



# Changes in American Society

## Objectives

1. Identify the causes and effects of the Eighteenth Amendment.
2. Explain how the Nineteenth Amendment changed the role of women in society.
3. Describe how the automobile, radio, and movies changed American culture.
4. Explain why tension and unrest lay beneath the surface during the 1920s.

## Prepare to Read

### Reading Skill

**Summarize Main Ideas** In an earlier chapter, you practiced identifying main ideas. You can build on that skill here, by summarizing main ideas. Clarify your understanding of the text by stating the main ideas. You will find that you must understand the main ideas in order to weave them together into a summary.

## Vocabulary Builder

### High-Use Words

restrict, p. 742

isolate, p. 743

### Key Terms

prohibition, p. 741

bootlegger, p. 741

speakeasy, p. 741

★ **Background Knowledge** The political changes of the 1920s were accompanied by far-reaching social and economic changes. The goals of some nineteenth-century reform movements were achieved in the early twentieth century. In this section, you will learn how a changing economy affected American society.

## Prohibition

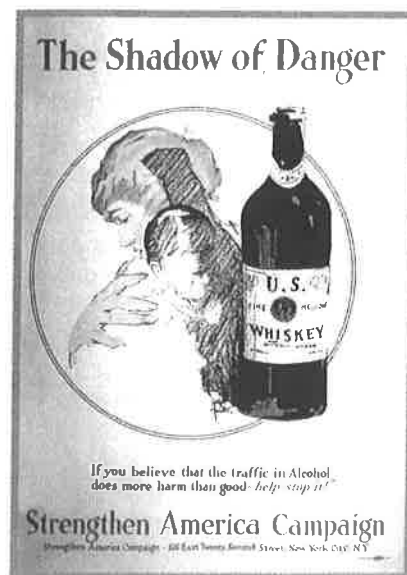
During the 1800s, many reformers had worked to reduce alcohol use in the United States. Eventually, supporters of temperance began supporting **prohibition**, a total ban on alcoholic drinks. During World War I, support for prohibition grew. Many Americans saw it as a way to conserve grains during the war. In part, due to this reasoning, the states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919. It prohibited making, selling, or transporting alcohol and began a specific time of federal enforcement known as Prohibition.

**The Experiment Fails** Saloons shut down, and arrests for drunkenness declined. There was a drop in the amount of alcohol that people consumed, especially working people for whom the high price of illegal liquor was an obstacle.

However, the law proved impossible to enforce. It was easy to smuggle liquor across the border from Canada and the Caribbean. Liquor smugglers, called **bootleggers**, made huge profits importing illegal alcohol. Every large town had its **speakeasies**, or illegal taverns that served liquor.

## Main Idea

In 1919, the Eighteenth Amendment bans the use and sale of alcohol.



Poster in support of prohibition

## A New Mass Culture

The automobile also became a symbol of the 1920s—especially the Model T Ford. Henry Ford introduced the assembly line which reduced the time in making cars from about 12 hours to about 1½ hours. Middle-class families could now afford to buy a car since prices dropped.

**Impact of the Automobile** The automobile changed American life in many ways. In a restless age, it became the symbol of individual freedom and independence. The automobile also created new businesses. Gas stations, roadside restaurants, and cabins sprang up along newly built highways.

Cars affected society in other ways. Cars and new roads made it easier for many families to move to the suburbs. Cars made people in rural areas less isolated. Furthermore, they encouraged tourism.

**The Radio** Another important part of the new culture was the radio. Introduced in the 1920s, commercial radio was an instant success. Almost any family could afford to buy a radio.

The radio became a leading supplier of entertainment. Families listened together at night after dinner. Radio put Americans in the stands at baseball games and on the floor of political conventions. It turned band leaders, singers, and comedians into household names.

The first commercial radio station, KDKA, began broadcasting in Pittsburgh in 1920. By 1926, there were more than 700 radio stations and a national radio network, NBC. People all over the country could hear the same songs and thrill to the same radio dramas.

### Main Idea

The automobile, the radio, and the movies brought sweeping changes to American life.

### Vocabulary Builder

**isolate** (i sah layt) v. to set apart; to separate

### Summarize Main Ideas

Summarize the main ideas under the heading "A New Mass Culture."



## Portrait of a Flapper

"She is frankly, heavily made up . . . pallor mortis, poisonously scarlet lips, richly ringed eyes. . . . And there are, finally, her clothes. . . . Her dress . . . is cut low where it might be high, and vice versa. The skirt comes just an inch below her knees, overlapping by a faint fraction her rolled and twisted stockings. The idea is that when she walks in a bit of a breeze, you shall now and then observe the knee. . . . [The flapper's] haircut is also abbreviated. She wears of course the very newest thing in bobs. . . ."

—Bruce Bliven, "Flapper Jane," *The New Republic*, Sept. 9, 1925



### Reading Primary Sources

#### Skills Activity

Some younger Americans shocked their elders by acting with a new freedom during the 1920s. In the quotation above, a magazine writer describes a 19-year-old flapper. **Critical Thinking:** **Evaluate Information** How did changes in American society help to create the flapper generation?

**The Movies** Movies were another new form of entertainment. They provided an escape from everyday life. Millions of Americans went to the movies at least once a week. The movie industry grew up in Hollywood, where mild weather allowed for filming year-round.

The first films were silent. A pianist or small musical group in each theater provided an accompaniment. In 1927, the first major "talkie," *The Jazz Singer*, created a sensation.

Americans especially loved action films. Comedies were also popular, and actors, such as Charlie Chaplin, became celebrities. Animated movies began in the 1920s, and the Walt Disney company was founded in 1923.

Out of the love of films grew a fascination with movie stars. Fan magazines and gossip columns contributed to the worship of celebrities.

**✓Checkpoint** What new forms of entertainment became popular in the 1920s?

### Main Idea

The rapid changes of the 1920s also brought social tensions and racial unrest.

### Magic of the Silver Screen

Charles Chaplin was among many Hollywood stars who became household names during the 1920s. **Critical Thinking: Draw Conclusions** How did new forms of mass culture like radio and movies help to bring Americans together?



### Social Conflict

Not everyone shared in the new postwar social values. Some were offended by what they saw. They feared that rapid social and economic changes would destroy a treasured way of life.

**The Scopes Trial** Some of those conflicts were at the heart of the Scopes trial of 1925. John Scopes was a high school biology teacher in Dayton, Tennessee. He was accused of violating Tennessee law by teaching the theory of evolution to his students.

Evolution is the scientific theory devised by Charles Darwin in the nineteenth century. Darwin claimed that all life evolved, or developed, from simpler forms over a long period of time.

Some religious leaders rejected evolution, saying it denied the word of the Bible. A number of states, including Tennessee, passed laws that banned the teaching of Darwin's theory. Scopes wanted to challenge the law, so he announced that he taught evolution.

The trial became a national sensation. The prosecutor was William Jennings Bryan, who had run for President three times. The defense attorney was Clarence Darrow, a famous Chicago criminal defense lawyer. The trial seemed to pit modern, urban Americans against traditional, rural Americans.

In the end, Scopes was convicted and lost his job. Laws against teaching evolution remained but were rarely enforced.

**Racial Conflict** African Americans returned from service in World War I with new hope for equality at home. They tried to get better paying jobs and to move to better neighborhoods.

The 1920s saw large numbers of African Americans move north in what was called the Great Migration. Leaving the South, they headed for cities such as Chicago, Detroit, and New York. They crowded into the few neighborhoods that allowed black residents.

Racial tensions mounted, and race riots broke out in several cities. Some of the worst violence occurred in Chicago, where 13 days of rioting in 1919 left 38 people dead and some 500 injured.

Under these conditions, the Jamaican immigrant Marcus Garvey gained a wide following. Arriving in America in 1916, Garvey, a spellbinding speaker, created the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). "Up, you mighty race," Garvey told his followers, "you can accomplish what you will." The UNIA sponsored activities to promote black pride and black unity. It also encouraged African Americans to move permanently to Africa.

The social tensions of the 1920s were also expressed in the growth of the Ku Klux Klan. The whites-only Klan scorned not just blacks but also immigrants, Catholics, and Jews. The organization's power spread from the South to the Midwest and the West. In Oregon and Indiana, Klan-backed candidates were elected as governors.

However, several public scandals at the end of the 1920s cost the Klan much of its support. The general economic prosperity also contributed to the organization's decline.

**Checkpoint** What was one cause of the Great Migration?

**★ Looking Back and Ahead** The economic and social pressures unleashed by World War I greatly changed U.S. society. The changes helped bring a burst of creative energy in the arts.



Marcus Garvey

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### Comprehension and Critical Thinking

1. **(a) List** How did automobiles change the lives of Americans?  
**(b) Draw Conclusions** How did the production of the automobile change life in small towns?
2. **(a) Recall** What did Marcus Garvey encourage?  
**(b) Link Past to Present** Which of Garvey's ideas have African Americans embraced and which have they rejected?

### Reading Skill

3. **Summarize Main Ideas** Reread the text following the subheading "The Movies." Summarize its main ideas.

### Vocabulary Builder

Complete the following sentence so that the second part further explains the first part and clearly shows your understanding of the key term.

4. Supporters of the temperance movement favored prohibition, \_\_\_\_\_.

### Writing

5. Which sentence is a better conclusion for a short essay about Prohibition? (a) "The Nineteenth Amendment outlawed the sale of alcohol." (b) "Given its unexpected effects, it is no surprise that Prohibition was repealed."