* Chapter 20
* The Twenties
* 1919-1929
* Section 1-A Booming Economy
* Rarely, if ever, has America enjoyed such an economic boom as it did in the 1920s. The recession that followed WWI ended and the economic growth began. There are several reasons for this:
	+ Stock prices rose rapidly
	+ Factories produced more and more goods
	+ Wages rose so more and more people could afford to buy
	+ The biggest contribution to this economic growth was sparked by the automobile industry.
		- Carmaker Henry Ford introduced a series of methods and ideas that revolutionized production, wages, working conditions and daily life
* Henry Ford did not originate the idea of **mass production**, which is the rapid manufacture of large numbers of identical products but with the assembling of the automobile, Ford brought mass production to new heights.
* Early on, only wealthy city dwellers could afford cars. The automobile was often seen as a symbol of the class divisions in the country.
* The Oldsmobile, a less expensive car, had been introduced in 1901, but it was Henry Ford who truly brought the automobile to the people. In 1908, he introduced the **Model T**, a reliable car the average American could afford. (The first Model T cost $850.) Soon after, Ford opened a new plant in Detroit, which gave him easy access to steel, glass, oil, and rubber manufactured in surrounding states.
* Ford hired **scientific management** experts to improve his mass-production techniques. This included experts looking at every step of a manufactured process to find ways to reduce time, effort and expense.
* Ford also started his cars on **assembly lines**. At each step, a worker added something to construct the automobile. In 2 years, the assembly line techniques reduced the time it took to manufacture a Model T from more than 12 hours to just 90 minutes!
* The assembly line allowed Ford to drop the price of the Model T, which fell to $350 by 1916 and $250 by 1927.
* By 1927, 56% of families owned a car.
* Henry Ford also doubled the wages of his workers, reduced their work day by an hour and became the first major industrialist to give his workers Saturday and Sunday off. Ford realized that if workers made more money and had more leisure time, they would become potential customers for automobiles. This idea made Ford not only a very rich man, but also one of the shapers of the modern world.
* The Automobile Changes America
* The boom in the automobile industry stimulated growth in other industries related to car manufacture and use:
	+ The steel, glass, rubber, asphalt, wood, gasoline and road-construction industries all benefited. (See Infographic on Page 662)
	+ Road construction boomed, especially when the federal government introduced the system of numbered highways in 1926.
	+ This road construction led to the appearance of service stations, diners and motor hotels (motels).
	+ The automobile prompted a new sense of freedom and prosperity. Americans had never been so mobile. Families could go on vacations or Sunday drives to the country.
	+ Automobiles altered residential patterns. The ability to drive to work permitted people to live farther from their place of employment, which led to the development of suburban communities linked to cities by highways.
* The 1920s saw what has been called a **consumer revolution**, in which a flood of new, affordable goods became available to the public.
* Several things supported this revolution:
	+ The **widespread availability of electrical power** because it contributed to the sale of electric washing machines, vacuum cleaners, irons, radios, refrigerators.
	+ The **growing advertising industry** using scientific techniques and psychological research, advertisers were able to sell more products to more Americans than ever before.
		- Ads focused on people’s desires and fears more than what they really needed. Ads celebrated consumption and convinced people that they could be the person they wanted to be just by buying the right products.
	+ **New ways of buying**-people who did not have the cash to buy what they wanted bought on credit. *Installment buying*, in which a consumer would make a small down payment and then pay the rest off in regular monthly payments, allowed Americans to own products they might otherwise have had to save up for years to buy.
* The stock market also soard in the 1920s. It was known as the **bull market**, a period of rising stock prices. More and more Americans put their money in stocks in an effort to get rich quick.
* This desire to become rich quick led investors to ignore financial risks. As the market soared, people began **buying on margin**, another form of buying on credit. By purchasing stock on margin, a buyer paid as little as 10% of the stock price up front to a broker. The buyer then paid the broker for the rest of the stock over a period of months. The stock served as collateral for the broker’s loan. As long as the price stayed up, the buyer had no trouble paying off the loan and making money, but if the price fell, the buyer still had to pay off the loan.
* In truth, the bull market was very shaky, but most people ignored the dangers.
* Section 3-Social and Cultural Tensions
* The 1920 census showed that more people lived in urban areas than in rural regions. This fact had a profound consequence: this split was between urban America and rural America. These two groups were divided on almost every important social and cultural issue.
* **Urban Americans** enjoyed new consumer products and a wide array of leisure activities. They showed an openness toward social change and the new discoveries of science. (They participated in **modernism**, which was the growing trend to emphasize science and secular values over traditional ideas of religion)
* **Rural Americans** did not participate fully in the consumer revolution and they missed out on many of the new forms of leisure. People in the country generally embraced a more traditional view of religion, science and culture.
* Rural and Urban Americans disagreed in their attitudes toward formal education.
	+ Rural Americans prolonged formal education and did not see it as vital. They felt children only needed the “Three Rs”—reading, writing and arithmetic. Muscle, endurance and knowledge of crops and farming was more important than “book learning.”
	+ Urban Americans felt formal education was more important. Mental ability was seen as the essential ingredient for success. They felt education could be the difference between a low-paying, unskilled job and a higher-paying position in an office.
* In the 1920s, many devout Americans believed that Christianity was under attack across the world. They were upset about the secular trends in religion and culture in America.
* To fight it they took an approach known as **fundamentalism**, which is a movement or attitude toward stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles. They emphasized the Protestant teachings and the belief that every word in the Bible was literal truth. These fundamentalists believed that every important moral and scientific question was in the Bible. Their ideas took root all over the U.S. and were especially strong in rural America.
* Fundamentalism and modernism clashed in the **Scopes Trial** of 1925.
* In 1925, Tennessee passed a law making it illegal to teach Darwin’s theory of evolutionin the state’s public schools. The American Civil Liberties Union convinced John Scopes, a high school biology teacher, to challenge the law. When Scopes taught evolution in his classroom, he was arrested.
* **Clarence Darrow**, the most celebrated defense attorney in America, defended Scopes. Presidential candidate **William Jennings Bryan**, a long-time defender of rural values, served as an expert for the prosecution.
* Scopes was found guilty of breaking the law—a fact that was never in question—and fined $100.
* Importance/decision: The Scopes trial showcased a major cultural and religion division, but it did not heal the conflict or answer the central questions. When the trial was over, each side still believed in the truth of its position. The conflict over evolution continues today.
* Some rural Americans saw the country become increasingly urban and their own position in the nation slip in relative importance. Many lashed out against the symbols of change.
* In 1915, in Georgia, a group of angry men revived the Ku Klux Klan. The new Klan continued to promote hate for African Americans, it also aimed at the new America taking shape the cities. It targeted Jews, Catholics and immigrants. They also opposed labor unions (mostly because many union members were immigrants or political radicals) and claimed to stand against lawbreaking and immorality.
* At its height, the Klan had between 4-5 million members, mostly in the South but also in the Midwest.
* Just like before, the Klan boycotted businesses and terrorized citizens at night, often by burning crosses outside their homes. The Klan also bribed politicians, stole dues from their members and lied to members. Many Klan leaders ended up in prison and by the end of the 1920s, the Klan had withered in importance.
* Another divisive issue of the 1920s was **Prohibition**, the banning of alcohol use.
* By 1917, some 75% of Americans lived in “dry” counties that had banned liquor. World War I increased support for temperance because it seemed unpatriotic to use corn, wheat and barley to make alcohol when soldiers overseas needed bread.
* In 1919, Congress ratified the **Eighteenth Amendment** which forbade the manufacture, distribution and sale of alcohol anywhere in the U.S. (The amendment had been passed largely by rural votes.) Congress then passed the **Volstead Act**, a law that officially enforced the 18th amendment.
* Advocates of Prohibition, called “drys,” argued that Prohibition improved individuals, strengthened families and created better societies.
* Opponents of Prohibition, called “wets,” countered that the ban on alcohol did not stop people from drinking. They argued that Prohibition helped create an atmosphere of hypocrisy and increased organized crime.
* The gap between the law and individual desire to drink was filled by a large illegal network. People made alcohol in homemade stills or smuggled it from other countries. **Bootleggers** sold illegal alcohol to consumers. In cities, secret drinking establishments, known as **speakeasies**, attracted eager customers.
* Government agents worked to stop the flow of illegal liquor but they were shorthanded and the demand for alcohol was too great. Also, police and politicians tended to look the other way when liquor was involved because everyone was making so much money.
* The problem was that organized crime spread quickly into other areas of society. For example, Al Capone’s “other businesses” included prostitution, drugs, robbery, and murder. In essence, Prohibition contributed to the growth of organized crime in America.
* By the mid-1920s, most city politicians fought for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment, but too many rural Americans believed that liquor and crime were tied to other divisive issues. Like evolution, the debate over Prohibition became part of a battle over the future. (Prohibition will bot be repealed until the 21st Amendment in 1933.)
* Section 4-A Mass Culture
* The 1920s was in many respects the first decade of our modern era. This is due to the fact that technology created the leisure interests of the American people.
* Remember, the workweek for city workers dropped to 55 hours and they were given weekends off. At the same time, salaries and wages were higher.
* With more free time and disposable income, urban and suburban Americans looked to new sources for entertainment. Motion pictures met the demand.
* The technology to make a motion picture had been around a while (remember Thomas Edison?), but the movie industry rose to new heights in the 1920s. A handful of movie studios in California established monopolies that controlled the production, distribution and exhibition of movies.
* During the 1920s, between 60-100 million Americans went to the movies each week.
* For most of the decade studios made silent films, which was ideal when so many immigrants didn’t speak English. Movies became America’s democratic art. The stories could easily be followed by anyone and unlike the theater, movies were available to anyone with a few cents to spare.
* Comedian **Charlie Chaplin** was the most popular silent film star.
* In 1927, film history changed forever with the release of ***The Jazz Singer***, the first movie with sound synchronized to the action. Audiences were amazed and silent pictures quickly faded out, replaced by “talkies.”
* Other technology of the 1920s included the phonograph and the radio, which became powerful instruments of mass popular culture. Both of these technological advances are important because they helped created a standardized culture. Americans in all parts of the country listened to the same songs, learned the same dances and shared the same popular culture as they never had before.
* Radios brought distant events into people’s homes. For example, Americans could listen to sporting events live (championship boxing match between Gene Tunney and Jack Dempsey in 1927).
* The phonograph allowed people to listen to the same music they heard on the radio, but whenever they wanted. In the 1920s, grooved disc recordings really improved the sound quality of phonographs. This led to Americans learning dances such as the fox trot and the Charleston.
* The 1920s is also considered the “Golden Age of Sports” thanks to increased newspaper readership and the rise of radio coverage, every major sport boasted nationally famous performers.
* The leading sports hero was baseball’s home-run king, **Babe Ruth**. Others included Jack Dempsey in boxing, Red Grange in football and even women athletes like Gertrude Ederle, the first woman to swim the English Channel (about 150 miles).
* Even the most famous sports stars did not match the adoration of **aviator Charles Lindbergh** who in May of 1927 took off from Long Island, NY in his tiny, single-engine plane (*The Spirit of St. Louis*) and headed east to Paris, France. Lindbergh was the first to make a solo, non-stop flight across the Atlantic Ocean. The flight took more than 33 hours and the single pilot had to stay awake the whole time.
* During the 1920s, the “New Woman” challenged political, economic, social and educational boundaries to prove that their role was as vital outside the home as inside it.
* The New Woman of the 1920s was more liberated: she wore shorter dresses and more makeup, danced to the latest crazes and generally assumed that she had the same political and social rights as any man.
* The symbol of these changes for women was the **flapper**, a young woman with short skirts and makeup who had their hair cropped close in a style known as a bob. The flapper was more publicized than imitated, but this image was still an important aspect of the decade. Not all women aspired to be flappers, but many wanted and achieved more control over their lives.
* Perhaps the most widespread revolution taking place in women’s lives was a quiet one. During the 1920s we see women beginning to live longer, marry later, and have fewer children. This freed them to pursue other interests.
	+ Some entered the workforce where we saw a number of firsts for women (first female state judge, automotive engineer, U.S. Senator, governor…).
	+ Others devoted time to charitable work
	+ Some joined clubs to discuss books and art
* American writers of the 1920s are often referred to as the **“Lost Generation”** because they no longer had faith in cultural guideposts of the Victorian Era. Many were inspired by their “lost” condition to search for new truths and fresh ways of expressing these truths.
* Never in American history have we seen the emergence of so many literary talents: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, T.S. Eliot.
* F. Scott Fitzgerald explored the reality of the American dream of wealth, success and emotional fulfillment. In *The Great Gatsby* he wrote that through hard work and careful planning, someone can recreate themselves into a success.
* Section 5-Harlem Renaissance
* As a result of World War I and the Great Migration, millions of African Americans relocated from the rural South to the urban North. This mass migration continued through the 1920s and contributed to a highpoint of music and literature, especially in Harlem, NY.
* It was F. Scott Fitzgerald who called the 1920s the “Jazz Age,” but it was African Americans who brought the musical form into popularity.
* Jazz emerged in the South and Midwest, particularly New Orleans, where different cultures and traditions came together and influenced each other.
* From the South, it spread north with the Great Migration of African Americans.
* Trumpet player **Louis Armstrong** became the unofficial ambassador of jazz. He became a legend and influenced the development of jazz.
* **Duke Ellington** became one of the most important figure in early jazz and probably its greatest composer.
* Importance of Jazz:
* 1. Jazz was more than a musical style, it was also a symbol of the Roaring Twenties.
	+ It was part of the Prohibition Era, played in speakeasies in New York, Chicago, St. Louis and Los Angeles.
* 2. Jazz also demonstrated the depth of richness of African American culture.
* 3. Jazz announced that the United States was a land of shared cultures and traditions, a place where people came together and created something greater than their parts.
* 4. Jazz quickly bridged the races.
	+ Trumpeter Bix Beiderbecke became the first white musician to contribute to the styles and popularity of jazz. Jazz sounds influenced white songwriters and composers like Cole Porter.
* There were other expressions of African American culture besides Jazz in the 1920s. Novelists, poets, and artists celebrated their culture and explored questions of race in America. This flowering of American culture became known as the **Harlem Renaissance**, which helped give a new vocabulary and dynamic to race relations in the U.S.
* In the 1920s, the term the “New Negro” entered the American vocabulary. It suggested a radical break with the past. No longer would African Americans silently endure the old ways of exploitation and discrimination.
* This new mood was most vividly felt in Harlem, which attracted African American novelists, eassayists, poets and journalists from all over the country and beyond. In their work, these writers explored the pains and joys of being black in America, leaving a literary legacy that spoke to all Americans of all times.
* Probably the most powerful literary voice of this time was **Langston Hughes**, who felt the force of the movement was not politics but a celebration of African American culture and life.