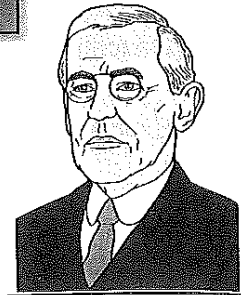


The USA's Reaction to World War One

After the First World War (1914-1918), the USA chose not to get involved in international affairs. This policy was known as isolationism.

The League was the idea of the American President

- 1) The League of Nations was largely the idea of the American president Woodrow Wilson. It was one of his Fourteen Points (see p.21) — fourteen principles on which he thought a peace settlement could be based.
- 2) He thought a League of Nations could act like a world parliament where the representatives of all the major powers would meet to discuss matters of international importance.
- 3) He was sure that such an organisation could prevent another world war.



Woodrow Wilson

But America Never Joined the League of Nations

- 1) A League of Nations was set up following the end of the First World War, as part of the Treaty of Versailles.
- 2) Wilson wanted the USA to join the League of Nations, but he needed the approval of the US Congress.
- 3) The problem was that most Americans didn't want to join.
- 4) The majority of the American people favoured 'isolationism' — they wanted the USA to remain isolated from foreign entanglements.

Americans Didn't Trust the League of Nations

- 1) Many Americans had been against the USA getting involved in the First World War and were upset by the loss of American lives.
- 2) They were worried that if America joined the League of Nations they would be obliged to interfere in conflicts that most Americans thought were none of their business.
- 3) The USA had a lot of citizens who were German or Austrian immigrants.



These people saw the League as linked to the hated Treaty of Versailles (see p.22). They were opposed to the USA joining an organisation that was forcing Germany to pay vast amounts in reparations (damages for the war).

- 4) Some Americans were suspicious of the French and the British. They were sure that the League would come under British and French control and that America would be called upon to help these countries defend their colonies. Many Americans felt that colonies didn't fit in with their ideas about freedom and democracy and should not be supported.
- 5) Other Americans were concerned that joining the League of Nations could cost them money. They were worried that the League would drag America into lots of expensive wars. Many businessmen contended that the US had grown prosperous by staying out of European affairs and that it should remain isolated from Europe.

The USA thought it was better off alone...

Perhaps it was a bit selfish of the USA to reject the League of Nations, but they probably did save themselves a lot of trouble and expense, at least in the short term. Make sure you learn all the reasons for their decision not to join.

Growth of Isolationism

America just wanted to be alone.

The USA Entered Late and Gained From World War One

- 1) The American economy boomed as a result of the First World War.
- 2) The USA exported weapons and food to Europe during the war.
- 3) The USA joined the Allied side in 1917 — but no fighting happened on American soil.
- 4) After the war, European countries whose industries had been damaged bought American goods with the help of American loans.

Cheap European Imports were seen as a Threat

- 1) American businesses were afraid that the USA would be flooded with cheap European imports.
- 2) Unemployment was higher in Europe so European workers were willing to work for lower wages. Businessmen were worried American consumers would start buying European products rather than the more expensive American ones.
This would mean:
 - The loss of American jobs.
 - Lower profits for US companies.
 - Less money in taxes for the US government.

Warren G Harding raised tariffs to protect US Industry



Warren G Harding

- 1) Harding was elected President in 1921. He brought in the Emergency Tariff Act of May 1921. A tariff is a tax on imported and exported goods. The act increased the tariff rates on imported farm products.
- 2) In 1922, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff gave the President the power to raise and lower the tariff rates.
- 3) Harding used the Fordney-McCumber Tariff to raise duties on both factory and farm goods.
- 4) He hoped to protect America from "unfair" European competition.

Immigration Control was increased

Before the First World War, America had followed an 'Open Doors' policy that allowed almost anybody to move to the USA. But some Americans started demanding that this 'door' be closed. The most powerful and wealthy cultural group in America at this time were people with mainly British ancestors — later known as the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs).

- 1) Many WASPs believed that people such as anarchists and communists were coming into the USA and undermining the American way of life.
- 2) They were also alarmed at the number of Asian, Catholic and Jewish people who were entering the USA.

The WASPs had great influence in Congress (the American parliament). As a consequence President Harding decided to place strict limitations on immigration, especially from Eastern and Southern Europe. In 1921, Congress passed an act which introduced a quota system. Annual immigration was reduced from over one million to about 150 000 in 1929.

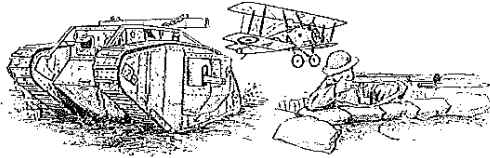
Isolationism — it's tariffic...

After the First World War, Europe had lots of problems, while America had relatively few. By limiting imports and reducing immigration, the US sought to secure its peace and prosperity.

Reasons for the boom of the 1920s

During the 1920s, the USA experienced an economic boom – a period of great prosperity. There were several reasons for the boom.

Impact of the First World War

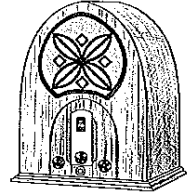


US industry greatly benefited from the war.

- There was little competition from their main rivals, Britain and Germany, who were preoccupied with fighting the war.
- US firms made huge profits selling weapons to the British and French.
- The US gave loans to these countries which they had to pay back after the war.

New technology

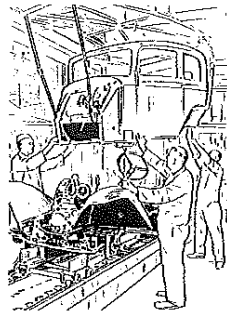
This was a period of great change.



- Radio broadcasting started in 1921. This created a demand for radios.
- The widespread availability of electrical supplies created demand for electrical goods, such as vacuum cleaners and fridges.
- The chemical industry created new, cheap materials such as rayon, Bakelite and cellophane.
- In 1928, the invention of 'talking pictures' boosted the film industry.

Mass production

Mass production methods made it cheaper and much easier to manufacture goods than by hand. The main new method was first used by Henry Ford in the car industry. He trained each worker to perform a specific task as a vehicle or engine passed by on an assembly line. This is how he described it: 'The operations are sub-divided so that each man and machine do only one thing. The thing is to keep everything in motion and take the work to the man, not the man to the work.'



Wages and prices

During the 1920s, the average wage of industrial workers doubled. Many people could afford to buy cars, domestic appliances and cinema tickets. At the same time, prices were steady or, in the case of some consumer goods, actually falling due to mass production methods. Consumer goods became affordable to a wider range of people.



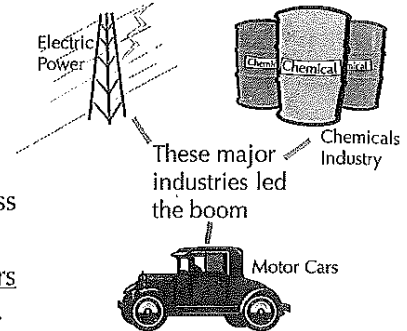
Prosperity in the 1920s

The 1920s were a time of huge economic growth in the US.

The 1920s were a Time of Plenty

This decade was a 'boom time' for many — incomes rose and standards of living improved.

- 1) There was low inflation, low unemployment and low interest rates.
- 2) Cities were rebuilt with tall skyscrapers, and major road building programmes were undertaken.
- 3) There was a consumer boom. More people could now afford items such as radios, refrigerators, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and telephones.
- 4) Advertising encouraged more spending and became a big business in itself, expanding into radio and film commercials.
- 5) Hire purchase (buying in instalments) was introduced to make cars affordable to average earners who could only buy them on credit. It encouraged more spending on luxury goods.
- 6) Republican government policy contributed to prosperity. The reduction of income tax left people with more money to spend. The government also promoted cheap credit through the Federal Reserve Board (central banking system). They encouraged banks to lend money on easier terms, which (in the short term) contributed to the boom.

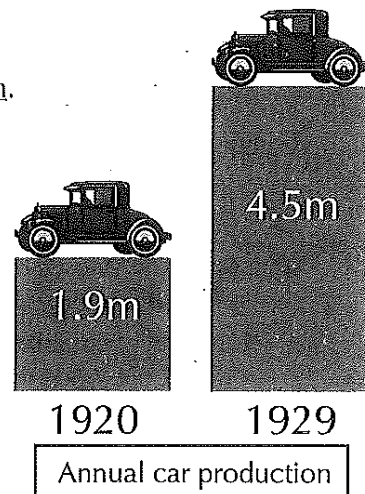


The Stock Market boomed

1.5 million Americans bought shares in the 1920s. Before the price of shares began to rocket unrealistically in 1928, there were sensible reasons for buying them — people were investing in a real boom in production and consumption. It only started to go bad when people took to buying shares on credit in the hope of selling them at a profit (see p.114).

The Motor Industry led the way

- 1) The jobs of 1 in 12 workers were linked to motor car production.
- 2) Car production boosted other industries — steel, petrol, chemicals, glass and rubber.
- 3) Cars became more affordable — the Model T Ford cost less than \$300.
- 4) Production of cars became dominated by the big three companies — Ford, Chrysler and General Motors.
- 5) Ford's factory used an assembly line system. It divided manufacturing tasks among a group of workers spaced alongside a moving belt. It made production far more efficient, which allowed for a huge reduction in price. By 1929, there was one car for every five Americans.



Boom in the US — revise this and prosper...

This page is really important. It shows you how the American economy really took off in the 1920s. Make sure you learn some of these statistics — they'll impress the examiners.

Changes in economy

The Roaring Twenties referred to the changes in lifestyle of many Americans, which were encouraged by the boom in the economy. In particular, there was a great growth in the entertainment industry.

Shares

As companies made profits, their share prices rose. The system of 'buying on the margin' allowed ordinary people to buy company shares on a hire purchase basis. They hoped that a rise in share prices would mean they could pay for the purchase and also make a profit. Millions of Americans became shareowners.

Source A: A US citizen remembers the 1920s.

Everybody was in the stock market, whether he could afford it or not. Shoeshine boys and waiters as well as the rich. Some people even mortgaged their houses or businesses to buy shares. On trains and buses, you could see people reading a list of stock market prices instead of headlines or sports pages.

Motoring

Between 1920 and 1929, the number of Americans owning cars rose from 8 million to 23 million. Car ownership greatly changed people's lives. It gave them greater freedom to travel, whether to visit friends or take trips to the cities. Many people moved out to live in the suburbs during the 1920s because they could drive to the city to work. The car meant young people could escape their parents and go out to cinemas or clubs.

Source B: An advert for the Ten-Millionth Ford car.

The Ten-Millionth Ford

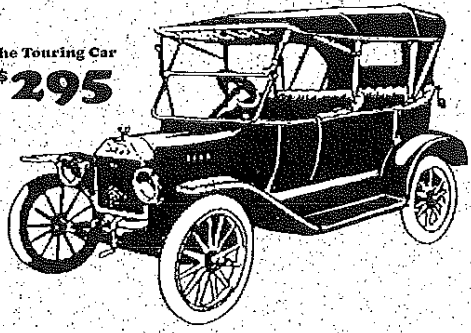
The 10,000,000th Ford car left the Highland Park factories of the Ford Motor Company June 4th. This is a production achievement unapproached in automotive history. Tremendous volume has been the outgrowth of dependable, convenient, economical service.

Ford Motor Company

See the nearest authorised Ford Dealer.

The Touring Car

\$295



Shopping

In the cities, chain-stores opened to stock the new ranges of goods available. It was at this time that clothing for women started to be mass produced. Clothing sales went up 427 per cent in the 1920s.

Entertainment

People had more money to spend and more leisure time.

The 'Jazz Age'

New types of music became popular. Jazz came from black Americans. Many parents were horrified when their children became enthusiastic about this strange music. Some places even banned it. Even more worrying were strange new dances, such as the Black Bottom and the Charleston. Visiting clubs and dancehalls became enormously popular in the 1920s. Some people at the time condemned the new dances.



Source B: An advert for the movie *Alimony* in 1925.

Brilliant men, beautiful jazz babies, champagne baths, midnight revels, petting parties in the purple dawn, all ending in one smashing climax that makes you gasp.

Source A: From the Reverend Burke Culpepper.

Dancing is a divorce feeder. It is heathen and animalistic. It degrades people. Now is the time to say plainly that it is one of the most evil of all modern customs.

The cinema

By the 1920s, Hollywood had become the film-making capital of the world. In 1920, 40 million cinema tickets were sold every week. By 1930, it was nearer 100 million. The stars of the 1920s became household names and everybody wanted to read about them in magazines. All these early films were silent. 'Talkies' arrived at the end of the 1920s.



The radio

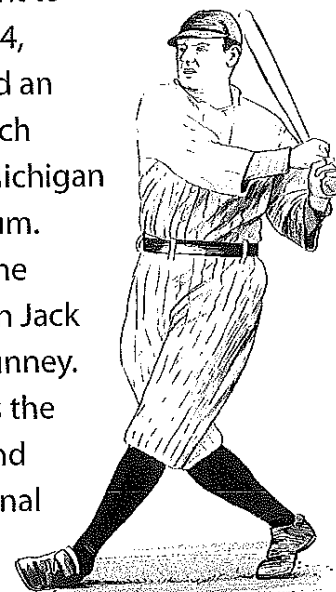
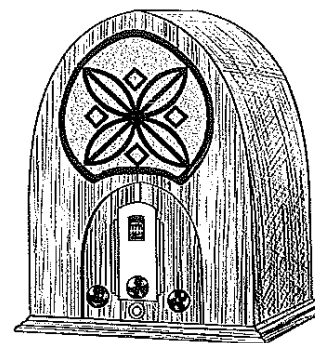
America's first radio station – Station KDKA – was started in 1920.

The radio quickly became an important part of life. By 1930, 40% of all homes had

a radio set. The radio meant that Americans could listen to new types of music from dance bands to jazz. They could also listen to sporting events, so sports personalities became national stars.

Sport

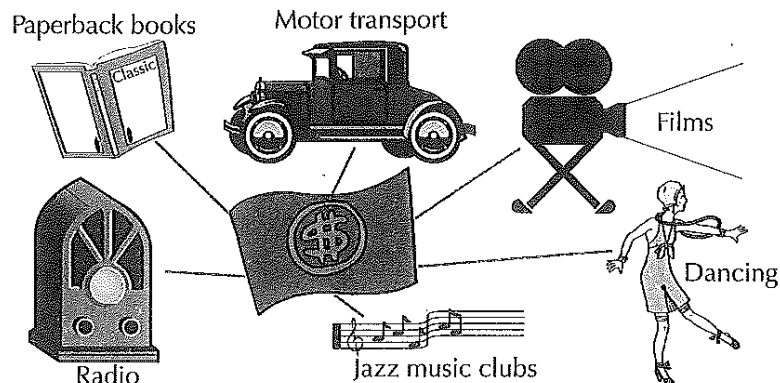
Many more people went to sporting events. In 1924, 67 000 people watched an American football match between Illinois and Michigan at the Memorial Stadium. In 1926, 145 000 saw the boxing match between Jack Dempsey and Gene Tunney. However, baseball was the most popular game and Babe Ruth was a national hero.



Social Developments

American society underwent big changes in the 1920s.

Many people had **More Money** to spend on Leisure



- 1) Film became the essential mass entertainment — and a multi-million dollar industry. Huge cinemas were built which could seat up to 4000 people. Films were silent until 1927, when the first “talking” picture was released. Hollywood was the major film-making centre.
- 2) Radio also boomed. In 1921 there was just one licensed station. Two years later there were 508. Millions of sets were sold. By 1929, \$850m was spent on sets and parts every year. The NBC (National Broadcasting Company) was set up in 1926. By 1929 it had made \$150m from advertising.

There were changing **Manners and Morals**

- 1) Young people enjoyed smoking, dancing and cocktail parties. Some women started to wear lipstick, shorter skirts and high heels (these women were called flappers).
- 2) Church attendance fell and the divorce rate increased.
- 3) But many people felt that permissiveness and sexual freedom had gone too far.

Women gained more **Freedom and Independence**

- 1) Films, popular songs and paperbacks encouraged new fashions and freedom.
- 2) Some feminists encouraged liberation, but had only limited success.
- 3) Women were encouraged to gain economic independence — some learnt a trade or trained as typists or secretaries. New office jobs provided employment for many women.
- 4) Household gadgets gave some relief from domestic drudgery.
- 5) Rising high school and college attendance meant women were better educated than before.

But **Traditional Views** continued

- 1) Some books and magazines tried to set ‘decent’ standards.
- 2) Women were still expected to be homemakers.
- 3) In employment there was continuing discrimination against women.
- 4) The vast majority of working class women continued in low-skilled, low-paid jobs.
- 5) Traditional male values continued to emphasise the superiority of men in the ‘public sphere’.

Hollywood, short skirts — and all that jazz...

What a great couple of pages to learn here — gangsters, flappers, film stars, they're all here. Don't get carried away though — you still need to know all these facts in detail for the exam.

Changes in the 1920s

The 'new women' of the 1920s were often referred to as 'flappers'.

Domestic role

Labour-saving devices, such as the vacuum cleaner and the washing machine, greatly reduced the time they had to spend on housework and freed them to do paid work if they so desired.

Work

During the First World War, women had taken over many of the jobs traditionally done by men. After the war, most went back to traditional jobs. However, the number of working women increased by 25% to 10.5 million by 1929. The number of upper- and middle-class women in employment increased, especially in teaching and secretarial work.

Fashion/appearance

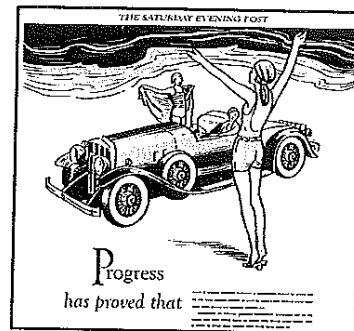
Many women stopped wearing corsets. Hemlines went up and hair was cut short in bobs. Heavy make-up became fashionable. In 1922, a fashion writer wrote in the *New York Times*, 'The American woman has lifted her skirt far too high. Some even above knee level. They wear thin, often short-sleeve dresses and flesh coloured stockings. Some have short bobbed hair. Most wear make-up, especially rouge and lipstick.'



Behaviour

Many younger women smoked and drank in public. They began to take part in strenuous sport and dances such as the Charleston. They went out unaccompanied by chaperones and even drove cars.

Source A: An advert for a car showing a woman driver.



Source B: Joan Crawford, a famous actress and flapper, speaking in 1929.

'By sheer force of violence, the flapper has established the right of women to do things which were exclusive to men – to smoke, drink and swear in public.'