

**1924**

Women governors elected in Wyoming and Texas

**1927**

Lindbergh makes first nonstop transatlantic flight

**1927**

Babe Ruth sets baseball's home-run record

**1927**

Ederle becomes first woman to swim English Channel

**1924****1926****1928****1930**

## 3 Society in the 1920s

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Describe changes in women's attitudes and roles in society during the 1920s.
- 2 Analyze the causes for population changes in American cities and suburbs.
- 3 Identify some of the heroes of the 1920s and explain their popularity.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: flapper; demographics; barrio.

#### Main Idea

The 1920s was a time of rapid social change, in which women, in particular, adopted new lifestyles and attitudes. Amid these changes many Americans admired heroes who embodied old-fashioned values.

#### Reading Strategy

**Formulating Questions** Write down three questions you might ask to help you better understand the social changes of the 1920s.

After the war ended and the nation prospered, the manners and attitudes of Americans were bound to change. A symbol of this shift was the **flapper**. The term described a new type of woman: young, rebellious, fun loving, and bold. One author depicted the flapper this way:

#### AMERICAN VOICES

“Breezy, slangy, and informal in manner; slim and boyish in form; covered in silk and fur that clung to her as close as onion skin; with carmined [vivid red] cheeks and lips, plucked eyebrows and close-fitting helmet of hair; gay, plucky and confident.”

—Preston Slosson,  
The Great Crusade and After, 1930

### Women's Changing Roles

Actually, the flapper represented only a tiny number of American women. Yet the symbol had a wide impact on fashion and manners. More than anything else, it stood for a longing to make a break with the past.

**The Flapper Image** Women of the 1920s preferred shorter dresses than those of their mothers. Hemlines rose from 6 inches above the ground in 1919 to knee-length or even higher by 1927. Dresses and blouses became much simpler. Amazingly, between 1913 and 1928, the average amount of fabric used to make a woman's outfit shrank from 19.5 yards to just 7 yards.

Women also discarded other symbols of the past. While their mothers had worn their hair long, young women “bobbed,” or cut short, their hair. Even the hat they preferred, the tight-fitting cloche, matched their helmet-shaped haircuts. They also began wearing makeup, which had once been considered a sign of immorality.

Women's manners changed along with their appearance. Before the 1920s, women rarely smoked or drank in public. By the end of the decade, many women were doing both. Between 1918 and 1928 the number of cigarettes produced in the United States more than doubled. Though men were smoking



Flappers defined a whole new style of dress.



more, too (many switching from cigars and pipes to cigarettes), a big part of the increase was due to the new woman smoker.

**Women Working and Voting** Despite the power of the flapper image, large numbers of young people did not rebel against traditions.

While many women had their hair bobbed and wore shorter skirts, some adopted the new styles because they were more convenient, not because they admired the flapper lifestyle.

Convenience was an issue for women who were moving into office, sales, service, and some professional jobs during the 1920s. Generally only single women could get jobs, and even then they held them only until they were married. If married women did go to work, they usually had to quit if they became pregnant.

For this and other reasons, employers seldom trained women for higher positions or paid them on the same scale as men. Women in leadership positions were few. Many hospitals refused to hire women doctors, and many law firms rejected women lawyers.

Like the situation of women at work, women's status in politics changed little. Although as of 1920 women could vote in national elections, they seldom did. One estimate suggested that only about 35 percent of all women voters went to the polls. When they did, their votes did not change politics as much as suffragists had hoped. In national elections especially, women voted in patterns similar to men. They seemed to have a noticeable impact, however, in local elections.

Still, women did begin to seek and win state and national political office. Jeannette Rankin of Montana had begun the trend when she was elected to the House of Representatives in 1916, becoming the first woman to serve in either house of Congress. Miriam A. Ferguson from Texas and Nellie Tayloe Ross of Wyoming, both wives of former governors, were elected governors themselves in 1924. By 1928, there were 145 women in 38 state legislatures. Thus, although women did not increase their political power as quickly as suffragists had hoped, they did lay a foundation for future participation in government.

## Cities and Suburbs

The 1920s saw demographic as well as social changes. **Demographics** are the statistics that describe a population, such as data on race or income. The major demographic change of the 1920s was a movement away from the countryside. During the decade some 6 million people moved from rural areas to the cities.

**African Americans in the North** As you read earlier, the passage of Jim Crow laws, as well as new job opportunities in the North, produced the Great Migration of blacks from the South to northern cities from the late 1800s through World War I. The industrial boom you read about in Section 2 further encouraged this demographic shift.

Throughout the early 1900s, jobs for African Americans in the South had been scarce and low-paying. Many factory jobs simply were closed to them. As industries expanded production during the 1920s, many new job opportunities opened up for African Americans in the North. In 1860, 93 percent of all African Americans lived in the South. By 1910, this had dropped very little, to 89 percent. By 1930, it had fallen far more, to 80 percent.

Yet the North was no promised land. African American factory workers often faced

### Main Idea CONNECTIONS

What types of social change did many women experience in the 1920s?

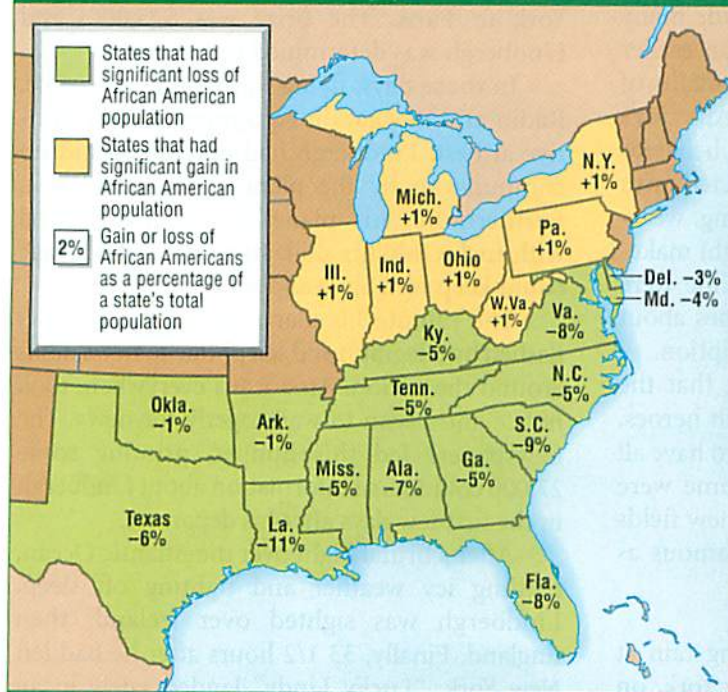


To celebrate the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, Alice Paul adds the "ratification star" to the flag of the National Woman's Party.

**Culture** Why do you think more women did not turn out to vote in the early 1920s?



## African American Migrations, 1890–1920



The migration of African Americans from the South to the North helped alter the populations of both regions. This family moved from the rural South to settle in Chicago in 1912. **Movement** Which states lost the largest percentages of their black populations?

anger and hatred from whites, who feared that migrants threatened their jobs and wages. African American women often had to work as household help for whites, at wages that kept them trapped in poverty.

**Other Migration** As you read, the nation's immigration laws were tightened in the 1920s. As the number of immigrants from Europe decreased, employers turned to immigrants from Mexico and Canada to fill low-paying jobs. The new immigration quotas did not apply to nations in the Americas.

In the West, Mexicans supplied this labor, migrating across the border to work on the farms of California and the ranches of Texas. In the Northeast, Canadians from the French-speaking province of Quebec traveled south to work in the paper mills, potato fields, and forests of New England and New York.

The migrants also took jobs in the cities. Los Angeles, for example, became a magnet for Mexicans and developed a distinct **barrio**, or Spanish-speaking neighborhood. New York also attracted Spanish-speakers—Puerto Ricans migrating in the hope of a better life in the United States.

**Growth of the Suburbs** One result of the movements of Americans in the 1920s was a huge increase in the size of American suburbs. Some suburban growth had taken place earlier, as cities built transportation systems that used electric trolleys, or railway cars, that ran on rails laid in or along streets. The trolleys allowed people to get from the suburbs to jobs and stores in the city quickly and cheaply.

When automobiles were introduced, electric trolleys lost passengers. Between 1916 and 1926, about 2,500 miles of trolley track were abandoned. Yet the loss of trolleys did not slow the growth of suburbs.

About 80 percent of the old trolley routes were soon replaced by bus lines. By the middle of the 1920s, about 70,000 buses were operating throughout the United States. The automobile extended transportation lines even farther.

New York City is a good example of demographic change during the 1920s. The number of residents decreased in Manhattan, the heart of the city. Meanwhile, one of the city's suburbs, Queens, saw its population double.



## American Heroes

The changing morals of the 1920s made many Americans hungry for the values of an earlier era. Their memories of the senseless brutality of World War I remained strong. In America's cities, they saw people indulging in behavior that had always been connected with immorality—smoking, drinking, wearing revealing clothing and bright make-up. The newspapers of the time were filled with sensational headlines about crimes and sins of every description.

It was no wonder, then, that the nation became fascinated with heroes, especially those who seemed to have all the virtues of the good old days. Some were sports stars. Others were experts in new fields such as aviation. None became as famous as “Lucky Lindy.”

**“Lucky Lindy”** The sky was drizzling rain at Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, on the morning of May 20, 1927. A 25-year-old Minnesotan, Charles Lindbergh, climbed into the cockpit of his specially built plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, and revved the engine. He had not slept much, but he did not dare wait any longer.

Two other teams were waiting on the airfield, hoping to be the first to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. The prize was \$25,000, and Lindbergh was determined to capture it.

In those days, flying was an infant science. Radio and navigation equipment were primitive at best. Lindbergh had no copilot and no computer to fly the plane so he could rest. Furthermore, his plane was heavily loaded with fuel. Only his skill, stamina, and courage could keep him alive and on course.

The minute his plane was aloft, the news flashed by telegraph and telephone to news desks around the nation. Americans everywhere took notice and began to wait eagerly for news. The newspapers fed this hunger, printing some 27,000 columns of information about Lindbergh in the first few days after his departure.

After a brutal flight over the Atlantic Ocean, battling icy weather and fighting off sleep, Lindbergh was sighted over Ireland, then England. Finally, 33 1/2 hours after he had left New York, “Lucky Lindy” landed safely in an airfield outside Paris.

America went wild with celebration. Lindbergh was brought home on a Navy cruiser, given the Congressional Medal of Honor, and honored with parades in every state in the nation.



Charles Lindbergh, pictured here with his *Spirit of St. Louis*, not only inspired the nation but also fostered the development of commercial aviation. **Culture** Why was the nation so hungry for heroes?





Yet despite this frenzy of hero-worship, Lindbergh remained modest and calm. He refused offers of millions of dollars in publicity fees. Fame and applause could not spoil him. To millions of Americans, Lindbergh was proof that the solid moral values of the old days lived on in the heartland of America.

**Amelia Earhart** Lindbergh's feat inspired later flyers, including Amelia Earhart, who in 1932 flew across the Atlantic alone. Three years later Earhart flew solo from Hawaii to California, a challenge that had resulted in the deaths of many aviators before her. In 1937, however, attempting to fly around the world, she disappeared somewhere in the Pacific Ocean.

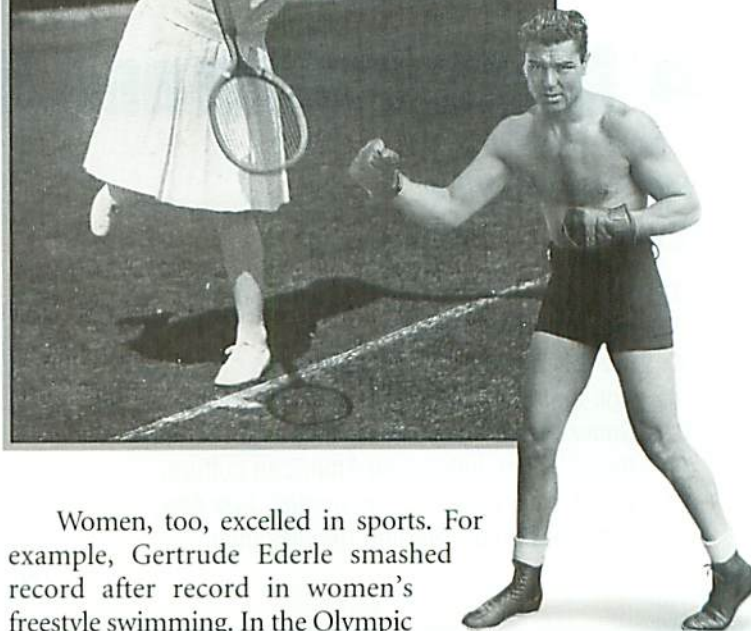
**Heroes of Sports** In general, the 1920s were a time when Americans began to enjoy sports as never before. A highly publicized fight between boxers Jack Dempsey and Georges Carpentier in 1921 broke the record for ticket sales, taking in \$1 million. Dempsey won the fight to become the heavyweight champion of the world and a new American hero.

Of all the heroes of the era, none generated more excitement than baseball legend George Herman "Babe" Ruth. Known as "the Sultan of Swat," Babe Ruth set records in hitting, pitching, and outfielding that stood for decades.

During his career, with the Boston Red Sox and then with the New York Yankees, Ruth hit 714 home runs, a record that was unbroken for nearly 40 years. In 1927 the champion enthralled Americans by setting the legendary record of 60 home runs in a 154-game season.



*Tennis star Helen Wills and boxing champion Jack Dempsey.*



Women, too, excelled in sports. For example, Gertrude Ederle smashed record after record in women's freestyle swimming. In the Olympic Games of 1924 she won a gold medal. In 1927 she became the first woman to swim the 35-mile-wide English Channel. Her time beat the men's record by nearly two hours.

Besides being eager spectators, more Americans began participating in sports. With more leisure time and with the mobility of automobiles, people took up golf, tennis, swimming, and other types of recreation.

## SECTION 3 REVIEW

### Comprehension

- 1. Key Terms** Define: (a) flapper; (b) demographics; (c) barrio.
- 2. Summarizing the Main Idea** In what ways did Americans react to the changing social values of the 1920s?
- 3. Organizing Information** Make a tree map entitled *Women in the 1920s*. On the first level, create categories labeled *Changes in Lifestyles*, *Women at Work*, and *Women in Politics*. Then fill in facts under each of these categories.

### Critical Thinking

- 4. Analyzing Time Lines** Refer to the time line at the start of the section. Choose three entries and explain the significance of each.
- 5. Recognizing Cause and Effect** How did the business boom of the 1920s affect the nation's demographics?

### Writing Activity

- 6. Writing an Expository Essay** Write a magazine article titled "The Roaring Twenties." Describe some of the trends and people who gave the 1920s this name.



**1920**  
Nation's first  
commercial radio station  
begins operation

**1922**  
Claude McKay's  
Harlem Shadows

**1923**  
Duke Ellington  
begins jazz  
career in New  
York City

**1924**  
George  
Gershwin's  
Rhapsody in Blue

**1925**  
F. Scott  
Fitzgerald's  
The Great Gatsby

**1926**  
Ernest Hemingway's  
The Sun Also Rises

**1920**

**1922**

**1924**

**1926**

## 4 Mass Media and the Jazz Age

### SECTION PREVIEW

#### Objectives

- 1 Analyze the impact of the growth of the nation's mass media.
- 2 Identify some of the major figures of the Jazz Age and other artistic figures of the 1920s.
- 3 Show how the Lost Generation and the Harlem Renaissance influenced American culture.
- 4 **Key Terms** Define: mass media; Jazz Age; Lost Generation; Harlem Renaissance.

#### Main Idea

Radio, movies, and jazz were some of the new forms of information, entertainment, and the arts that began in the 1920s. The decade was an especially creative period for music, art, and literature.

#### Reading Strategy

**Organizing Information** As you read, write down facts that will help you to define what the Jazz Age was. Then use your notes to write a one-sentence definition.



Lillian Gish  
worked in silent  
films and  
“talkies.”

Before 1900, few outside of Los Angeles had even heard of the dusty little suburb northwest of the city. It had been built by a prohibitionist, who hoped it would remain a dry town, free of drinking and bad behavior.

In the early 1900s, however, filmmakers moved into the little town. They were attracted by its sunny climate, its variety of landscapes from desert to snowy mountains, and the large work force available in the area.

Movies made the little town big. In time, its main avenue became a strip of expensive shops and bars. Stars drove the streets in luxurious imported cars, trailed by reporters.

By the 1920s, the whole nation knew about it. In fact, the whole world knew about it. Dusty little Hollywood had grown up.

### The Mass Media

Hollywood's new fame reflected a major trend of the 1920s. Before that time, the United

States had been largely a collection of regional cultures. Interests, tastes, and attitudes varied widely from one region to another. The majority of people simply did not travel about much, talk to those in other regions, or even read much of the same news as others.

The 1920s changed all that. Films, nationwide news gathering, and the new industry of radio broadcasting produced a truly national culture. Print and broadcast methods of communicating information to large numbers of people are known as the **mass media**.

**Movies** From their beginnings in the 1890s, motion pictures had been a wildly popular mass medium, and through the 1920s, people just kept coming. Between about 1910 and 1930, the number of theaters rose from about 5,000 to about 22,500. During the later part of the decade, the nation's theaters showed movies to 100 million Americans each week—at a time when the total population was less than 125 million. Movie making had become the fourth largest business in the country.

These growth figures are even more amazing in view of the fact that before 1927, movies