

Chapter Summary

The Jazz Age, 1921–1929

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How was social and economic life different in the early twentieth century from that of the late nineteenth century? How has the cultural identity of the United States changed over time?

This chapter discusses the postwar political scandals and the changing atmosphere in the post–World War I United States. This “boom” period brought about new technologies that spurred economic growth and cultural changes that shaped an era.

The Politics of the 1920s

- Harding’s administration was plagued by corruption scandals—the Forbes and the Teapot Dome.
- Harding died after less than three years as president; Coolidge became president.
- Government had limited interference in business.
- Most Americans became tired of European politics and favored isolationism.
- The Washington Conference brought eight major countries together to discuss disarmament.
- The Kellogg-Briand Pact and the Dawes Plan were the major achievements of Coolidge’s foreign policies.

A Growing Economy

- The Coolidge administration encouraged business growth.
- Henry Ford improved the moving assembly line for the Model T.
- Mass production created a wide range of consumer goods sold at low prices.
- Technology, such as autos, airplanes, and radios, led to new industries and economic growth.
- People had more disposable income and more leisure time.
- Mass advertising increased.

- Easy consumer credit was available, leading to greater consumer debt.
- While the middle class grew and quality of life improved for it, African Americans, Native Americans, and farmers were left out of the economic boom.

A Clash of Values

- Nativists and a new Ku Klux Klan targeted immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and African Americans.
- The government imposed new quotas on immigration.
- Young people and women gained more independence.
- Fundamentalists pushed for traditional values.
- Prohibition was implemented.

Cultural Innovations

- A new bohemian lifestyle and a new youth culture developed a new morality and allowed artists, writers, and musicians a greater freedom of expression.
- An increase in spending money and leisure time made radio shows, movies, and sports popular forms of entertainment.

African American Culture and Politics

- The Harlem Renaissance, a creative era for African American artists and writers, began.

Chapter Summary *Cont.*

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- Jazz and the blues became popular.
- A great migration during the war created a larger African American voting presence in Northern cities.
- The NAACP battled segregation and discrimination.
- The first African American from the North was elected to Congress.