

*THE WAY WE SAW IT*

# THE ROARING TWENTIES

IN ILLUSTRATION AND ART

A Teacher's  
Resource Booklet

with Lesson Plans and Reproducible  
Student Activity Assignments



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# Introduction

## The Decade of the Twenties

The 1920s are often thought of as “the Jazz Age,” or sometimes as “the Roaring Twenties.” (That last phrase, of course, is also the name of this booklet.) And the decade did seem to be one of high spirits and carefree confidence. A more contented America turned away from the problems of the world and enjoyed its new automobile-driven prosperity. A consumer culture emerged, along with what appeared to be a more relaxed view of life and its pleasures.

Yet beneath the surface, a troubled and tense mood can also be detected. Traditional values regarding religion and personal morality clashed, at times in dramatic ways, with a more cosmopolitan outlook. At the same time, many older groups of Americans seemed to become less welcoming toward the new immigrants who had entered the nation by the millions before World War I. Racial tensions were high as well. And the prosperity of the 1920s affected many groups unevenly. It helped to create a huge new middle class; but it also left many behind in deep poverty.

The twelve illustrations in this booklet do not neglect the optimism of the 1920s. But they also highlight many of the tensions of the decade. The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic in the overall story of “the Roaring Twenties.” Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

### **The Jazz Age**

The illustrations in this lesson touch on several aspects of life in the 1920s that helped the decade earn its reputation as a time of new ideas, cultural change and adventurous individualism.

### **An Uneven Prosperity**

The mass production of automobiles was at the heart of the prosperity that helped fuel the dynamic consumer capitalism of the 1920s. The images in this lesson suggest the breadth of this prosperity, along with its limits.

### **Cultural Conflict in a Time of Change**

The cultural clashes of the age are summed up in the illustrations in this lesson, which focus attention on the social, religious, ethnic, and racial conflicts of the decade.

### **Politics in a Satisfied Age**

The deepest conflicts of the day were not often dealt with openly in the political arena. For the most part, citizens were content. They had their doubts about how much political leaders could accomplish. And they seemed to prefer to keep government limited. These are the themes touched on by the illustrations in this lesson.



## Using Photos, Cartoons and Other Visuals to Teach History

Most textbooks today are full of colorful visuals. But all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. But only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

## How to Use this Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

**A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET** This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

**CD-ROM WITH IMAGES** The ImageXaminer allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions. The CD-ROM also includes a folder containing all of the discussion questions and follow-up questions in pdf format. All of the images are also in pdf format, should you wish to create overhead transparencies.

### **DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS FOR EACH ILLUSTRATION**

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the images in the ImageXaminer. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small group or all-class activities.

## The Roaring Twenties

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### OBJECTIVES FOR THIS LESSON:

1. Students will better understand the cultural and social changes in the 1920s that most helped to get the decade labeled as “the Jazz Age.”
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# The Jazz Age

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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### BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:

#### Illustration 1

This cartoon celebrates the final achievement of voting rights for women in 1920, when the 19th Amendment was ratified. This was mainly a victory of the pre-war reform era. Few of the women who helped win that victory were as “modern” or stylish as the woman in this cartoon. This female figure seems to fit in more with the social changes of the 1920s. That decade’s growing consumer economy began to offer women much more social and personal freedom. In this sense, the cartoon portrays the start of a new cultural era, as well as a triumph for women’s rights.

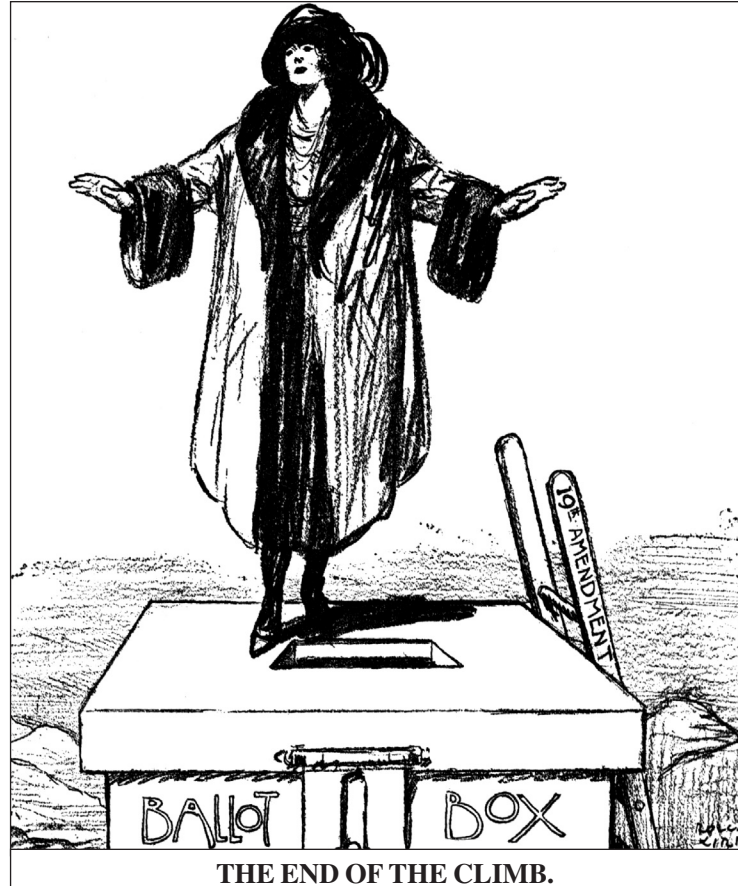
#### Illustration 2

The 1920s are often called “the Jazz age.” This *Life* magazine cover is one small example of what that phrase meant. The cover shows a carefree and stylish couple dancing the Charleston. Economic good times, jazz, cars, illegal liquor and speakeasies, less strict attitudes about relations between men and women — all these and more helped make the 1920s seem a more relaxed, more fun-loving time. Whether it actually was or not is a debatable issue. But in those prosperous years, ads, movies, music and other media did seem to appeal more to people’s wants and desires, and less to tradition or to a sense of self-restraint.

#### Illustration 3

In the 1920s, newspapers, mass-circulation magazines, and radio brought news and ideas about the world into people’s living rooms to a far greater degree than ever before. Fads, changing styles, and all sorts of popular celebrities could catch the nation’s attention rapidly. Among the popular figures of the age, a number seem to have become heroes almost overnight. Some were larger-than-life sports heroes, such as Babe Ruth. Others were movie stars, such as Rudolph Valentino. Or they were lone adventurers, such as Charles Lindbergh. Perhaps such heroes filled a need that people felt in an age when factories and offices were actually becoming larger and more tightly organized than ever before. In any case, Lindbergh and these other figures captured the spirit of personal independence that was so strong in those years.

## Illustration 1



Rollin Kirby/*The World*

### **Discussing the Illustration**

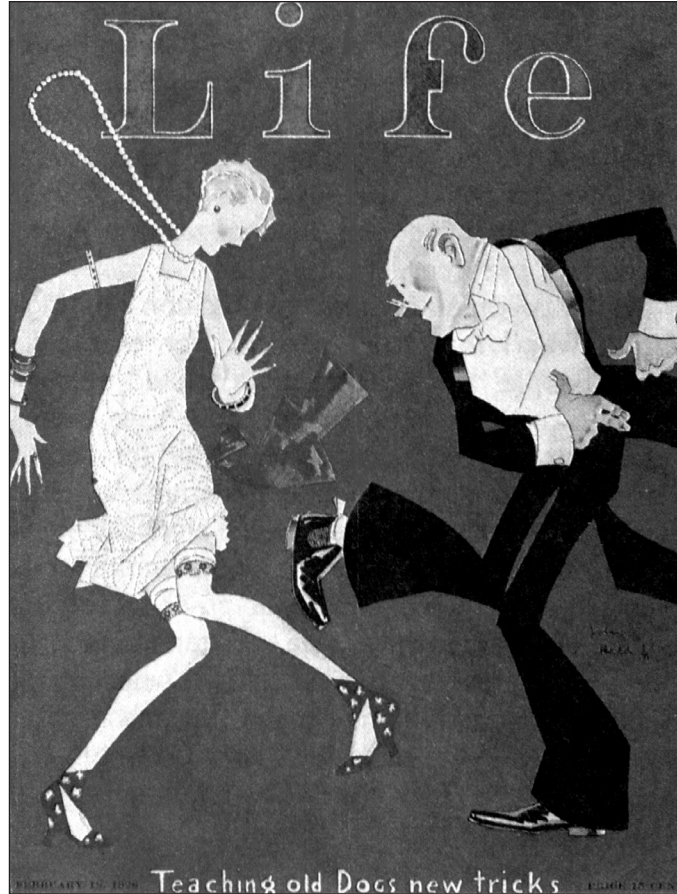
1. This cartoon shows a woman on top of a large box. She has just climbed up onto this box using a ladder labeled “19th Amendment.” The 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920. What is meant here by the word “Amendment,” and what does it mean to say that an Amendment has been ratified?
2. How did the 19th Amendment change the U.S. Constitution? Does this cartoon appear to be in favor of that change or against it? Explain your answer. What is the meaning of the cartoon’s caption?
3. This cartoon is from 1920. What about the cartoon helps to show that it is from the 1920s? Aside from showing the right to vote, does the cartoon suggest any other changes in the way women lived or in the way society viewed them in the 1920s?
4. Do you think those changes in the lives of most women were mainly for the good? Why or why not?

### **Follow-up Activities**

1. Look through your U.S. history textbook or some other general U.S. history text. Find references to several women who were in the news or were important historical figures in the 1920s. Read more about one of these women. Then pretend you are this woman, and write a letter to the editor of the newspaper that printed the cartoon. In your letter, explain what you do and/or do not like about the cartoon. Also try to explain how you think the issue dealt with in the cartoon has and will affect your own life.
2. Use your library to find old news magazines from the first few decades of the 20th century. Or look for books on the history of these years, especially the history of fashions and advertising. Choose some ads from 1900 to 1920 that include pictures of women. Then choose some ads from the 1920s that also include pictures of women. In class, share these ads and use them in a discussion about this cartoon.

## Lesson 1 — The Jazz Age

### Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### **Discussing the Illustration**

1. This *Life* magazine cover is from the year 1926. The 1920s are often called “the Jazz Age.” What do you think this phrase means? How does this cover of *Life* help to explain what the label “the Jazz Age” means and why it was used for the 1920s?
2. What do the styles of dress and behavior here show about life in the 1920s? From what you know about U.S. history, how does this differ from what life in general was like just before the 1920s?
3. The caption for this magazine cover is “Teaching Old Dogs New Tricks.” What do you suppose the story accompanying this cover drawing was about? What, if anything, does this title tell you about attitudes in the 1920s toward young people and the elderly?
4. From this magazine cover, how would you compare attitudes toward young people in the 1920s with attitudes about the young today?

#### **Follow-up Activities**

1. In the 1920s, jazz and blues became very popular music styles. African Americans had the greatest influence on both music styles. Read a biography about Louis Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington or some other black jazz or blues artist of the 1920s. Based on what you learn, pretend you are that musical artist and write a letter to the editor of *Life* commenting on this cover.
2. Small Group Activity: Create a bulletin board display called “Fads and Fashions: the 1920s and the 1990s.” Collect as many ads, photographs, and other illustrations about various kinds of fads, dances, clothing styles, and other things that show what was popular with millions of Americans in each decade. Have each group member write a brief essay comparing the fads and fashions of each decade and explaining what we can learn from them about overall attitudes and values in each time period. Post these essays along with the other items in your bulletin board display.



## Illustration 3



### Discussing the Illustration

1. This is a photo of one of the most famous Americans of the 1920s? Can you name him and explain what great accomplishment in 1927 made him famous all over the world?
2. From the photo, can you explain why Lindbergh's accomplishment would have been seen as heroic in 1927? Do you see it as heroic? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think airplane pilots in general were so admired in the 1920s? That is, why would their accomplishments have seemed especially heroic to people on those years?
4. In the 1920s, certain sports figures and movie stars also became national heroes, or at least they were widely admired by millions of Americans. Can you name some of those heroes of the 1920s?
5. Why do you think Americans in the 1920s became so fascinated by people like Lindbergh, Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey, Rudolph Valentino, Clara Bow, and others?

### Follow-up Activities

1. On May 20, 1927, Charles Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt field in New York. A little more than 33 hours later he landed his monoplane, *The Spirit of St. Louis*, at Le Bourget Airport, near Paris. Read more about this event and the effect it had on people at the time. Pretend you are a newspaper reporter who has been sent to Paris to cover the landing. You know that the photo shown above will be included with your article in the next day's newspaper. Invent a headline for your article. Then write a news story that tries to get across the feelings people at the time had about Lindbergh's accomplishment.
2. Read a biography of Charles Lindbergh. As you do, take notes on some of the key events and activities in Lindbergh's life in the 1920s and in the 1930s. Write a brief essay on Lindbergh's life during each of these decades. In what ways was Lindbergh affected by key trends and developments in each decade? In what ways did Lindbergh influence the nation most in each decade?

*The Roaring Twenties*

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better understand the nature of the prosperity in America in the 1920s.
  2. Students will better appreciate how some groups benefited more than others from the good economic times of the 1920s.
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# An Uneven Prosperity

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

The 1920s were an age of growing prosperity. And more than ever before, the good times seemed to benefit a large share of ordinary Americans. Before the decade began, Henry Ford had already pioneered new assembly-line methods of production. By the '20s, he was turning out cars that millions of average Americans could buy. These consumers also found a large number of other appliances and goods increasingly affordable. This photograph of a simple small town crossroads illustrates how the automobile-driven prosperity of the day was reaching into every part of the nation. It shows an early stage in the growth of the consumer-based economy that is still with us.

**Illustration 2**

The prosperity of the 1920s brought into existence a large and growing middle class. But not all Americans benefited from the good times. As this photo suggests, the developing consumer society of the 1920s often passed rural Americans by. After World War I, a vast world market for American crops began to shrink. Farmers had no real control over prices. And their growing output pushed down the prices they could get for their crops. The urban and suburban middle class enjoyed the good times that a booming economy brought. But this often only added to the isolation felt by poorer farmers and others in the nation's rural regions.

**Illustration 3**

One other group benefited even less from the good times of the 1920s. In both rural and urban settings, African Americans faced huge difficulties. In the South, black tenant farmers and sharecroppers were among the poorest of the rural poor. And African Americans in the cities of the South were not much better off — as this photo of an all-black slum in Atlanta makes clear. In addition to poverty, African Americans in the 1920s had to deal with the terrible burdens of racial hatred. Lynchings, race riots, and some of the worst forms of racial segregation were common. Many Southern blacks began moving to the North during and after World War I. But even there, discrimination and a lack of job skills made it hard for them to do well.

## Lesson 2 — An Uneven Prosperity

# Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. This photograph shows a street corner on an ordinary day in an ordinary American small town in the 1920s. How can you tell this photo is from the 1920s?
2. This photograph may not seem very exciting. Yet it actually shows some of the most important and dramatic changes of the 1920s. What features of this photo help to show what some of these changes were?
3. Cars were actually first invented in the late 1800s. But they only really began to have a big effect on the U.S. and its economy in the 1920s. Why was that so?
4. How does this photo show the effect the car was having on the nation? Do you think that effect was mainly good or mainly bad? Why?
5. Many historians call the 1920s a prosperous decade when a real consumer society developed. What do the phrases “prosperous decade” and “consumer society” mean? How does the photo help to show what these phrases mean?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. The 1920s were a time of growing prosperity in America. The small town scene in the above photo may not look like an example of this. But perhaps you will see that it is if you compare it with photos of typical small town scenes from around 1900. In the library, look through history books, collections of historical photos, books about the history of towns or cities, etc. Find ten photos of small towns from the 1890s or from the first decade of the twentieth century. Compare these photos with the one shown above. Think about all of the details in the above photo — the stores, what they are selling, the car, and the other objects you see in the photo. Using this photo and the ones you have found, list all of the ways in which economic conditions were changing for average Americans in the 1920s. Now use the above photo and the ones you have found as items in a bulletin board display called “The 1920s: A New Kind of Prosperity.”



## Lesson 2 — An Uneven Prosperity

# Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. These two photos are both from the 1920s. One of them is a photo of a “flapper.” Who is the flapper here, and what does the term itself mean?
2. The woman in the photo on the right is hiding something in her garter. From what you know about the 1920s, explain what is she hiding, and why?
3. The 1920s are known as a time of prosperity. All kinds of new consumer goods, cars, household appliances, and other products were making life better for millions. The ‘20s are also often called the “Jazz Age.” Which photo here supports these ideas about the 1920s? Which photo does not support these ideas? Explain your choices.
4. Taken together, do these two photos back up the idea of the 1920s as a consumer society and a time of growing prosperity? What point do they help to make about the effects of that prosperity on the lives of women?

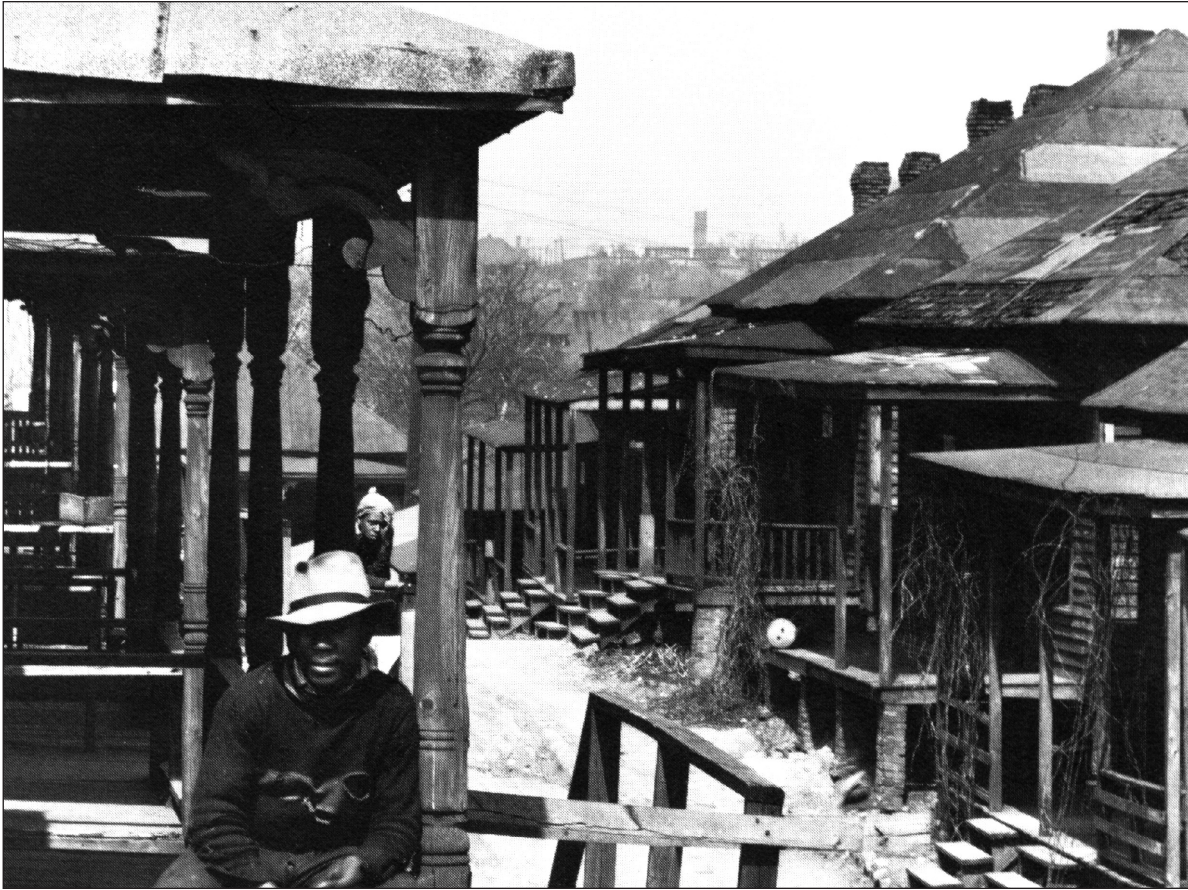
### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Read more about life in the 1920s. In particular, read about life in America’s largest cities and life in its small towns. Now pretend you are one of the women in these photographs and that you are related to the woman in the other photo. Write a long letter about your life in recent years to the woman in that other photo. Now pretend you are that other woman, and write a long letter responding to the first one. Try to make your letters as believable as possible, given what you have learned about life in the 1920s.
2. In the 1920s, many new household appliances and other goods made life easier for everyone, especially for women in the home. Have your librarian help you find books or magazines with ads from the 1920s. Photocopy several ads for household appliances and other consumer products that would have had a big effect on women’s lives. Write an essay to accompany your photos explaining both the positive and negative effects of these products on the lives of ordinary women in the 1920s.



## Lesson 2 — An Uneven Prosperity

### Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

#### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. At least one large group as a whole did not share in America's prosperity in the 1920s. From this photo, can you explain what group of Americans that was?
2. This is a photograph of a slum district in Atlanta, Georgia, in the U.S. South. By the 1920s, many African Americans were already moving to big cities in the North. But most of them still lived in cities and rural areas in the South. From what you know of U.S. history, why were most blacks living in the South?
3. Most Southern blacks were very poor. What kinds of work did these black people do? What special laws in the South made life even more difficult for African Americans there in those years?
4. What would life have been like for African Americans in a city slum district such as the one shown here? Do you think life in this slum would have been worse for blacks than life in a poor rural area in Georgia in the 1920s? Explain your answer.

#### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. All of us use what we know and what we have experienced to make sense out of any photo we see. And each of us "sees" a photo differently depending on our knowledge, values, and beliefs. For example, take the following list of individuals:

W. E. B. Du Bois  
Calvin Coolidge  
Langston Hughes  
Eleanor Roosevelt  
Zora Neal Hurston  
Alfred E. Smith

The above list is made up of six famous Americans, three blacks and three whites. All of them were alive during the 1920s. Choose two of the six individuals listed above and read more about them. Now write a short essay on the above photo as if you were each of the individuals you have chosen to read about. Share some of these essays in a class discussion about this photo.

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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will learn more about some of the key social conflicts of the 1920s.
  2. Students will debate both sides of a number of value conflicts that divided different groups of Americans in the 1920s.
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# Cultural Conflict in a Time of Change

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

The decade of the 1920s, a time of rapid change, was called “the Jazz Age.” The name seems to suggest a relaxed, easy-going attitude about life. Yet not all Americans then were relaxed or pleased about the changes taking place around them. For example, some people worried about what they saw as a widespread loss of religious faith, even a hostile feeling toward religion. During the famous Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, their side was taken by former presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan. In that trial, John Scopes was accused of breaking a Tennessee law against the teaching of evolution. Famous trial lawyer Clarence Darrow defended Scopes’ right to teach the controversial ideas of evolution. But Bryan argued that evolutionary theory was actually being used to mock or insult religion. The trial showed that deep feelings of suspicion divided Americans on religion in the 1920s. This photo shows Darrow defending Scopes during the trial.

**Illustration 2**

By the 1920s, America had become much more diverse culturally. Millions of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe had crowded into the nation’s biggest cities. Large numbers were Catholic or Jewish, and they brought with them strange languages and customs. To some people, this seemed to threaten an older, mainly Protestant and mainly Anglo-Saxon America. Fears about the newcomers helped to fuel a huge revival of the Ku Klux Klan. As in its earlier form, it still directed much of its hatred at African Americans. But the huge growth of the KKK in the 1920s, especially in the North, rested just as much on its attacks on the new groups of immigrants. This photo of a parade in Washington, D.C., in 1926 shows just how popular the KKK had become.

**Illustration 3**

For decades before World War I, the temperance movement had grown ever stronger. In 1919, this movement finally succeeded when the 18th Amendment outlawed the sale or manufacture of most alcoholic beverages. But this success came just as attitudes about drinking started to change. A less strict public mood now clashed with the official effort to maintain Prohibition. The result was the speakeasy, the bootlegger, and an intense decade-long conflict over alcohol.



## Illustration 1



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This is a photograph of a famous court trial of the 1920s — the Scopes trial in Dayton, Tennessee, in July of 1925. A teacher named John Scopes was on trial for teaching something. Can you explain what he was on trial for teaching?
2. Standing on the left is the famous trial lawyer who defended Scopes. Meanwhile, a former candidate for President helped the prosecutors in the case. Can you name those two famous individuals?
3. In the trial, Scopes was found guilty and fined. The trial attracted national attention. Why do you think so many people in the 1920s had such strong views either for or against the teaching of evolution?
4. Many people in the 1920s saw this trial as a contest between rural people and city people. Others said it was a contest between those who favored tradition and those who favored progress and change? Do you agree with either or both of these views? Why or why not?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Small Group Activity: In 1960, Stanley Kramer directed a movie version of the play *Inherit the Wind*, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee. This play is about the Scopes trial. As a group, watch this movie or read the play itself. Your group's task will then be to decide if the movie or play accurately describes the actual Scopes trial. To do this, you will have to find a good account of the trial itself. You probably should try to find a trial transcript to see what each side in the trial actually said. Organize your findings by answering the following questions:

How fairly were Bryan's views presented?  
How fairly were Darrow's views presented?  
How fairly was the town of Dayton portrayed?  
How fairly were Scopes' opponents portrayed?  
How fairly were Scopes' supporters portrayed?

Perhaps one group member can work on answering each of these questions. Share your findings with the rest of the class, and guide a discussion of the real meaning of this trial in U.S. history.

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. This photo shows thousands of members of one organization marching in a parade. Can you tell from their white robes what organization they belong to?
2. This photo shows a huge march that took place on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C., on September 13, 1926. From what you know about the Ku Klux Klan, why is it unlikely that a march such as this would take place in Washington today? Could such a march take place at all now? Why or why not?
3. In the 1920s, the KKK directed its hatred not only at African Americans, but also at Jews, Catholics, and other immigrant groups. From what you know about the early 1900s, why do you think the KKK included these groups in its attacks in the 1920s?
4. Unlike today, the KKK in the 1920s was a huge group with millions of members — and not just in the South. Why do you think this group's hateful ideas about blacks, Jews, Catholics and immigrants had such wide appeal in those years?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small Group Activity: The first Ku Klux Klan existed in the South just after the Civil War. Its main aim was to terrify blacks and stop them from trying to use any of the rights they had just won. A second Ku Klux Klan was set up in 1915. By the 1920s, it had four to five million members. It was strong in the South and in several northern states as well. Your group's task is to find out how popular the Klan was, and why, in several states, including your own. Have each member study one of the following states:

Your state  
Georgia  
Maine  
Texas  
Indiana

Each group member should prepare a brief talk for the class on one state. In it, describe Klan activities in the 1920s and explain why the Klan was popular in that state. Finally, explain what happened to the Klan in that state after the 1920s.

## Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### ***Discussing the Illustration***

1. This photograph would never have been taken had it not been for the 18th Amendment, which was ratified in 1919. Explain what that Amendment did.
2. This 1924 photo shows an official smashing a barrel of beer. He was helping to wage the battle against “bootleggers” and “speakeasies.” What were bootleggers and speakeasies? And why do you think there were so many of them during the 1920s?
3. The movement to close saloons and ban liquor grew stronger and stronger from the late 1800s up to 1919. Among the main supporters of the movement were many women’s organizations and Protestant religious organizations. Why do you think these two groups were so strongly in favor of Prohibition? People in big cities and many immigrant groups opposed Prohibition. Why do you think that was so?
4. How do you think someone in favor of Prohibition would have reacted to this photo? How might someone opposed to Prohibition have seen it?

### ***Follow-up Activities***

1. Small Group Activity: Have each member of your group read a biography about one of the following key political figures of the 1920s:

Calvin Coolidge  
Franklin Delano Roosevelt  
Alfred E. Smith  
Herbert Hoover

Play the person you have studied in a role-playing exercise in front of the class. In the exercise, discuss your reactions to this photo and your ideas about Prohibition generally.

2. Read more about the federal government’s efforts to enforce Prohibition in the 1920s. Now find recent newspaper or magazine articles on government efforts to deal with the problem of illegal drugs today. Write a brief essay comparing these two kinds of efforts. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different? What is your own opinion of each of these efforts?



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**OBJECTIVES  
FOR THIS LESSON:**

1. Students will better understand some of the key political issues and concerns and of the 1920s.
  2. Students will discuss the notion that citizens in the 1920s were complacent, or satisfied with political conditions.
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# Politics in a Satisfied Age

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*Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.*

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS:**

**Illustration 1**

In April 1917, America went to war, and President Woodrow Wilson redirected his reform idealism and energy abroad. He said he hoped to aid the Allies in World War I in order to “make the world safe for democracy.” After the war, Wilson’s idealism was again reflected in his effort to win the Senate’s support for the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the war and set up a League of Nations. But Americans seemed tired of idealism and the troubles of the world. In 1920, the Senate refused to ratify, or agree to, the treaty. This cartoon accuses the isolationists in the Senate of betraying the President and endangering the world. But Americans wanted a quieter, more satisfied age — what the next President, Warren G. Harding, called a time of “normalcy.”

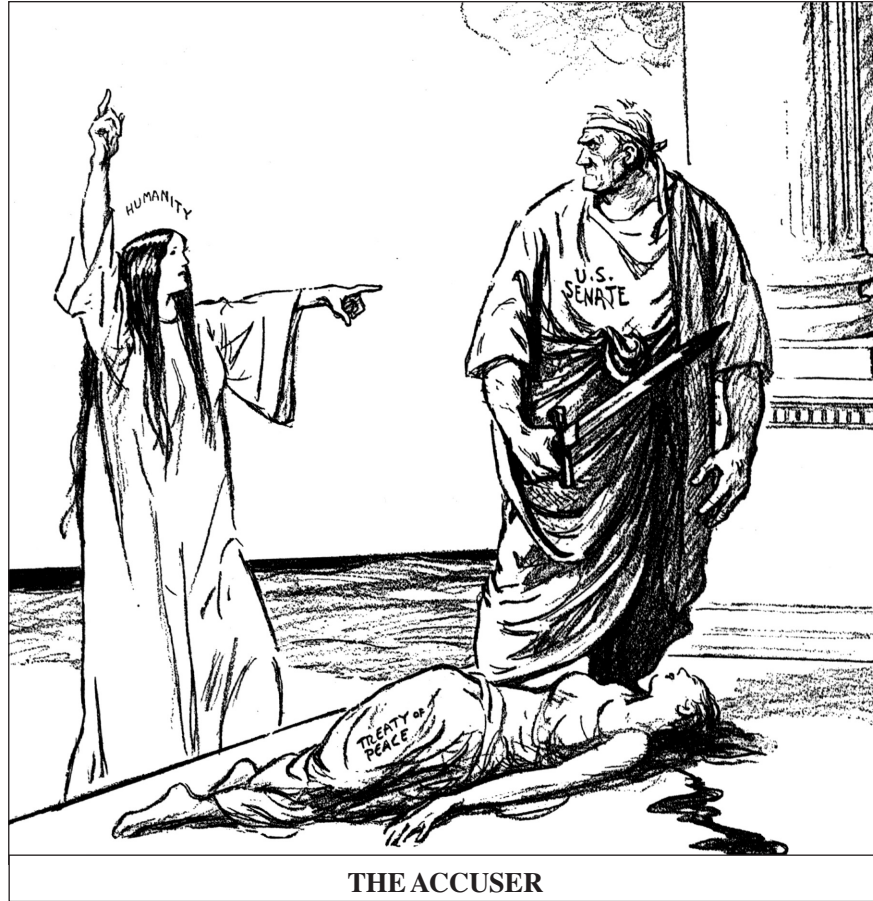
**Illustration 2**

In the 1920s, many Americans seemed satisfied with life in the United States. Nevertheless, this did not mean they were happy with the way all their public officials acted. The prosperity of the 1920s meant there was more money around to tempt political leaders into dishonest acts of various sorts. One big source of political corruption was Prohibition, the effort to stop the sale of liquor and beer. In many places, Prohibition was very unpopular. And the criminals who supplied liquor to people found it easy to evade the law — often by bribing officials like those in the long line in this editorial cartoon.

**Illustration 3**

Calvin Coolidge took over as President in 1923, after Harding’s death. Partly because Coolidge himself was so honest, his efforts to clean up government kept the Harding scandals from hurting the Republicans. This, and the good times of the twenties, made Coolidge very popular. Under the slogan “Keep Cool with Coolidge,” he won election in 1924 by a huge landslide. Most Americans seemed to agree with his view that government should limit its role in the economy, and that “the business of America is business.” As we have seen, the 1920s were in fact a time of rapid social change and cultural conflict. Nevertheless, this cartoon suggests that most Americans wanted a President with limited goals for government and limited political ambitions of his own.

## Illustration 1



Rollin Kirby/*The World*

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon is about the peace treaty that ended World War I. The U.S. never agreed to this treaty, mainly because it set up a new organization of nations from around the world. What was that organization called?
2. The U.S. President at the time was a strong supporter of that organization. Can you name him?
3. The cartoon shows the Senate as a murderer who has just killed this peace treaty. Explain why the figure is labeled "U.S. Senate" and not "U.S. Congress."
4. In this cartoon, a figure labeled "humanity" points at the Senate in blame for murdering the treaty. Why do you suppose this figure is labeled "humanity," and not "the American people" or "America"?
5. The defeat of the treaty containing the League of Nations is often described as an example of the "isolationism" many Americans felt in the 1920s. What was isolationism, and why do you think the mood of isolationism was so strong in the 1920s?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Using your library, find one book or article describing the fight between Woodrow Wilson and the Republican leaders in the Senate over the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty of Versailles ended World War I. It is the peace treaty shown in the above cartoon as a murdered woman. In your reading, pay attention to the efforts the President made in support of the treaty and the reasons so many Senators opposed it. Now write a brief essay on this battle over the treaty. In the essay, take a stand for or against the point of view expressed in the above cartoon. How fair do you think the cartoon is to the Senate? Why?
2. The cartoon shows the Senate as a Roman assassin, and it shows both the peace treaty and "humanity" as females. Why do you think the artist chose these symbols? How do these symbols help the cartoon to make its point forcefully? Do the symbols make the issue of the treaty clearer and/or easier to understand? Why or why not?

## Illustration 2



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Illustration

1. This cartoon comments on a big problem that has often worried and angered many Americans, the problem of "political corruption." What does it mean to say someone is "corrupt." What kinds of actions might be labeled acts of political corruption?
2. In the cartoon, each of the figures has his hand out behind his back. What does this gesture seem to mean? That is, what is each figure hoping for?
3. The last figure in the line is labeled a "Prohibition Agent." What do you suppose his job is? From this figure, can you guess who exactly is going to be paying off each of these political officials?
4. Why would bootleggers or other criminals selling liquor have wanted to pay off so many officials?
5. Some historians say crime was actually not that big a problem in the 1920s. They say the concerns about it simply show that, in a satisfied age, people had few other big issues to worry about? Do you agree or disagree with this view? Why?

### Follow-up Activities

1. Create a dialogue in which each figure in this cartoon comments on what he is doing in this long line. The dialogue should make clear why each person has his hand out as shown in the cartoon. It should also make clear to whom the figure is holding out his hand, and why. If you think there are figures implied by the cartoon but not shown in it, you may include words from them as well. Be imaginative. Use humor if you want to. But make sure that all the dialogue helps to clarify the meaning of the cartoon.
2. Do you think this cartoon is as true of political officials and leaders today as it was in the 1920s? Why don't you ask a local politician? Write a letter to your representative in the state legislature or a local elected official in your town or city government. Send that official the above cartoon and a letter about it. Invite the official to respond to the cartoon and explain how accurate it still is today. Better yet, invite the official to visit your class to discuss the cartoon.



## Illustration 3



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

### Discussing the Cartoon

1. This cartoon was published in August 1928. The man in the canoe was still the U.S. President then. Can you name him?
2. From what you know about Coolidge, can you explain what choice this cartoon shows him making?
3. Look at the setting and the way Coolidge is drawn in this cartoon. Do these features help to show anything about the kind of person Coolidge was? Do they help to show the kind of President Coolidge was, or what he thought about the Presidency in general? Explain your answer.
4. Do you think this cartoon's view of Coolidge is accurate? Why or why not?
5. Do you think this cartoon helps to show what many Americans felt about their country and the times in general in the 1920s? Does the cartoon fit with the heading for this lesson: "Politics in a Satisfied Age"? Explain your answer.

### Follow-up Activities

1. Debate the wisdom of Calvin Coolidge's ideas about business, wealth, and government in a free society. Coolidge is famous for saying "The chief business of the American people is business." He also said the following:

"History reveals no civilized people among whom there was not a highly educated class and large aggregations of wealth. Large profits means large payrolls. Inspiration has always come from above."

As a class, have a debate about this statement by Coolidge. In the debate, discuss these questions: What does Coolidge mean by "aggregations of wealth," by "civilization," and by "inspiration"? How does he see these three things as connected? Is Coolidge correct about past civilizations? Is he correct about America in the 1920s? Is he likely to be correct about all future societies?

# Answers to Factual Questions

(Answers provided only to questions  
requiring a single correct answer)

## Lesson 1

**Illustration 1** Question 1: An Amendment is a change in the U.S. Constitution. When three-fourths of the states approve of it, an Amendment is ratified, or passed.

Question 2: The 19th Amendment gave women the right to vote.

**Illustration 2** (no fact questions)

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Charles Lindbergh. In 1927, he made the first solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

## Lesson 2

**Illustration 1** Question 3: Only in the 1920s did assembly-line techniques make it possible to produce cars cheaply enough.

**Illustration 2** Question 1: The woman on the left is the flapper. "Flapper" was the term for women who acted rebelliously to flaunt traditional values or styles in the 1920s.

**Illustration 3** Question 1: African Americans

## Lesson 3

**Illustration 1** Question 1: The theory of evolution

Question 2: Clarence Darrow, William Jennings Bryan

**Illustration 2** Question 1: Ku Klux Klan

**Illustration 3** Question 1: It outlawed the sale, manufacture or transportation of intoxicating liquors.

Question 2: Bootleggers illegally manufactured and sold liquor. Speakeasies were illegal taverns where customers could buy drinks.

## Lesson 4

**Illustration 1** Question 1: The League of Nations

Question 2: Woodrow Wilson

Question 3: The Senate alone votes on treaties.

Question 5: Isolationism was the term for the strong desire many Americans then had to stay out of world affairs.

**Illustration 2** (no fact questions)

**Illustration 3** Question 1: Calvin Coolidge

Question 2: The choice not to run for President again in 1928.

