Hemispheric “damage control” (re: Roosevelt Corollary)

ECONOMICS ≈ “spectacular prosperity”

Gap between poor & wealthy . . . affluence
Consumer goods & advertising . . . thriving economy . . . over-production
Office jobs
“Welfare capitalism” (re: Henry Ford)
Organized labor & farming

DEMOGRAPHICS ≈ “inward America”

Urbanization, inc. southern blacks to northern & midwestern cities
Visibility of black culture (re: Harlem Renaissance)
Mobility (re: automobile industry)
Religious fundamentalism
Nationwide uniformity (e.g., music & entertainment, chain stores, advertising, etc.)
Nationalism (patriotism & pacifism & homogeneity & nativism & xenophobia)
Birth control & labor-easing devices (e.g., washing machine, vacuum cleaner, etc.)
Coalition of urban workers & distressed farmers (re: election of 1828)
Unghlad younger America (re: fundamentalism, conservatism, nativism)
Progressivism, inc. genuine feminist measures