

# The Jazz Age Glossary

*The exuberant '20s were extraordinarily fertile years for language in America; dozens of new words and expressions sprang into existence. Much of the new verbiage was scornful of established ways; no less than half a dozen of the terms are roughly synonymous words meaning "nonsense." A partial list of terms that were coined or popularized in the decade appears below.*

**ALL WET**—wrong; arguing a mistaken notion or belief.

**APPLESAUCE**—a term of derogation; nonsense; same as baloney, bunk, banana oil, hokum and horsefeathers.

**BALONEY**—nonsense; same as applesauce, etc.

**BANANA OIL**—nonsense; same as above.

**BEE'S KNEES**—a superb person or thing.

**BELLY LAUGH**—a loud, uninhibited laugh.

**BERRIES**—anything wonderful; similar to bee's knees.

**BIBLE BELT**—an area in the South or south Midwest where Fundamentalist religion prevails (coined by H. L. Mencken).

**BLIND DATE**—a date with an unknown person of the opposite sex, usually arranged by a mutual friend.



*Dumb Dora*

county whose representative in Congress in 1820 explained the irrelevance of a speech he was making by saying that he was "talking to Buncombe").



*Drugstore Cowboy*

**CAKE-EATER**—a ladies' man.

**CARRY A TORCH**—to suffer from unrequited love.

**CAT'S MEOW**—anything wonderful; similar to bee's knees, berries.

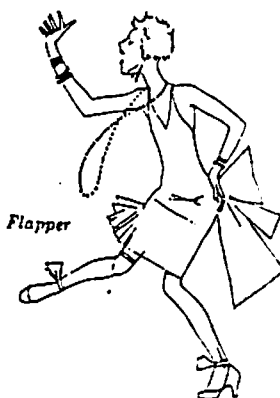
**CHEATERS**—eyeglasses.

**COPACETIC**—excellent.

**CRUSH**—an infatuation with a person of the opposite sex.

**DARB**—an excellent person or thing.

**DOGS**—human feet.



*Flapper*

**DRUGSTORE COWBOY**—a fashionably dressed idler who hangs around public places trying to pick up girls.

**DUMB DORA**—a stupid girl.

**FALL GUY**—a scapegoat.

**FLAPPER**—a typical young girl of the '20s, usually with bobbed hair, short skirts and rolled stockings.

**FLAT TIRE**—a dull, boring person.

**FRAME**—to cause a person's arrest by giving false evidence.

**GAM**—a girl's leg (from French dialect *gambe*).



*Big Cheese*

**GATECRASHER**—a person who attends a party without an invitation, or a show without paying admission.

**GIGGLE WATER**—an alcoholic drink.

**GIN MILL**—a speak-easy.

**GOLD DIGGER**—a woman who uses feminine charm to extract money from a man.

**GOOFY**—silly.

**GYP**—to cheat (from *gypsy*).

**HARD-BOILED**—tough; without sentiment.

**HEEBIE-JEEBIES**—the jitters.

**HEP**—wise.

**BIG CHEESE**—an important person.

**BRONX CHEER**—a loud derisive noise from an audience (coined by the humorist Bugs Baer, who credited Bronx rooters at athletic events with inventing this mode of expression).

**BULL SESSION**—an informal group discussion.

**BUMP OFF**—to murder.

**BUNK**—nonsense; same as applesauce, etc. (a shortened form of *bunkum*, which is also spelled *buncombe*, from the name of a North Carolina

LINE—insincere flattery.

KISSER—the mouth.

KIDDO—a familiar form of address.

KEEN—attractive; appealing.

JALOPY—an old car.

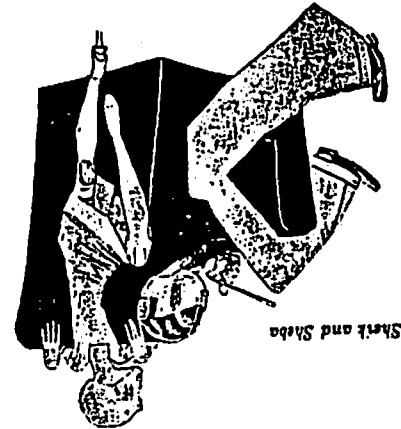
"Everything's jake".

JAKE—okay (most commonly used in the phrase

HOTSY-TOTSY—pleasing.

sauce, etc.

HORSEFEATHERS—nonsense; same as apple-



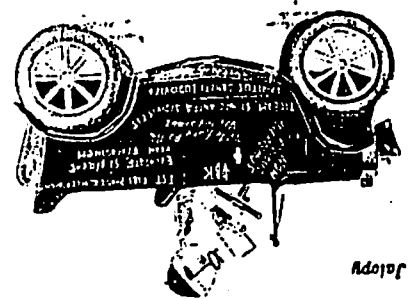
Sheik and Sheba

HOOFER—chorus girl.

liquor.

HOOCH—bootleg liquor (from Hoochinoo, a tribe of Alaskan Indians who made distilled

HOKUM—nonsense; same as applesauce, etc.



Jalopy

HIGH-HAT—to snub.

SCREWY—crazy; eccentric.

SCRAM—to leave hurriedly (from scramble).

especially in response to a request.

RUN-AROUND—deceptive or delaying action,

did not adulterate his liquor).

REAL MCCOY, THE—the genuine article (the Scottish clan leader named MacKay; a boxer named Kid McCoy, who had a rival with the same name, or a bootlegger named McCoy who

RITZY—elegant (from Ritz, the Paris hotel).

KASPBERRY—same as Bronx cheer.

PUSHOVER—a person or thing easily overcome.

PINCH—to arrest.

PET—same as neck.

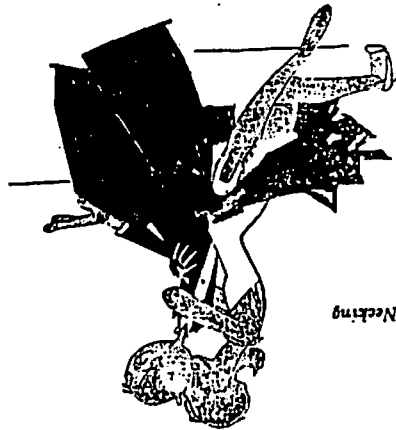
PEPPY—full of vitality.

OSSIFIED—drunk.

speaker's disgust.

NEETS (NUTS)—an interjection expressing the

NECK—to caress intimately.



Neck and Neck

town or city.

MAIN DRAG—the most important street in a

LOUSY—bad; contemptible.

eater.

LOUNGE LIZARD—a ladies' man; same as cake-

SEX APPEAL—physical attractiveness to mem-

SHEBA—a young woman with sex appeal.

SHEIK—a young man with sex appeal.

SMELLER—the nose.

SOB SISTER—a woman reporter who leans toward sentimentality in the treatment of her subject matter.

SPEAK-EASY—a saloon or bar selling bootleg whiskey.

SPIFFY—having an elegantly fashionable appearance.

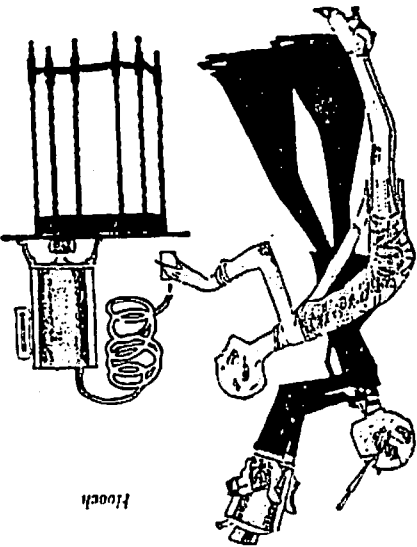
SPIFFLICATION—drunk.

STRUGGLE BUGGY—a car (from its use as a place in which boys tried to seduce girls).

STUCK ON—having a crush on.

SWANKY—rifty.

SWELL—marvelous.



Whoopee

TOKPELO—a hired gunman.

UPCHUCK—to vomit.

WHOOPEE—boisterous, convivial fun.