Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ HW#7 – 1920’s

Due Wed. 3/20/13

**Growth in the 1920s**

After the war, there was a two-year period of reduced economic activity called a ***recession.*** The returning soldiers came home and competed for jobs. Companies stopped making wartime goods. Many companies went bankrupt, or ran out of money, and many workers lost their jobs. Prices increased and people had difficulty paying for necessary goods and services.

After the recession, the economy became stronger. The economy grew throughout the decade. Between 1922 and 1929, the ***gross national product,*** or total value of goods and services produced in the United States, increased from $70 to $100 billion. This economic growth was caused by advances in technology. Electricity powered 70 percent of the factories in 1929, compared to 30 percent before World War I. Electricity was cheaper than steam power, so businesses lowered prices and increased profits.

Businesses hired specialists to study ways to manufacture goods more quickly. New work methods and scientific management helped workers produce more goods in the same amount of time. Costs were cut by increased ***productivity,*** or the amount of work each worker could do, and mass production. Henry Ford’s assembly line method was used in many industries.

Working conditions improved with new safety programs and health insurance coverage. Workers bought company stock and became loyal company employees. These new benefits, called welfare capitalism, discouraged workers from joining unions.

Because of the increase in the use of electricity, new appliances were invented. These new appliances made daily life easier for many Americans. More than half of all Americans had electricity by the 1920s. Refrigerators, stoves, vacuum cleaners, radios, and fans were manufactured. The demand for these items grew. As more were made, the cost for each item decreased, and more people could afford them. Household chores took less time with the new appliances. Americans benefited from more free time.

Many companies and corporations became national companies. They did business in many states across the nation. For example, the Ford, General Motors, and Chrysler corporations dominated the auto industry across the country. The Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company (also know as the A&P) owned more than 15,000 grocery stores all over the United States.

Advertising increased as companies looked for ways to sell more products. Propaganda techniques that began during the war were used to help persuade people to buy certain brands, or products made by certain companies. Newspapers and magazines sold advertising space, and radio stations sold commercial time.

Consumers, the people who purchase goods and services, used a new method of paying for goods called ***installment buying.*** People signed agreements to pay small, regular amounts over time until the goods they bought were completely paid for. This method helped people buy more goods.

**The Automobile Age**

Installment buying made large purchases possible. Many Americans bought cars that were paid for a small amount at a time each month until the debt was paid. Car ownership jumped from $8 million to $23 million during the 1920s. Car makers employed almost four million Americans. Most cars were manufactured in Detroit, Michigan.

In 1914 Henry Ford began to pay his workers higher wages. He paid $5 per day, which shocked other corporate leaders. His workers were happy, and he sold more cars. The more cars he sold, the cheaper they cost. As prices dropped and wages increased, more Americans could afford to buy cars. Many Americans could afford a Model T automobile. Other auto makers began to improve their cars, making them more comfortable and giving a choice of colors. Ford responded by making the Model A. It was an improvement of the Model T version and came in many colors. Auto manufacturers began to sell new models every year.

Because more Americans owned automobiles, roads, highways, gas stations, and rest stops were needed. New businesses opened up along the roads and highways. People began to travel farther and tourism increased. The increase in the demand for cars caused steel, rubber, and glass industries to grow. The oil industry began refining gasoline for cars. People moved out of cities and into the suburbs.

The 1920s was a decade of economic growth. However, many Americans did not share in the economic boom. The agriculture, coal mining, and railroad industries earned reduced profits during this time as trucks replaced railroads and electricity replaced coal.

The government had stopped buying wheat, corn, and other products to feed Allied forces and citizens. Europeans markets began to compete with American farmers again, causing profits to fall. Many American farmers lost their farms when they could no longer afford to stay in business. By 1929 the cost of living increased faster than wages. Nearly 75 percent of Americans were struggling to pay their living expenses.

**New Directions**

In May 1927, Charles Lindbergh did something no one had ever done before. He flew alone across the Atlantic Ocean in a single-engine plane named the *Spirit of St. Louis.* Lindbergh became famous overnight, with parades held in his honor in cities across the nation. The successful flight became front-page news, causing great excitement everywhere.

The Nineteenth Amendment was approved in 1920, giving women the right to vote. Women ran for public office. More women began working outside the home. Many women worked in jobs traditionally assigned to women, such as teaching and secretarial work. However, some women attended college and pursued careers traditionally held by men. More women continued working after they were married, but most married women stayed home to take care of their homes and families.

Women began to have more freedom. Many women were tired of their traditional roles and pushed for change. In magazines, the new “liberated” woman was pictured. She wore heavy makeup, a short, blunt haircut, and a short skirt. This ***flapper*** image shocked many people. Some believed that this behavior and the carefree attitude were wrong.

**Entertainment**

New trends spread quickly across the nation because of newspapers and radio. These forms of ***mass media*** made communicating with millions of people possible. Americans had more free time to spend reading newspapers and magazines and listening to the radio. People also went to movies and listened to records.

Movies made in Hollywood, California, became a big business. At first, movies were in black and white, not color. They were silent movies. The first talking motion picture was *The Jazz Singer* in 1927.

In the 1920s, people enjoyed listening to the radio and other leisure activities.

Families gathered around radios much like they gather around televisions today. There were programs of all kinds, including news, sports, concerts, music, mysteries, and comedies. Businesses paid radio stations for commercial time. Listening to sporting events on the radio and going to games became favorite activities. Sports stars became heroes. The game mah-jongg and crossword puzzles became popular. Dance marathons, contests, and the Miss America Pageant, which began in 1921, were also of great interest.

**The Jazz Age**

A new kind of music called jazz was the rage. People loved to dance to the blend of ragtime and blues. Jazz originated in the South from African American work songs and African music. People loved the new rhythms and melodies. The 1920s became known as the Jazz Age. Famous African American jazz musicians included Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Bessie Smith. White jazz musicians joined in and helped the audience for jazz music grow.

Harlem, an African American section of New York City, became the center for creative African American writers and artists. The Harlem Renaissance movement expanded African American culture. Many poets and writers helped African Americans develop a sense of pride in their heritage. At the same time, other writers and artists moved to Paris, France, searching for inspiration. Writers and artists who chose to move to other countries because they no longer shared American values were called ***expatriates.*** Famous American expatriates include the writers F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Sinclair Lewis.

**Prohibition**

People living outside of crowded cities believed American values and morals were declining. They felt that cities were filled with crime, corruption, and immoral behavior and wanted all Americans to return to family values, church, and tradition. Conflicts arose between traditionalists and those who desired change, affecting daily life.

The temperance movement, which began in the 1800s, was renewed in the 1920s. People who supported the temperance movement believed the values of American society would improve if alcohol was banned. In 1919 the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution was approved, banning the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcohol within the United States. The ban was called ***Prohibition.*** The Volstead Act was passed to enforce Prohibition.

Many Americans broke this law. Some people secretly made their own alcohol, called bathtub gin, at home. Others visited illegal bars or clubs called speakeasies, where alcohol was served. Bootleggers made millions of dollars making and selling illegal alcohol. There were not enough government agents to enforce the Prohibition laws.

Organized crime increased during Prohibition because making and selling alcohol illegally became very profitable for criminals. Organized crime leaders, such as Al Capone, used their illegal profits to influence some government officials, labor unions, and businesses.

Because Prohibition was impossible to enforce, it eventually ended. The Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution repealed, or canceled, Prohibition in 1933.

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences.**

**1.** How did electricity and technology lead to the economic boom of the 1920s?

**2.** What other industries profited from the manufacture of more automobiles? Why?

**3.** What changes did the 1920s bring for women?

**4.** What forms of entertainment did people enjoy in the 1920s?

**5.** What was the Harlem Renaissance?

**6.** What beliefs resulted in Prohibition laws?

Complete the following chart based on the above reading.

**Changes During the 1920s**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Values and Beliefs | Women’s Roles | Culture | Entertainment |
| 1.  2.  3.  4. | 1.  2.  3. | 1.  2.  3. | 1.  2.  3.  4. |