

# *From the Great War to the Great Depression:* Teacher's Guide

**Grade Level:** 6-8

**Curriculum Focus:** U.S. History

**Lesson Duration:** Two class periods

## **Program Description**

Explore America's involvement in World War I and the hardships of life in the trenches. Discover how the war's aftermath contributed to the Roaring Twenties. See how shifting attitudes transformed American music and led to the birth of jazz. And examine how temperance laws gave way to criminals during Prohibition.

- The United States and World War I (4 min.)
  - World War I (5 min.)
  - The Roaring Twenties (5 min.)
  - The Birth of Jazz (4 min.)
  - Prohibition and the American Gangster (27 min.)
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## **Onscreen Questions**

- What conditions led to American involvement in World War I?
  - How did World War I affect American culture in the 1920s?
  - Where does jazz have its roots?
  - What social conditions led to the rise of organized crime in America?
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## **Lesson Plan**

### *Student Objectives*

- Discuss what the nation was like during the 1920s, highlighting changes in its economy, society, politics, and arts and culture.
- Create a list of important figures from the 1920s who are featured in the film.
- Research the life and significance of a famous person from the 1920s and develop a creative work that portrays an event in that person's life.

## Materials

- *From the Great War to the Great Depression* program
- Resources about the 1920s and significant figures of the decade
- Computer with Internet access

## Procedures

1. After watching *From the Great War to the Great Depression*, discuss what the United States was like in the decade following World War I, known as the “Roaring Twenties.” Ask students to describe changes in the nation’s economy, society, politics, and arts and culture. During the discussion, note key terms and phrases that describe the era on the chalkboard. The following list provide some examples, which you may want to use to guide the discussion.

### Economy

- Economic prosperity
- High quality of life (hot and cold running water, electrical appliances)
- Growth of big business and industry
- Mass-produced automobiles

### Arts and Culture

- Movies with sound
- Radios in most homes
- Birth of jazz
- Harlem Renaissance

### Society

- Increasing rights for women; changing role of women (19th Amendment, Women’s Trade Union League)
- New, carefree style of fashion and behavior (flappers)
- Prohibition (18th Amendment, Temperance Movement, speakeasies)
- Rise in organized crime (bootlegging, gangsters)
- Racism (KKK)

### Politics

- Isolation from rest of world; focus on issues at home
- Distrust of foreigners
- Red Scare (fear of Communism)

2. Next, ask students to discuss why the decade was called the “Roaring Twenties.” Then have them name some of the significant people from the 1920s who were featured in the film. Brainstorm a list of names of famous – and infamous people – from the decade. You may want to refer to your earlier chalkboard list to help students remember individuals from all aspects of society, such as:
  - Warren Harding
  - Louis Armstrong
  - Duke Ellington

- Bessie Smith
  - Benny Goodman
  - George Gershwin
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald
  - Langston Hughes
  - Marcus Garvey
  - Al Capone
  - James Cagney
  - Texas Guinan
  - George Raft
  - Mayor Big Bill Thompson
3. Explain that students will be working with a partner to explore the life and significance of one person from the list. Their assignment is to research the events in that person's life as well as his or her accomplishments and role in society. Then, they will develop and present a creative work that portrays an important event in that person's life. Encourage them to be creative in their presentation—for example, they could write a newspaper article, compose a radio news story, give a mock interview, storyboard a movie scene, or even write and perform a fictional scene.
4. In addition to any available print resources, have students use the following Web sites for their research.
- Warren Harding  
<http://www.lawlessdecade.net/21.htm>  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/history/presidents/wh29.html>
  - Louis Armstrong  
<http://www.time.com/time/time100/artists/profile/armstrong.html>  
[http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist\\_id\\_armstrong\\_louis.htm](http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_armstrong_louis.htm)  
<http://www.redhotjazz.com/louie.html>
  - Duke Ellington  
<http://museum.media.org/duke/essence/index.html>  
<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/text/ellington.html>
  - Bessie Smith  
[http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist\\_id\\_smith\\_bessie.htm](http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_smith_bessie.htm)  
<http://bluesnet.hub.org/readings/bessie.html>  
<http://www.rockhall.com/hof/inductee.asp?id=190>
  - Benny Goodman  
<http://www.redhotjazz.com/goodman.html>  
[http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist\\_id\\_goodman\\_benny.htm](http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_goodman_benny.htm)
  - George Gershwin  
<http://www.gershwin.com/>  
[http://www.songwritershalloffame.org/exhibit\\_home\\_page.asp?exhibitId=70](http://www.songwritershalloffame.org/exhibit_home_page.asp?exhibitId=70)
  - F. Scott Fitzgerald  
<http://www.sc.edu/fitzgerald/index.html>  
<http://www.lawlessdecade.net/25-1.htm>  
<http://www.fitzgeraldsociety.org/>

- Langston Hughes  
<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/writers/hughes>  
<http://www.poets.org/poet.php/prmPID/83>
  - Marcus Garvey  
<http://www.si.umich.edu/CHICO/Harlem/text/garvey.html>  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/garvey/>
  - Al Capone  
<http://www.crimelibrary.com/capone/caponemain.htm>  
<http://www.lawlessdecade.net/29-1.htm>
  - James Cagney  
<http://www.imagesjournal.com/issue01/infocus/cagney1.htm>  
[http://www.kennedy-center.org/calendar/index.cfm?fuseaction=showIndividual&entity\\_id=3702&source\\_type=A](http://www.kennedy-center.org/calendar/index.cfm?fuseaction=showIndividual&entity_id=3702&source_type=A)
  - Texas Guinan  
<http://www.lawlessdecade.net/28.htm>  
<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/GG/fgu21.html>  
[http://www.dictionaryofeverything.com/explore/828/Texas\\_Guinan.html](http://www.dictionaryofeverything.com/explore/828/Texas_Guinan.html)
  - George Raft  
[http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/filmography.html?p\\_id=58473&mod=bio](http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/filmography.html?p_id=58473&mod=bio)
  - Mayor Big Bill Thompson  
<http://www.inficad.com/~ksup/thompson.html>
5. Have students perform or present their works to the class. Then discuss the different people they learned about. How did each one reflect life in the 1920s? Do we see similar people in society today? If so, who? If not, why not? What was unique about the Roaring Twenties?

## Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were active in class discussions; provided several examples to describe the nation during the 1920s; developed a thorough, engaging creative work about a famous person from the decade.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; provided some examples to describe the nation during the 1920s; developed a clear, complete creative work about a famous person from the decade.
- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; provided few or no examples to describe the nation during the 1920s; developed a vague or incomplete creative work about a famous person from the decade.



## Vocabulary

### **alliances**

*Definition:* Agreements between countries; the two main alliances formed before World War I were the Central Powers and the Allied Powers.

*Context:* Alliances were intended to create powerful combinations that no one would dare attack, but they increased international tensions even more.

### **bootlegging**

*Definition:* The illegal importing of alcohol, which became widespread during Prohibition

*Context:* The largest groups of bootleggers were organized crime gangs.

### **Harlem Renaissance**

*Definition:* A cultural movement in New York during the 1920s during which African-American arts, music, literature, and politics flourished

*Context:* The Harlem Renaissance thrived during the 1920s and '30s, until the Great Depression forced many artists to abandon New York in search of jobs.

### **nationalism**

*Definition:* A sense of extreme pride or loyalty to a particular country

*Context:* In 1914, economic rivalries, imperial competition, and rising nationalism were spreading across the continent.

### **Prohibition**

*Definition:* A period in U.S. history during which the production, distribution, and sale of alcohol was illegal; Prohibition began in January 1920, with the ratification of the 18th Amendment.

*Context:* Although it remained a law throughout the Twenties, Prohibition became increasingly difficult to enforce.

### **speakeasies**

*Definition:* Hidden saloons and night clubs that sold liquor illegally during Prohibition

*Context:* Jazz was particularly popular with young people, who flocked to nightclubs and speakeasies to dance the Charleston.

### **temperance**

*Definition:* Total abstinence from alcohol

*Context:* Supporters of temperance called Prohibition "a noble experiment."

## Academic Standards

### Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History: Era 7 – Understands how Progressives and others addressed problems of industrial capitalism, urbanization, and political corruption; Understands the changing role of the United States in world affairs through World War I; Understands how the United States changed between the post-World War I years and the eve of the Great Depression

### The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
  - Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
  - Production, Distribution, and Consumption
  - Science, Technology, and Society
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## Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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## DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

### How to Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:



**Play Video** – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

**Video Index** – Here the video is divided into five segments (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

**Curriculum Units** – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

**Standards Link** – Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

**Teacher Resources** – This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

## Video Index

### **I. The United States and World War I (4 min.)**

The promise of gold and land enticed many Americans to migrate westward, creating the need for a transcontinental railroad. See how U.S. expansion affected the West and its native populations.

### **II. World War I (5 min.)**

Mining camps became towns as prospectors ventured west in search of gold. Learn about the mining towns of the Old West, which were only as prosperous as their mines.

### **III. The Roaring Twenties (5 min.)**

In the 1800s, the Western frontier provided a possibility for riches, land, and opportunity that many European settlers could not pass up.

### **IV. The Birth of Jazz (5 min.)**

Our familiar notion of the Wild West was actually created in Hollywood studios. Compare the fictionalized version of how the West was won with historic facts.

### **V. Prohibition and the American Gangster (27 min.)**

Intended to bring a return of sobriety and good values to America, Prohibition instead gave rise to organized crime and illegal activities.



## Curriculum Units

### 1. Entering World War I

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: Have you ever been pulled into a conflict against your wishes?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: Do you think the United States should have entered World War I?

A: Answers will vary.

### 2. European Powers at War

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What alliances do you have?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What led to the beginning of World War I?

A: Industrialization built economic competition among European powers, so they signed treaties pledging to defend allies. Gradually the alliances developed into the Triple Alliance of Germany, Italy, and Austria-Hungary and the Triple Entente of France, Russia, and Britain. Tensions erupted when Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated during a visit to Serbia. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and with the alliances in place, a chain reaction took place.

### 3. An Industrial War

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: Do you think World War I would have occurred if people had known its devastating effects?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How was World War I different from all previous wars?

A: World War I was the first to incorporate machine guns, bombs, and other military technology that could hit targets from miles away. Newly industrialized factories could produce weapons at an unheard-of rate. It was also the first war in which science, previously seen as a sign of progress, was used for killing; chemical warfare was put into use.

### 4. Good Money, Good Music, Good Times

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What do you think was the most exciting era in American history?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What was life like for most Americans during the Roaring Twenties?

A: Most Americans enjoyed the highest quality of life in the world during the 1920s. People could make money in the stock market, and many could buy refrigerators, washing machines, and other



electrical appliances. Affordable mass-produced automobiles gave mobility, natural gas and electricity became widely available, and the introduction of sound transformed moving pictures. Radios brought news and entertainment into homes, and jazz became popular music. Women were allowed to vote in 1920, and greater numbers of women graduated from high school, attended college, and got jobs.

## 5. Prohibition and Communism

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What can cause racial or cultural intolerance?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What was the Red Scare?

A: Many Americans became anxious when communists took control of Russia because they feared that the same thing could happen at home. This fear became known as the Red Scare, and it led to the rounding up and mistreatment of thousands of people suspected of being communists, socialists, or anarchists.

## 6. The Jazz Age

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What kinds of music do you like and why?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What was the Harlem Renaissance?

A: This African-American cultural movement, which took place in New York in the 1920s, produced a flowering of literature, art, and politics.

## 7. The Era of Speakeasies

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What laws do you find unjust or misguided?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What was the objective of Prohibition?

A: Proponents of Prohibition wanted to dim the lights of Broadway and bring the country back to the traditional values of hard work and sobriety. But in the economic boom following World War I, people wanted fun, not sobriety.

## 8. Gangs and Liquor

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What do you know about Chicago in the 1920s?

A: Answers will vary.



*Post-viewing question*

Q: Would you have supported Prohibition if you had lived in the 1920s?

A: Answers will vary.

## **9. George Raft: Gangster Movie Star**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What did gangsters look like during Prohibition?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: What similarities and differences exist in the styles of gangsters during Prohibition and those today?

A: Answers will vary.

## **10. Big Bill Thompson, Mayor**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: Have you ever disrespected a law?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: Do you think the 1920s were more corrupt than today?

A: Answers will vary.

## **11. Gangsters and Women**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What benefits resulted from the Prohibition era?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: How did the role of women change in Hollywood and in society in the 1920s?

A: Women gained power and independence that they had not had before. Many went from playing hostesses and girlfriends to becoming accomplices, gangsters, and owners and managers of speakeasies and other establishments.

## **12. The Roaring Twenties End**

*Pre-viewing question*

Q: What do you know about Al Capone?

A: Answers will vary.

*Post-viewing question*

Q: Would the Roaring Twenties have continued if the stock market had not crashed?

A: Answers will vary.

