The 1920s saw the culmination of fifty years of rapid American industrialization. New products seemed to burst from American production lines with the potential for revolutionizing American life. Other products that had previously been toys for the rich were now available to a majority of Americans. The standard of living increased as the economy grew stronger and stronger. The results were spectacular. The America of 1929 was vastly different from the America of 1919.

The automobile was first and foremost among these products. The practices of Henry Ford made these “horseless carriages” affordable to the American masses. Widespread use of the automobile ushered in changes in work patterns and leisure plans. A host of support industries were launched. Dating customs and education were changed by the automobile. Radio usage brought further changes. For the first time, a national popular culture was supplanting regional folkways. Americans across the continent were sharing the same jokes, participating in the same fads, and worshiping the same heroes. Housework was reduced with the introduction of labor saving devices. As a result, leisure time was increased.

The bleak outlook and large sacrifices of the wartime era were now a part of the past. Young Americans were looking to cut loose and have a good time. Prohibition did not end alcohol usage. The subculture of the speakeasy kept the firewater flowing. Organized crime flourished as gangland violence related to bootlegged liquor plagued America’s cities. “Flapper” women strove to eliminate double standard values. Young females engaged in behaviors previously reserved for men, including smoking and drinking. Sigmund Freud’s assertion that sexuality was merely a natural instinct brought down more barriers as young Americans delved into promiscuity. The Harlem Renaissance brought a new form of entertainment. The sounds of jazz bands had appeal that transcended African American audiences, as thousands flocked to hear the new sounds.

The 1920s ushered in more lasting changes to the American social scene than any previous decade. Escapism loomed large as many coped with change by living in the present and enjoying themselves. The economic boom that unleashed the transformation and its consequences made the Roaring Twenties an era to remember.
Reading and Assignments

In this unit, students will:
- Complete four lessons in which they will learn about the 1920s, journaling and answering discussion questions as they read.
- Define vocabulary words.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Leading Ideas

Man’s discoveries and understanding will never outweigh God’s ultimate wisdom.

Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
— Proverbs 3:7

Children and young people should be teachable and open to instruction.

A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
— Proverbs 13:1

Happiness and success is not found in the gathering of wealth.

For to the one who pleases him God has given wisdom and knowledge and joy, but to the sinner he has given the business of gathering and collecting, only to give to one who pleases God. This also is vanity and a striving after wind.
— Ecclesiastes 2:26

Vocabulary

**Lesson 1:**
- assembly line
- vulcanize
- cuisine
- licensure

**Lesson 2:**
- profiteer
- “turf wars”
- bootlegging

**Lesson 3:**
- dispossessed
- disenfranchisement
- acrimonious
- proximity

**Lesson 4:**
- none

Key People, Places, and Events

- Henry Ford
- Federal Highway Act of 1921
- The Eighteenth Amendment
- Prohibition
- Volstead Act
- Al Capone
- The Harlem Renaissance
- Langston Hughes
- Harlem's Cotton Club
- Duke Ellington
- Bessie Smith
- Billie Holiday
- Jelly Roll Morton
- Louis Armstrong
- Claude McKay
- Jean Toomer
- Zora Neale Hurston
- Paul Robeson
- Frank Conrad
- Guglielmo Marconi
- The Federal Radio Commission
- The Radio Corporation of America
- National Broadcasting Company
Lesson One

History Overview and Assignments

The Age of the Automobile

Perhaps no invention affected American everyday life in the 20th century more than the automobile.

Vocabulary

- assembly line
- vulcanize
- cuisine
- licensure

Key People, Places, and Events

- Henry Ford
- Federal Highway Act of 1921

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *The Age of the Automobile*.
- Narrate about today's reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Do additional research on Henry Ford and be prepared to share what you learned.
- Do additional research on the assembly line and its effects on business. Be prepared to share what you learned.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Discussion Questions

1. According to today's article, what invention affected American life in the 20th century more than any other?
2. What were some of the beneficial economic results of the invention and use of the automobile?
3. What were some of the business "casualties" that resulted due to the invention and use of the automobile?
4. How was cuisine transformed by the automobile?
5. What was the difference in the approach to mass transit in Europe and America?
6. List some of the effects of the automobile on society.

A 1933 Duesenberg Model J Derham Tourster parked at the Sofiero Classic car show at Sofiero castle in Helsingborg, Sweden. This car was popular for Sunday cruising.
Modern: Middle School
Unit 16: The Decade that Roared

Portrait of Henry Ford, circa 1919

Although the technology for the automobile existed in the 19th century, it took Henry Ford to make the useful gadget accessible to the American public. Ford employed the idea of the assembly line for automobile manufacturing. He paid his workers an unprecedented $5 a day when most laborers were bringing home $2, hoping that it would increase their productivity. Furthermore, they might use their higher earnings to purchase a new car.

To keep automobile prices low, Ford reduced options, even stating that the public could choose whatever color car they wanted—so long as it was black. The Model T sold for $490 in 1914, about one quarter the cost of the previous decade. By 1920, there were over 8 million registrations. The 1920s saw tremendous growth in automobile ownership, with the number of registered drivers almost tripling to 23 million by the end of the decade.

Economic Spin-offs

The growth of the automobile industry caused an economic revolution across the United States. Dozens of spin-off industries blossomed. Of course the demand for vulcanized rubber skyrocketed. Road construction created thousands of new jobs, as state and local governments began funding highway design.

The famous Ford 999 Racer, 1902 was the first car to rise to legend status. On display at the Henry Ford Museum, this photograph by Michael Barera, was released under the Creative Commons Attribution license.

Even the federal government became involved with the Federal Highway Act of 1921. Gas stations began to dot the land, and mechanics began to earn a living fixing the inevitable problems. Oil and steel were two well-established industries that received a serious boost by the demand for automobiles. Travelers on the road needed shelter on long trips, so motels (motor
hotels) began to line the major long-distance routes.

Even cuisine was transformed by the automobile. The quintessential American foods—hamburgers, French fries, milk shakes, and apple pies—were hallmarks of the new roadside diner. Drivers wanted cheap, relatively fast food so they could be on their way in a hurry. Unfortunately, as new businesses flourished, old ones decayed. When America opted for the automobile, the nation’s rails began to be neglected. As European nations were strengthening mass transit systems, individualistic Americans invested in the automobile infrastructure.

**Effects of the Automobile**

The social effects of the automobile were as great. Freedom of choice encouraged many family vacations to places previously impossible. Urban dwellers had the opportunity to rediscover pristine landscapes, just as rural dwellers were able to shop in towns and cities. Teenagers gained more and more independence with driving freedom.

Americans experienced traffic jams for the first time, as well as traffic accidents and fatalities. Soon demands were made for licensure and safety regulation on the state level. Despite the drawbacks, Americans loved their cars. As more and more were purchased, drivers saw their worlds grow much larger.
Lesson Two

History Overview and Assignments

The Fight Against “Demon Rum”

Saloons were closed, bottles were smashed, and kegs were split wide open. When the states ratified the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages was outlawed. Many Protestant ministers and progressive politicians rejoiced and proclaimed a holier and safer America. It was predicted that worker productivity would increase, families would grow closer, and urban slums would disappear. Yet for all its promise, Prohibition was repealed fourteen years later, after being deemed a dismal failure.

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: The Fight Against “Demon Rum.”
- Narrate about today’s reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Make a chart with two columns. In one column, list the advantages to prohibition. In the other column, list the disadvantages to prohibition.
- Visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.

Vocabulary

- profiteer
- “turf wars”
- bootlegging

An allegorical 1874 political cartoon print, which somewhat unusually shows temperance campaigners (alcohol prohibition advocates) as virtuous armored women warriors (riding sidesaddle), wielding axes Carrie-Nation-style to destroy barrels of Beer, Whisky, Gin, Rum, Brandy, Wine and Liquors, under the banners of “In the name of God and humanity” and “Temperance League”
Key People, Places, and Events

| Prohibition | Volstead Act | Al Capone | The Eighteenth Amendment |

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the term “prohibition.”
2. What was the purpose of the Volstead Act? Was it successful?
3. Who profited the most from prohibition?
4. How was the 18th Amendment different from previous changes to the Constitution?
5. Do you believe that “social engineering” is effective?
6. What issues in our society today might be considered by some to be efforts at “social engineering”?

Advantages to Prohibition

Disorderliness caused by drunkenness became a serious problem during the second half of the nineteenth century, and temperance organizations finally gained enough support to establish the prohibition of alcohol manufacture and sale with the Eighteenth Amendment, passed in 1919.

There were advantages to Prohibition. Social scientists are certain that actual consumption of alcohol actually decreased during the decade. Estimates indicate that during the first few years of Prohibition, alcohol consumption declined to a mere third of its pre-war level. Health records indicate a decrease in alcoholism and alcohol-related diseases such as cirrhosis of the liver. Family savings increased during the decade, but it was difficult to determine whether the increase was due to decreased alcohol consumption or a robust economy.

Disadvantages to Prohibition

Despite these advantages, the minuses seemed to outweigh the pluses. First, Federal allocation of funds to enforce Prohibition were woefully inadequate. Gaping loopholes in the Volstead Act, the law implemented to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment, encouraged abuse. Alcohol possession was permitted for medical purposes, and production of small amounts was permitted for home use. The manufacturing of “near beer”—regular beer without the alcohol—was also permitted. The problem was that to make near beer, it was first necessary to brew the real variety, so illegal breweries could insist their product was scheduled to have the alcohol removed. Soon a climate of lawlessness swept the nation, as Americans everywhere began to partake in illegal drink. Every city had countless speakeasies, which were not-so-secret bars hidden from public view.
While the number of drinkers may have decreased, the strength of the beverages increased. People drank as much as they could as fast as they could to avoid detection. Because alcoholic production was illegal, there could be no regulation. Desperate individuals and heartless profiteers distilled anything imaginable, often with disastrous results. Some alcohol sold on the black market caused nerve damage, blindness, and even death. While women of the previous generation campaigned to ban alcohol, the young women of the twenties consumed it with a passion.

Organized Crime
The group that profited most from the illegal market was organized crime. City crime bosses such as Al Capone of Chicago sold their products to willing buyers and even intimidated unwilling customers to purchase their illicit wares. Crime involving turf wars among mobsters was epidemic. Soon the mobs forced legitimate businessmen to buy protection, tainting those who tried to make an honest living. Even city police took booze and bribes from the likes of Al Capone. After several years of trying to connect Capone to bootlegging, federal prosecutors were able to convict him for income tax evasion.

The Eighteenth Amendment was different from all previous changes to the Constitution. It was the first experiment at social engineering. Critics pointed out that it was the only amendment to date that restricted rather than increased individual rights. Civil liberties advocates considered prohibition an abomination. In the end, economics doomed Prohibition. The costs of ineffectively policing the nation were simply too high. At the deepest point of the Great Depression, government officials finally ratified the Twenty-First Amendment, repealing the ban on alcohol once and for all.
The artists of the Harlem Renaissance undoubtedly transformed African American culture. But the impact on all American culture was equally strong.

Zora Neale Hurston  
Jean Toomer

**Reading and Assignments**

- Review the discussion questions and vocabulary, then read the article: *The Harlem Renaissance*.
- Narrate about today’s reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Define the vocabulary words in the context of the reading and put the word and its definition in the vocabulary section of your history notebook.
- Choose an author or musician involved in the Harlem Renaissance and do additional research on him or her. Be prepared to share what you learned.
- Visit [www.ArtiosHCS.com](http://www.ArtiosHCS.com) for additional resources.

**Discussion Questions**

1. Why was the Harlem Renaissance significant to African American culture specifically and to American culture in general?
2. Describe the Harlem Renaissance.
3. What type of music gained popularity during the Harlem Renaissance?
African Americans had endured centuries of slavery and the struggle for abolition, but the end of bondage had not brought the promised land many had envisioned. Instead, white supremacy had been quickly, legally, and violently restored to the New South, where ninety percent of African Americans lived. Starting in about 1890, African Americans migrated to the North in great numbers. This great migration eventually relocated hundreds of thousands of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North. Many discovered they had shared common experiences in their past histories and their uncertain present circumstances. Instead of wallowing in self-pity, the recently dispossessed ignited an explosion of cultural pride. Indeed, African American culture was reborn in the Harlem Renaissance.

**The Great Migration**

The Great Migration began because of a “push” and a “pull.” Disenfranchisement and Jim Crow laws mandating segregation led many African Americans to hope for a new life up north. Hate groups and hate crimes cast alarm among African American families of the Deep South. The promise of owning land had not materialized. Most blacks toiled as sharecroppers, or tenant farmers, trapped in an endless cycle of debt. In the 1890s, a boll weevil blight damaged the cotton crop throughout the region, increasing the despair. All these factors served to push African Americans to seek better lives. The booming northern economy forged the pull. Industrial jobs were numerous, and factory owners looked near and far for sources of cheap labor.

Unfortunately, northerners did not welcome African Americans with open arms. While the legal systems of the northern states were not as obstructionist toward African American rights, the prejudice among the populace was as acrimonious. White laborers complained that African Americans were flooding the employment market and lowering wages. Most new migrants found themselves segregated in run down urban slums. The largest of these was Harlem. Writers, actors, artists, and musicians gathered there, where they glorified African American traditions and at the same time created new ones.

**Writers and Actors**

The most prolific writer of the Harlem Renaissance was Langston Hughes. Hughes cast off the influences of white poets and wrote with the rhythmic meter of blues and jazz. Claude McKay urged African Americans to stand up for their rights in his powerful verses. Jean Toomer wrote plays and short stories, as well as poems, to capture the spirit of his times. Book publishers soon took notice and patronized many of these talents. Zora Neale Hurston was noticed quickly with her moving novel, “Their Eyes Were Watching God.” Music met prose in the form of musical comedy. The 1921 production of *Shuffle Along* is
sometimes credited with initiating the movement. Actor Paul Robeson electrified audiences with his memorable stage performances.

Langston Hughes

**Musicians**

No aspect of the Harlem Renaissance shaped America and the entire world as much as jazz. This musical form flouted many musical conventions with its syncopated rhythms and improvised instrumental solos. Thousands of city dwellers flocked night after night to see the same performers. Improvisation meant that no two performances would ever be the same. Harlem’s Cotton Club boasted the talents of Duke Ellington. Singers such as Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday popularized blues and jazz vocals. Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong drew huge audiences as white Americans as well as African Americans caught jazz fever.

The continuing hardships faced by African Americans in the Deep South and the Urban North were severe. It took the environment of the new American city to bring in close proximity some of the greatest talents of the day. Harlem brought notice to great works that might otherwise have been lost or never produced. The results were phenomenal. The artists of the Harlem Renaissance undoubtedly transformed African American culture. But the impact on all American culture was equally strong. For the first time, white America could not look away.

Star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame at 6535 Hollywood Blvd.
Regional differences in America began to dissolve as the country was able to listen to the same radio programming simultaneously. Americans throughout the country listened to the same sporting events and took up the same fads. A mass national entertainment culture was flowing.

This caricature of a "ward heeler" politician haranguing voters by radio, is from the cover of a 1922 American radio magazine. In 1922 radio was a revolutionary new technology. AM radio transmission only became widespread with the availability of amplifying vacuum tubes after WW1, and broadcasting had suddenly sprung up two year earlier, in 1920.

Key People, Places, and Events

Frank Conrad
Guglielmo Marconi
The Federal Radio Commission
The Radio Corporation of America
National Broadcasting Company

Discussion Questions

1. Describe the beginnings of commercial radio in the United States.
2. What were some of the effects of radio on American society?

Reading and Assignments

- Review the discussion questions then read the article: Radio Fever.
- Narrate about today’s reading using the appropriate notebook page. Be sure to answer the discussion questions and include key people, events, and dates within the narration.
- Be sure to visit www.ArtiosHCS.com for additional resources.
Commercial radio in America had humble beginnings. Frank Conrad, an engineer for Westinghouse, set up an amateur radio station above his garage in a Pittsburgh suburb. Since the wireless technology was developed by Guglielmo Marconi in the late 19th century, thousands of enthusiasts across the world experimented with the new toy. After World War I, Conrad began broadcasting a variety of programming from his "station." High school music groups performed, phonograph records were played, and news and baseball scores were reported. Conrad had dramatically improved the transmitter, and soon hundreds of people in the Pittsburgh area were sending requests for air time. The bosses of Westinghouse knew that Conrad was on to something and convinced him to make his hobby commercially profitable.

KDKA on the Air

On the night of November 2, 1920, Conrad and his Westinghouse associates announced that Warren G. Harding had defeated James Cox to become the next president. The message was heard as far north as New Hampshire and as far south as Louisiana. The federal government granted the call letters KDKA to the Pittsburgh station, and a new industry was born. For nearly a year, KDKA monopolized the airwaves. But competition came fast and furious; by the end of 1922, there were over 500 such stations across the United States. The federal government exercised no regulation over the budding enterprise, and the result was complete chaos. Stations fought over call letters and frequencies, each trying to out-broadcast the closest competitor. Finally in 1927, Congress created the Federal Radio Commission to restore order.

Ad Time

One of the great attractions to the radio listener was that once the cost of the original equipment was covered, radio was free. Stations made money by selling air time to advertisers. The possibility of reaching millions of listeners at once had advertising executives scrambling to take advantage. By the end of the decade, advertisers paid over $10,000 for an hour of premium time.

The Radio Corporation of America added a new dimension to the venture in 1926. By licensing telephone lines, RCA created America’s first radio network and called it the National Broadcasting Company, or NBC. For the first time, citizens of California and New York could listen to the same programming simultaneously. Regional differences began to dissolve as the influence of network broadcasting ballooned. Americans throughout the country listened to the same sporting events and took up the same fads.
Baseball games and boxing matches could now reach those far away from the stadiums and arenas. A mass national entertainment culture was flowering.

An advertisement for the RCA Radiola AR-812 radio, the first commercially produced superheterodyne radio receiver.

The superheterodyne receiver circuit, used in virtually all modern radios, was invented by US engineer Edwin Armstrong in 1918 during World War I. The rights were purchased by RCA, and the AR-812 medium wave receiver was released March 4, 1924. It used 6 UV-199 triodes: a mixer, a local oscillator, two IF and two audio amplifier stages, with an IF of 45 kHz, and was priced at $289 with tubes and horn speaker, and $220 without. It was built to be semi-portable, with compartments for the batteries in back and a handle on top, although it weighed 30 lbs. without batteries. The two large knobs are the input and local oscillator tuning, they had to be adjusted in tandem. They had blank cardboard dials, so users could mark the positions of stations on them. The small knobs adjust the filament current. Its superior sensitivity and selectivity compared to competing receivers made it a commercial success. There are many reports of transcontinental and transoceanic reception. In an apparent attempt to prevent competitors “reverse-engineering” it, the innards were encased in solid wax.