

The Roaring 20s

Define: a period in which US society underwent significant societal and economic change (in values and customs)

Key features

- Flappers
- Growth in popular entertainment - Radio, Jazz & cinema
- Changing 'values'
- Spectator sport- esp baseball + boxing
- Urbanization (speakeasies)
- Mass advertising, mail order, consumerism
- Crazes!

Synonymous with the Roaring 20s - **The Flapper**

Rejected pre-war societal norms - more independence / liberation

- Went out without a chaperone - drank & smoked in public, attended dance halls & clubs, dancing the Charleston & black bottom.
- Wore new fashions - shorter skirts, abandoned corsets - 'garçons look' (Coco Chanel), hair cut short (bobbed).
- Had a far more active life - played sports, drove cars.
- Increased use of contraception.

Economic growth - Big picture

- GNP from \$78 to \$ 103 billion = disposable income.
- Increase in wealth (for some) 63 to over 500 millionaires
- Urbanization- building boom.
- Reduced unemployment.
- Huge expansion of manufacturing (consumer goods) and mass advertising. 20% increase

Cinema

- Becomes the MAIN form of popular entertainment.
- Ticket sales from 40 million a week in 1920 to 100 million by 1929.
- Picture Palaces - 25 cents a ticket .
- First talking picture, 1927 - The Jazz Singer.
- Birth of Hollywood + film stars - Clara Bow, Joan Crawford.
- Disney's Mickey Mouse from 1928
- 500 films a year

Jazz Age

- Origins - blues + ragtime from the south
- Easy dancing rhythms
- Replaced older dances (waltz) with Charleston, black bottom, the shimmy and Lindy hop.
- Made stars of black musicians - Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald.
- Famous Cotton Club.

Sport

- Radio turned baseball player, Babe Ruth and boxer Jack Dempsey into household names. Dempsey first boxer to be paid \$1 million for a fight.
- Advertising + sponsorship increased. (Coca Cola sponsored the 1928 Olympics)
- 120,000 watched Turney defeat Dempsey (1926)
- Sporting stars became icons of society

Radio

- By end of 1920s 50 million radios sold. 60% of homes had a radio.
- Spread influence of jazz, regular news, advertising (fueling the consumer boom)
- Specialist radio stations - sport, opera, comedy, jazz
- Live sports coverage.

BUT the 20s didn't 'Roar' for everyone.

- Racism still prevalent - Bessie Smith (female musician) died after car crash and refused treatment in a white only hospital.
- Radio programmer 'Amos n Andy' perpetuated negative cultural stereotypes about black people.
- Jazz seen as a corrupting influence - associated with speakeasies, gangsters - New York banned jazz!
- Racists said jazz was encouraging mixing of the races!
- Rural areas (bible-belt / Midwest) saw developments as immoral (skirts going up, morals going down) e.g increases in divorce rates
- Changes limited to white middle classes who could afford them (60% of society on or below the poverty line)



Flappers



Lindy Hop