

THE ROARING 20'S

ROARING '20'S!



POST-WAR AMERICA

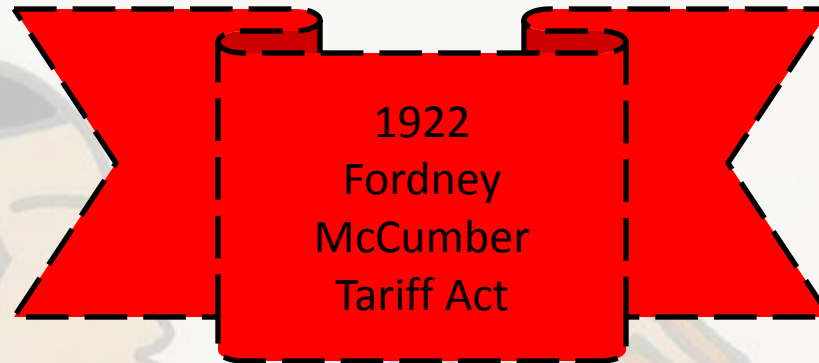
- Disillusionment leads to rejection of traditional values and norms
- The 1920's will become a time of social chaos as America seeks to re-define itself and deal with social issues long swept under the rug
 - Labor disputes
 - Racial tensions
 - Isolationism
 - Urban vs. Rural society
 - Tradition vs. Modernity

POLITICS OF THE 1920'S

- Return to Isolation after the war
- Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act to protect business
- Quota and Immigration Acts to keep refugees out because of fears over Communism, etc.
- Congress refuses to accept Treaty of Versailles
- Congress also refuses to join the League of Nations

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ECONOMIC ISOLATION



- All non American goods had to pay a huge tariff or entry tax
- This produced a huge domestic budgetary surplus
- Most Americans could only therefore buy American goods

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POST-WAR PROSPERITY

- Accidental by-product of the US involvement in WWI
- Europe was devastated by the war while the US suffered no damage
- US the only major industrialized nation able to immediately produce and supply goods and food
- European countries rely on the US to survive and re-build

PROSPERITY CONTINUED

- Loaning money abroad brought wealth into the US (*Creditor Nation*) Britain alone owed \$9 billion. America basically rebuilt Germany after WWI
- Tax cuts were possible since wartime spending decreased
- High consumer spending made up the market difference
- The policies of 3 Republican Presidents from 1922 onwards helped the industrial market

OTHER CAUSES OF PROSPERITY

- Mass production and Assembly line manufacture
- Hire-Purchase, first form of simple consumer credit
- Consumer culture promoted in mass media
 - Radio
 - Movies
 - Magazines

CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- Before the war, the US was firmly in the grip of “Progressives”
- After the war, the emphasis moved away from reforming society with others in mind to getting what you can for yourself
- First “me” generation
- Expressed in fashion, art and music

CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- New attitudes meant new challenges to tradition
- Fashions opened wide for women.
 - Short skirts, bare arms, bathing suits, bobbed hair and pants first made the fashion scene
- Men's fashions remained largely unchanged though more relaxed and brightly colored with some exaggerated features

FASHIONS OF THE 20'S

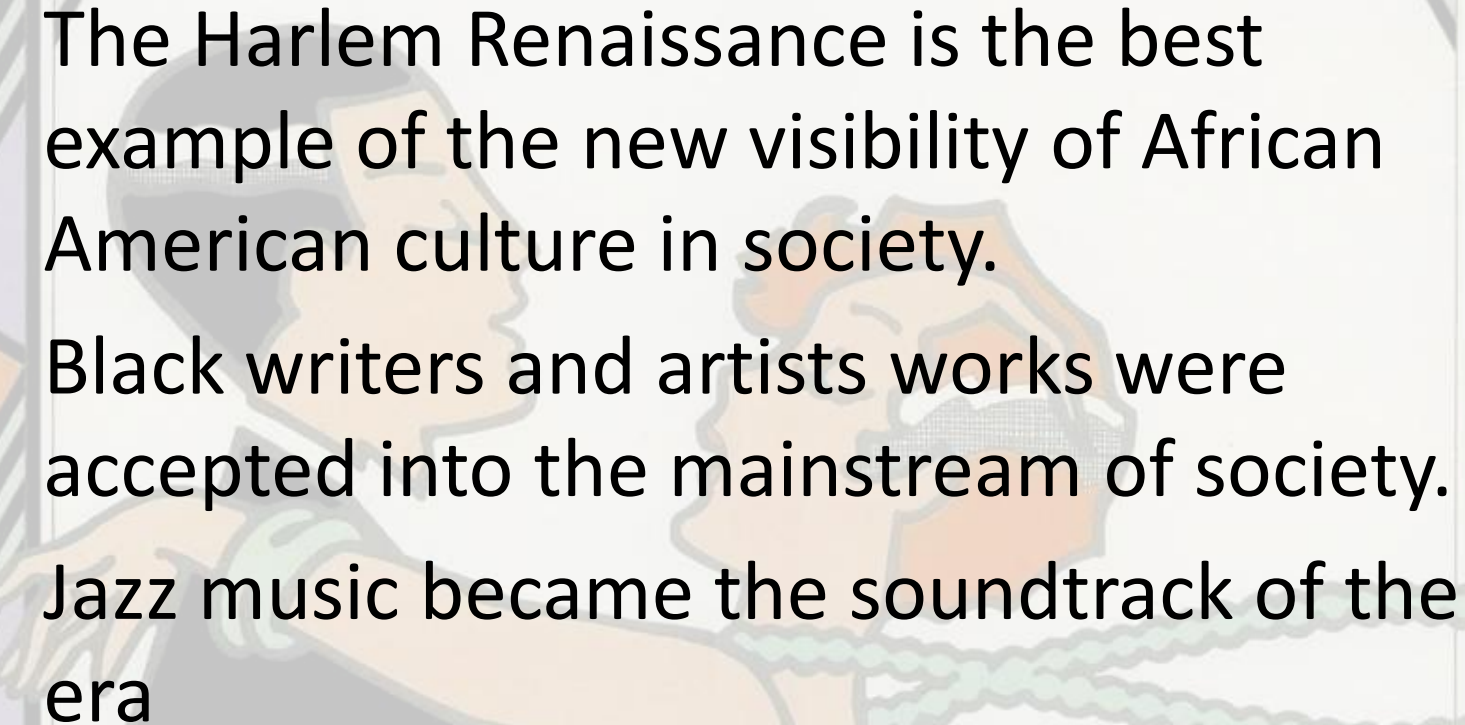


CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- Fashions were a reflection of new cultural freedoms
- 19th Amendment to the US Constitution guaranteed women the right to vote
- Women went to work in large numbers for the first time during the war
- This would remain a trend after the war as women moved from manufacturing to clerical positions

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CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- The Harlem Renaissance is the best example of the new visibility of African American culture in society.
 - Black writers and artists works were accepted into the mainstream of society.
 - Jazz music became the soundtrack of the era
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- A stylized, Art Deco-inspired illustration of a man and a woman in 1920s attire. The man is on the left, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a bow tie. The woman is on the right, wearing a light-colored dress with a dark belt and a large necklace. They are both looking towards the right. In the background, there are faint outlines of a piano keyboard and a saxophone. The overall style is graphic and modern, with bold lines and a limited color palette.

CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- Other changes in media included the exploding popularity of the movies and the rise of the movie star
- A secondary development from the movies was nationwide advertising which promoted nationwide product distribution and the first chain stores
- This trend was increased even more by the intensely popular radio programs

CULTURE IN TRANSFORMATION

- By the late 1920's
 - the movies had sound
 - More people lived in cities than in rural areas
 - Taboo topics were now common conversation
 - Cars were so affordable and reliable that one in every five Americans owned one
 - The “American Dream” of hard work earning you success, increasing wealth, a home and two cars was born.

NEW FREEDOMS - NEW FEARS

- Along with the prosperity and challenges to tradition, there was a darker side to the 1920's
- Communism in the Soviet union led to the Red Scare in the US
- Fears over Socialism, Communism and the old conflicts of Europe led to the rise of anti-immigration movements
- Economic competition in the Rural South led to the growth of the KKK
- Urban becomes the "standard" rural the "sub-standard"

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THOSE LEFT OUT

- **Farmers** did not prosper - new machines produced more which lowered prices.
- **Blacks** did not prosper - farmers laid them off. Many moved North looking for work.
- **Recent immigrants** did not prosper - they were given low paid jobs and lived in overcrowded conditions.
- **Workers in 'old' industries** (eg. mining, textiles) did not prosper - they were paid low wages and union movements were squashed.

PROBLEMS ON THE HORIZON

- 50% of American families earned less than \$2000 a year.
- American industry was producing too many goods.
- Credit was overextended to people who couldn't repay
- The booming Stock Market was weakened by Speculation – Short term gambling on and manipulation of stock prices