

The American Pageant

15th Edition

Chapter 31 notes

American Life in the "Roaring Twenties"

I. Seeing Red

1. Americans were paranoid after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, which spawned a tiny communist party in America.
2. The Big red scare of 1919-1920 resulted in a nationwide crusade against left-wingers.
3. Various states joined the pack in the outcry against the radicals
 - Legislatures passed criminal syndicalism laws – made unlawful there mere advocacy of violence.
4. The conservative Businessmen used the red scare to their advantage to break the union's backs.
5. Lots of feelings of anti-redism and anti-foreignism

II. Hooded Hoodlums of the KKK

1. A new Ku Klux Klan, Spawned by the post war reaction mushroomed in the early 1920's.
 - It was an anti-foreign, anti-catholic, anti-black, Anti-Jewish, anti-pacifist anti-communist, anti-internationalist, anti-evolutionist, anti-bootlegger, anti-gambling, anti-adultery and anti-birth control.
 - It was also pro-Anglo-Saxon, pro- "native" American and pro-protestant.
 - In short they were a force against diversity and modernity
2. The Klan spread with astonishing rapidity
 - Especially in the Midwest where protestant fundamentalism thrived.
3. This reign of hooded horror collapsed suddenly in the late 1920's.

III. Stemming the Foreign Flood

1. Isolationist America of the 1920a had little use for the immigrants flooding in.
2. Congress temporarily stopped the influx with the Emergency quotea act 1921. New comers from Europe were restricted to 3% or the people of their nationality who had been living in the US in 1910.
3. That legislation was replaced by the immigration act of 1925, quotas were cut to two percent of what they were in 1890.
4. Southern Europeans denounced this as unfair, the "nativist" belief was that the northern Europeans were of better blood.

5. A discriminatory section of the act slammed the door on Japanese immigrants.
6. Canadians and Latin American were exempt from the quota system because of their proximity.
7. The immigration act of 1924 marked the end of an era- a period of virtually unrestricted immigration.

IV. The Prohibition “Experiment”

1. The Eighteenth Amendment- Prohibition and the Volstead Act made the world “safe for hypocrisy ”
2. Legal abolition of alcohol was especially popular in the South west because they were eager to keep stimulants out of black hands and it kept drunken vices away/
3. It got strong opposition in the larger eastern cities because many foreign born people were used to drinking a lot.
4. Prohibitionists were naïve
 - They overlooked the weak government control over private lives and many people disregarded the law.
5. Prohibition might have started off on a better foot if there had been a larger army of enforcement officials.
 - People bribed officers and smuggled drinks or even tried making their own alcohol which sometimes resulted in death.
6. Yet the “noble experiment” was not entirely a failure.
 - Bank saving increased, and absenteeism in industry decreased.
 - On the whole probably less alcohol was consumed than in the days before prohibition.

V. The Golden Age of Gangsterism

1. Prohibition spawned shocking crimes, violent wars broke out in the big cities between rivals gangs- often in immigrant neighborhoods- trying to get the best market to sell the illegal booze.
 - Competitors were killed, arrests were few and convictions were even fewer.
2. Chicago was the most spectacular example of lawlessness.
 - In 1925 “Scarface” Al Capone began six years of warfare that made him rich.
 - He was branded “public enemy number one” but couldn’t be convicted of his massacres and eventually imprisoned for income-tax evasion.
3. Gangsters quickly moved to other profitable and illicit activities: Prostitution, gambling and narcotics.
 - Honest merchants had to pay “protection money”.
 - Organized crime had come to be one of the nation’s biggest businesses.

VI. Monkey Business in Tennessee

1. Education was growing in the 1920 more and more states were requiring young people to remain in school until 16, 18 or graduation.
2. Professor John Dewey formed the foundation of progressive education.

3. Science advanced wondrously.
 - Public-health programs wiped out hookworm. Better nutrition and health care helped increase the life expectancy from 50 to 59.
4. However born science and progressive education in the 1920's were disliked by fundamentalists who said that the teaching of Darwinism destroyed faith in God and the bible.

VII. The Mass-Consumption Economy

1. Prosperity put much of the "roar" into the twenties
 - The economy sprinted forwards for nearly 7 years
 - Rapid- expansion of capital investments was favored
 - Ingenious machines were powered relatively cheaply- increasing labor of productivity.
2. Great new industries sprouted
 - The car became the carriage of the common man.
3. New aim of commerce came into play: advertising: seduction and persuasion were ways to convince Americans that they wanted to buy more.
4. Sports became big business in the consumer economy- sports heroes were well known and families bought many tickets.
5. Buying on credit was a new idea too. "Posses today and pay tomorrow".

VIII. Putting America on Rubber Tires

1. A new industrial revolution came about in the 1920's out of all the inventions of the era, the automobile was the most important
 - It used new amazing industrial system based on assembly-line methods and mass production techniques.
2. Best known from the new crop of industrial wizards was Henry Ford- he went through some hard times getting his models to work but fully applied the technique of the moving assembly line- this method was called Fordism.
3. His methods were so economical that he was selling his Ford Roadster for \$260.

IX. The Advent of the Gasoline Age

1. The impact of the self-propelled car helped the industry develop and create more jobs.
2. The petroleum business experienced an explosive development.
 - Railroads were hit hard by the competition of passenger cars, trucks and buses.
3. Speedy marketing of perishable food stuffs was accelerated.
4. The era of mud had ended as the nation made haste to construct hard-surfaced roadways.
5. Cars were agents of social change- at first a luxury, they rapidly became a necessity.
 - By the late 1920s Americans owned more automobiles than bathtubs. "I can't go to town in a bathtub".

6. Sprawling suburbs spread out even further from the urban core as America became a nation of commuters.
7. The demon machine, on the other hand exacted a death toll. The one millionth American had died in a motorcar accident by 1951.
 - o Yet no sane American would plead for return of the old horse and buggy with its fly-breeding manure
 - o The car brought more convenience pleasure into peoples' lives more than any other invention.

X. Humans Develop Wings

1. Gasoline engines also provided the power needed for airplanes
 - o On December 17, 1903 – Orville Wright managed to stay airborne for 12 seconds and 120 feet.
2. As aviation got off the ground, the world slowly shrank.
 - o Private companies began to operate passenger lines and airmail.
3. Charles A. Lindbergh travelled from New York to Paris in 1927.
 - o He did much to dramatize and popularize flying.
4. A giant new industry was given birth to.
 - o The floundering railroad received another setback though the loss of passengers and mail.
5. A lethal new method was given to the gods of war.

XI. The Radio Revolution

1. Communication developed quickly
 - o Wireless telegraphy- 1890's, then voice carrying radios. Transatlantic wireless phonographs, radiotelephones and television
2. The radio was drawing families and neighbors back home
3. Educationally and culturally the radio made significant contribution
 - o Sports were further stimulated, politicians had to adjust their speaking techniques to the new medium and finally the music of famous artists and symphony orchestras was beamed into countless homes.

XII. Hollywood's Filmland Fantasies

1. The real birth of the movie came in 1903 when the first story sequence.
2. A fascinating industry was this launched. Hollywood, in southern California soon became the movie capital of the world for it had maximum sunshine and other advantages.
3. The motion picture really arrived during WWI when it was used as an engine of anti-German propaganda.
4. A new era began in 1927- "talkie"
 - o Success, the age of the "silents" was ushered out and color films started to be produced.
 - o Movie stars got higher salaries than the president.

XIII. The Dynamic Decade

1. There were new changes in lifestyles and values.
2. Many taboos flew out the window: once modest maidens took up flapper dresses and shocked elders with one piece bathing suits.
3. Jazz and new music came about.
4. New racial pride blossomed in the black communities.

XIV. Cultural Liberator

1. In the decade after the war a new generation of writers and artists burst onto the scene from different ethnic and religious backgrounds.
2. War had jolted many young writers out of their complacency about traditional values and literary standards. They probed for new codes of morals and understanding.
3. The “lost generation” was formed by expatriates in postwar Europe.
4. In an outpouring of creative expression- the Harlem renaissance- artists exulted in their black cultures and argued for a “new negro” a dull citizen and a white’s social equal.

XV. Wall Street’s Big Bull Market

1. Signals abounded that the economic joyride might end in a crash.
 - o As the 1920’s lurched forward, everyone seemed to be buying stocks.
 - o Little was done by Washington to curb money-mad speculators.
 - o Lots of taxes were abolished and the rich had to pay less taxes.

Source URL: <http://www.course->

[notes.org/the_american_pageant_15th_edition/chapter_31_american_life_in_the_roaring_twenties](http://www.course-notes.org/the_american_pageant_15th_edition/chapter_31_american_life_in_the_roaring_twenties)

Links:

[1] http://www.course-notes.org/sites/www.course-notes.org/files/chapter_31_0.docx

[2] http://www.course-notes.org/Subject/SocialScience/US_History