**LIFE & CULTURE IN AMERICA IN THE 1920S**

**CHANGING WAYS OF LIFE**

* During the 1920s, urbanization continued to accelerate
* For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than in rural areas
* New York City was home to over 5 million people in 1920
* Chicago had nearly 3 million

**URBAN VS. RURAL**

* Throughout the 1920s, Americans found themselves caught between urban and rural cultures
* Urban life was considered a world of anonymous crowds, strangers, moneymakers, and pleasure seekers
* Rural life was considered to be safe, with close personal ties, hard work and morals

**Immigration Laws in the 1920s:**

* Emergency Quota Act (1921) –
  + discriminated heavily against people outside of Western Europe (Britain, France, etc.)
* National Origins Act (1924) –
  + Limit of 150,000 immigrants per year. Northwestern European countries are 90% of immigrants.
* Mexican immigration not restricted under acts, record numbers cross border.

**PROHIBITION**

* One example of the clash between city & farm was the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1920
* This Amendment launched the era known as Prohibition
* The new law made it illegal to make, sell or transport liquor

**SUPPORT FOR PROHIBITION**

* Reformers had long believed alcohol led to crime, child & wife abuse, and accidents
* Supporters were largely from the rural south and west
* The church affiliated Anti-Saloon League and the Women’s Christian Temperance Union helped push the 18th Amendment through

**SPEAKEASIES AND BOOTLEGGERS**

* Many Americans did not believe drinking was a sin
* Most immigrant groups were not willing to give up drinking
* To obtain liquor illegally, drinkers went underground to hidden saloons known as speakeasies
* People also bought liquor from bootleggers who smuggled it in from Canada, Cuba and the West Indies

**ORGANIZED CRIME**

* Prohibition contributed to the growth of organized crime in every major city
* Chicago became notorious as the home of Al Capone – a famous bootlegger
* Capone took control of the Chicago liquor business by killing off his competition

**GOVERNMENT FAILS TO CONTROL LIQUOR**

* Eventually, Prohibition’s fate was sealed by the government, which failed to budget enough money to enforce the law
* The task of enforcing Prohibition fell to 1,500 poorly paid federal agents --- clearly an impossible task

**SUPPORT FADES, PROHIBITION REPEALED**

* By the mid-1920s, only 19% of Americans supported Prohibition
* Many felt Prohibition caused more problems than it solved
* The 21st Amendment finally repealed Prohibition in 1933

**SCIENCE AND RELIGION CLASH**

* Another battleground during the 1920s was between fundamentalist religious groups and secular thinkers over the truths of science
* The Protestant movement grounded in the literal interpretation of the bible is known as fundamentalism
* Fundamentalists found all truth in the bible – including science & evolution

**SCOPES TRIAL**

* In March 1925, Tennessee passed the nation’s first law that made it a crime to teach evolution
* The ACLU promised to defend any teacher willing to challenge the law – John Scopes did
* The ACLU hired Clarence Darrow, the most famous trial lawyer of the era, to defend Scopes
* The prosecution countered with William Jennings Bryan, the three-time Democratic presidential nominee
* Trial opened on July 10,1925 and became a national sensation
* In an unusual move, Darrow called Bryan to the stand as an expert on the bible – key question: *Should the bible be* *interpreted literally?*
* Under intense questioning, Darrow got Bryan to admit that the bible can be interpreted in different ways
* Nonetheless, Scopes was found guilty and fined $100
* **Despite the guilty verdict, Darrow got the upper hand during his questioning of Bryan**

**SECTION 2: THE TWENTIES WOMAN**

* After the tumult of World War I, Americans were looking for a little fun in the 1920s
* Women were becoming more independent and achieving greater freedoms (right to vote, more employment, freedom of the auto)

**THE FLAPPER**

* During the 1920s, a new ideal emerged for some women: the Flapper
* A Flapper was an emancipated young woman who embraced the new fashions and urban attitudes

**NEW ROLES FOR WOMEN**

* The fast-changing world of the 1920s produced new roles for women
* Many women entered the workplace as nurses, teachers, librarians, & secretaries
* However, women earned less than men and were kept out of many traditional male jobs (management) and faced discrimination

**THE CHANGING FAMILY**

* American birthrates declined for several decades before the 1920s
* During the 1920s that trend increased as birth control information became widely available
* Birth control clinics opened and the American Birth Control League was founded in 1921

**MODERN FAMILY EMERGES**

* As the 1920s unfolded, many features of the modern family emerged
* Marriage was based on romantic love, women managed the household and finances, and children were not considered laborers/ wage earners but rather developing children who needed nurturing and education

**SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND POPULAR CULTURE**

* During the 1920s, developments in education had a powerful impact on the nation
* Enrollment in high schools quadrupled between 1914 and 1926
* Public schools met the challenge of educating millions of immigrants

**EXPANDING NEWS COVERAGE**

* As literacy increased, newspaper circulation rose and mass-circulation magazines flourished
* By the end of the 1920s, ten American magazines -- including *Reader’s Digest* and *Time –* boasted circulations of over 2 million

**RADIO COMES OF AGE**

* Although print media was popular, radio was the most powerful communications medium to emerge in the 1920s
* News was delivered faster and to a larger audience
* Americans could hear the voice of the president or listen to the World Series live

**AMERICAN HEROES OF THE 20s**

* In 1929, Americans spent $4.5 billion on entertainment (includes sports)
* People crowded into baseball games to see their heroes
* Babe Ruth was a larger than life American hero who played for Yankees
* He hit 60 homers in 1927

**LINDBERGH’S FLIGHT**

* America’s most beloved hero of the time wasn’t an athlete but a small-town pilot named Charles Lindbergh
* Lindbergh made the first nonstop solo trans-atlantic flight
* He took off from NYC in the *Spirit of St. Louis* and arrived in Paris 33 hours later to a hero’s welcome

**ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS**

* Even before sound, movies offered a means of escape through romance and comedy
* First sound movies: *Jazz Singer* (1927)
* First animated with sound: *Steamboat Willie* (1928)
* By 1930millions ofAmericans went to the movies each week

**MUSIC AND ART**

* Famed composer George Gershwin merged traditional elements with American Jazz
* Painters like Edward Hopper depicted the loneliness of American life
* Georgia O’ Keeffe captured the grandeur of New York using intensely colored canvases

**WRITERS OF THE 1920S**

* The 1920s was one of the greatest literary eras in American history
* Sinclair Lewis, the first American to win the Nobel Prize in literature, wrote the novel, *Babbitt*
* In *Babbitt* the main character ridicules American conformity and materialism
* Writer F. Scott Fitzgerald coined the phrase “Jazz Age” to describe the 1920s
* Fitzgerald wrote *Paradise Lost* and *The Great Gatsby*
* *The Great Gatsby* reflected the emptiness of New York elite society
* Edith Warton’s *Age of Innocence* dramatized the clash between traditional and modern values
* Willa Cather celebrated the simple, dignified lives of immigrant farmers in Nebraska in *My Antonia*
* Ernest Hemingway, wounded in World War I, became one of the best-known authors of the era
* In his novels, *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Farewell to Arms,* he criticized the glorification of war
* His simple, straightforward style of writing set the literary standard

**THE LOST GENERATION**

* Some writers such as Hemingway and John Dos Passos were so soured by American culture that they chose to settle in Europe
* In Paris they formed a group that one writer called, “The Lost Generation”

**SECTION 4: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE**

* Between 1910 and 1920, the Great Migration saw hundreds of thousands of African Americans move north to big cities
* By 1920 over 5 million of the nation’s 12 million blacks (over 40%) lived in cities

**AFRICAN AMERICAN GOALS**

* Founded in 1909, the NAACP urged African Americans to protest racial violence
* W.E.B Dubois, a founding member, led a march of 10,000 black men in NY to protest violence

**MARCUS GARVEY – UNIA**

* Marcus Garvey believed that African Americans should build a separate society (Africa)
* In 1914, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association
* Garvey claimed a million members by the mid-1920s
* He left a powerful legacy of black pride, economic independence and Pan-Africanism

**HARLEM, NEW YORK**

* Harlem, NY became the largest black urban community
* Harlem suffered from overcrowding, unemployment and poverty
* However, in the 1920s it was home to a literary and artistic revival known as the Harlem Renaissance

**AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS**

* The Harlem Renaissance was primarily a literary movement
* Led by well-educated blacks with a new sense of pride in the African-American experience
* Claude McKay’s poems expressed the pain of life in the ghetto

**LANGSTON HUGHES**

* Missiouri-born Langston Hughes was the movement’s best known poet
* Many of his poems described the difficult lives of working-class blacks
* Some of his poems were put to music, especially jazz and blues

**ZOLA NEALE HURSTON**

* Zola Neale Hurston wrote novels, short stories and poems
* She often wrote about the lives of poor, unschooled Southern blacks
* She focused on the culture of the people– their folkways and values

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN PERFORMERS**

* During the 1920s, black performers won large followings
* Paul Robeson, son of a slave, became a major dramatic actor
* His performance in *Othello* was widely praised

**LOUIS ARMSTRONG**

* Jazz was born in the early 20th century
* In 1922, a young trumpet player named Louis Armstrong joined the Creole Jazz Band
* Later he joined Fletcher Henderson’s band in NY
* Armstrong is considered the most important and influential musician in the history of jazz

**EDWARD KENNEDY “DUKE” ELLINGTON**

* In the late 1920s, Duke Ellington, a jazz pianist and composer, led his ten-piece orchestra at the famous Cotton Club
* Ellington won renown as one of America’s greatest composers

**BESSIE SMITH**

* Bessie Smith, blues singer, was perhaps the most outstanding vocalist of the decade
* She achieved enormous popularity and by 1927 she became the highest- paid black artist in the world