

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR THE NEW ERA

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter 24 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. behaviorists: 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 (642-647)

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 types 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?
5. 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 (647-657)

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 (657-661)

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 (661-665)

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?

AMERICA IN THE WORLD: THE CINEMA (649)

23. Why has America dominated the filmmaking industry?

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: DANCE HALLS (652-653)

24. 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. "normalcy"
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. the "noble experiment"
19. Al Capone
20. "wets" and "drys"
21. *The Birth of a Nation*
22. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
23. Alfred E. Smith
24. John W. Davis
25. Andrew Mellon

Document

Read H. L. Mencken's obituary for Calvin Coolidge, noting Mencken's contempt 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

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
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

7. In the 1920s and after, the term "parity" was used to refer to:
- a fair exchange price for farm crops.
 - equal pay for union and non-union workers.
 - equal pay for equal work for males and females.
 - equal employment opportunities for blacks and whites.
8. Which of the following industries was most closely associated with the rise of consumerism in America in the 1920s?
- banking
 - insurance
 - advertising
 - fast-food chains
9. Margaret Sanger was significant to American social and cultural life in the 1920s as a promoter of:
- temperance.
 - the "debunkers."
 - progressive education.
 - the birth-control movement.
10. Three of the following were manifestations of changing cultural values among Americans in the 1920s. Which is the *exception*?
- There was an increase in secularism.
 - Many women enjoyed a less inhibited lifestyle.
 - The national divorce rate climbed dramatically.
 - Birth-control devices were legalized in all states, and abortion was legalized in some states.
11. According to the text, which of the following had the greatest influence in producing the sense of disillusionment characteristic of the Lost Generation?
- The decline of organized religion.
 - The moral relativism of pragmatism.
 - The widespread acceptance of evolution.
 - The traumatic experience of World War I.
12. H. L. Mencken was significant to American social and cultural life in the 1920s as:
- a leading advocate of temperance.
 - a sarcastic debunker of traditional culture.
 - an influential proponent of progressive education.
 - a prominent opponent of the birth-control movement.
13. A principal theme of Sinclair Lewis's novels in the 1920s was:
- utopian optimism for the future.
 - romantic idealization of the past.
 - contempt for modern American society.
 - acceptance of modern American society as the best of all possible worlds.

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."

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. The economic sector most responsible for the prosperity of the 1920s was agriculture.
4. The trend toward business consolidation that had begun in the 1890s began to slow during the 1920s.
5. During the 1920s, membership in labor unions declined significantly compared to the World War I years.
6. During the 1920s, advertising expanded rapidly and advertisers were increasingly trying to identify their products with a modern lifestyle.
7. 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.
8. H. L. Mencken and Sinclair Lewis were among the authors whose writings were critical of the dominant middle-class values of the 1920s.
9. The New York City-based flourishing of African American culture in the 1920s was given the nickname "Gotham Revival."
10. Support for the prohibition of liquor was strongest in the provincial, largely rural, Protestant-dominated areas of the country.
11. 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.
12. In the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan grew rapidly in some Midwestern states as well as in the South.
13. 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.
14. The Republican administrations of the 1920s accomplished notable reductions in taxes on corporate profits, personal incomes, and inheritances.
15. During most of the 1920s, the Democrats controlled Congress and the Republicans controlled the presidency.
16. The nickname "Ohio Gang" was given to several advisors of Calvin Coolidge.
17. The Teapot Dome Scandal in the 1920s involved corrupt leasing of government oil reserves to private business.
18. The scandals during the Harding administration caused little if any political harm to the Republican Party in the 1920s.
19. Calvin Coolidge was more popular than Warren Harding because he was more personable and gregarious.

