

## 20's in the USA:

**Key words:** *policy of isolationism, economic boom, Jazz Age, Harlem Renaissance, Louis Armstrong, Hollywood, Charlie Chaplin, Marlene Dietrich, Oscar, KKK, Al Capone, Prohibition, Speakeasy, Henry Ford, Model T, Assembly Line,*

**Homework:** Find out some more about two political parties in the US, the Republicans and the Democrats:

### The Democrats:

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### The Republicans:

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Interwar Presidents	Political Party
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921)</li><li>• Warren G. Harding (1921-1923)</li><li>• Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929)</li><li>• Herbert C. Hoover (1929-1933)</li><li>• Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-1945)</li></ul>	

### The Foreign policy:

#### The Republicans:

- The **Republican presidents** returned the USA to a **policy of isolationism towards Europe** – an opinion to stay out of international politics and diplomacy, especially in relation to **Europe**. This was based on the idea that American interests were centered on areas **closer to home – Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Pacific region.**
- The USA continued the **policy of extending American interests** and influence in **Latin America**. This policy had been established in **1823 and is known as Monroe Doctrine**. During the 1920s and 1930s, the USA militarily intervened in several states, including Nicaragua and Haiti. The US governments expanded the influence of the USA **in the Pacific**. This eventually brought America into conflict with Japan in WWII.

### The Economic Boom:

- The Republican presidents **ended the restrictions on industry and commerce** which had been introduced by the Democrat Wilson. The Republicans promoted the **economic policy of laissez-faire (French for “leave alone”): economic policy based on the idea that governments should leave businesses to make**

**their own decision.** The Republicans reduced taxes on the wealthy, and removed all restrictions on companies and *trusts – big companies that took over smaller ones to create monopoly.*

- Many ordinary people began to buy shares in companies in order to make profits.
- **Tariffs on foreign goods** = these are the charges or import duties placed by a government on foreign goods coming into the country. These charges are intended to make foreign goods more expensive, thus helping to increase the sales of the cheaper home-produced goods and protect domestic industry. This is the policy of .....
- The USA undertook a **rapid development** of new industries, such as a **car industry**. This led to an **expansion of other industries** connected to car production such as **tires, steel, leather** + other **new industries**: radios, fridges
- **Henry Ford** (†1947): founder of the **Ford Motor Company** located in Detroit, who was behind the development of the **assembly line technique of mass production** which replaced the individual hand crafting – ručne, remeselne. He is credited with **"Fordism", that is, mass production of inexpensive goods coupled with high wages for workers.** The **Ford Model T**: produced from **1908**. The Model T was the first automobile mass produced on assembly lines with completely interchangeable parts, marketed to the middle class.



- An **assembly line** is a manufacturing process in which parts (usually interchangeable parts) are added to a product in a sequential manner using optimally planned logistics to create a finished product much faster than with **handcrafting-type methods.**

The assembly line developed by Ford Motor Company between 1908 and 1915 made assembly lines famous in the following decade through the **social consequences** of mass production, such as the **affordability** of the Ford Model T and the introduction of **high wages** for Ford workers. By

**1925, over 15 million cars had been produced,** and by 1927 one car was being produced every 10 seconds.

- **Social phenomena:**
- **Divided nation:** despite the economic boom, almost **50% of the American people lived below the poverty line.** With no welfare system, the unemployed suffered great hardship.
- **Migration:** significant migration of people into the **towns and cities** of America. By the end of the 1920s, the majority of Americans were living in urban area not rural areas.



- **Immigration:** Before 1900, most immigrants had come from northern and western Europe and had been **White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (=WASPs).** After 1900, a growing number had come from elsewhere in Europe. Many of these were non-Protestants, and some were Socialists or Anarchists – who thought governments should be abolished. Consequently, attempts were made to limit their number.
- **Flappers:** Flappers were seen as brash for wearing excessive makeup, drinking, treating sex in a casual manner, smoking, driving automobiles and otherwise flouting social and sexual norms. Flappers also began working outside the home and challenged women's traditional societal roles. They advocated

voting and women's rights. With time, came the development of dance styles then considered shocking, such as the **Charleston**; flappers were dancing alone or together as a way of mocking the citizens who supported the Prohibition amendment. The Charleston was then considered quite immoral and provocative

Flappers did away with **corsets**. Their dresses were straight and tight, leaving the arms bare (sometimes no straps at all) and dropping the waistline to the hips.

**Tanned skin** became increasingly popular after **Coco Chanel** got a tan after spending too much time in the sun on holiday – it suggested a life of leisure, without the onerous need to work. Women wanted to look fit, sporty, and, above all, healthy.

- “**Red Scare**”: American society was scarred by **the immigrants from southern and eastern Europe** who might have brought **left-wing ideas** with them. Socialists, Communists and Anarchists were harassed by the police and even the Federal Justice Department, while some were even deported from the USA. Henry Ford for example refused to allow people to join **trade unions** and often used violence against those attempting to recruit members.

#### **Prohibition, Gangsters, Al Capone, Speakeasy:**

- The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the American Constitution from 1919 made the sale, manufacture or transport of alcohol illegal, and then the *Volstead Act* also made buying it illegal (= **Prohibition, 1920-1933**, longer in some states). However, many people were prepared to break the law in order to drink alcohol, and, as a result, many **speakeasies** were opened – *drinking clubs that illegally sold alcoholic beverages which had been smuggled in by the gangsters in the United States during the period of Prohibition.*

- Poverty and the policy of Prohibition gave rise to powerful gangster bosses who became so wealthy that they were able to bribe judges, police chiefs and elected official in many towns.

- **Al Capone** (†1947): used intimidation, extortion and murder to gain control of many illegal activities, such as gambling, prostitution and brothels, as well as supplying alcohol and running “speakeasies”. He used his money and power to control **Chicago** by bribing policemen and politicians, including Mayor of Chicago. By 1927, Capone’s income was probably more than \$ 27 million a year. Among the many murders he ordered was the killing of members of a rival gang led by **Bugs Moran** in 1929 (this murder is known as the **St. Valentine’s Day Massacre in 1929**). Capone's reign ended when he was found **guilty of tax evasion**, and sent to federal prison. His imprisonment included a stay at **Alcatraz** federal prison.

#### **Segregation, Ku Klux Klan (KKK):**



Picture on the left: **KKK**

- In 1920 about 10% of the total American population was black Americans. Although they had been **freed from slavery at the end of the American Civil War in 1865**, they remained **victims of poverty and discrimination**, especially in the southern states of the USA, where most of them still lived. For instance, there was **segregation** between

**black and white people** (=separation of whites and blacks in the southern states of the USA, in all public places such as schools, and on all forms of public transport. Even prisoners were segregated). Between 1920 and 1930, over 1,5 million black American migrated from the South to the cities in the North, where there were better chances for employment and education.

- **KKK**: organization formed in the southern states during the American Civil War to maintain white supremacy. It had gone into decline but was refounded in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by William Simmons. In 1925 the organization claimed it had 5 million members. Although blacks were its main victims, the KKK also had fanatical hatred of Catholics, Jews, Socialists and Communists. In fact, anyone who was not a **WASP**. Its main methods were **beating, burning and lynchings** - *the practice of killing people by extrajudicial mob action*.

**Art**: Jazz, Harlem Renaissance, New Orleans, Louis Armstrong, Hollywood, Oscar, MGM, Paramount Pictures, Marlene Dietrich, Charlie Chaplin,

- **Jazz Age**: from 1920s to 1930s, but in pop culture for decades. 1920s youth used the influence of jazz to **rebel against the traditional culture of previous generations**. Jazz started to get a reputation as being immoral and many members of the older generations saw it as threatening the old values in culture and promoting the new decadent values of the Roaring 20s. Professor Henry Van Dyke of Princeton University wrote "... *it is not music at all. It's merely an irritation of the nerves of hearing, a sensual teasing of the strings of physical passion.*" This youth rebellion of the 1920s went hand-in-hand with fads like bold fashion statements (flappers) and new radio concerts.

**Jazz**: is a musical tradition and style of music that originated at the beginning of the 20th century in **African American communities** in the Southern United States (**New Orleans** gave birth to jazz since it was the only South American city to allow slaves to gather in public and play their native music) from a confluence of African and European music traditions. Jazz differs from European music in that jazz has a "*special relationship to time, defined as 'swing'*", "*a spontaneity and vitality of musical production in which improvisation plays a role*". While jazz may be difficult to define, **improvisation is definitely one of its key elements**.

**Louis Armstrong** (on the pic. below): American jazz trumpeter and singer from New Orleans. Armstrong was



a foundational authority in jazz, shifting the music's focus from collective improvisation to **solo performance**. With his instantly recognizable **deep and distinctive gravelly voice**, Armstrong was also an influential singer, demonstrating great skillfulness as an **improviser**.

**Harlem Renaissance** (Harlem – neighborhood in NYC): cultural movement that spanned the 1920s and 1930s, also known as the "New Negro Movement". Characterizing the Harlem Renaissance was an overt racial pride that came to be represented in the idea of the New Negro, who **through intellect and production of literature, art, and music – jazz - could challenge the pervading racism and stereotypes to promote progressive politics, and racial and social integration**. The creation of art and literature would serve to "uplift" the race.

Contributing factors leading to the Harlem Renaissance were the Great Migration of African Americans to northern cities, which concentrated ambitious people in places where they could encourage each other, and the First World War, which had created new industrial work opportunities for tens of thousands of people. Factors leading to the decline of this era include the Great Depression.

- **Hollywood**: Before World War I, movies were made in several U.S. cities, but filmmakers gravitated to southern California as the industry developed. They were attracted by the **mild climate and reliable sunlight**, which made it possible to film movies outdoors **year-round**, and by the varied scenery that was available.

During the so-called **Golden Age of Hollywood**, which lasted from the end of the silent era in American cinema in the **late 1920s to the late 1950s**, thousands of movies were issued from the Hollywood studios. The start of the Golden Age was arguably when ***The Jazz Singer* was released in 1927, ending the silent era – 1927 first “talkie”**.

- **Paramount Pictures**: American film production and distribution company founded in 1912, it is America's oldest existing film studio.
- **Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Inc., (MGM)**, is an American media company, involved primarily in the production and distribution of films and television programs. MGM was founded in 1924.
- The **Academy Award** (informally known as the **Oscar**) is an award by the American **Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences** (AMPAS) to recognize excellence of professionals in the film industry, including directors, actors, and writers. The first Academy Awards ceremony was held in **May 1929**.



- **Marlene Dietrich** (†1992), actress and singer.

Dietrich's performance as Lola-Lola in ***The Blue Angel* (1930)** brought her international fame and a contract with Paramount Pictures in the US. Hollywood films such as *Shanghai Express* and *Desire* made her one of the highest paid actresses of the era.

Dietrich became a US citizen in 1939; during World War II, she was a high-profile frontline entertainer. Although she still made occasional films in the post-war years, Dietrich spent most of the 1950s to the 1970s touring the world as a successful show performer.

- **Charlie Chaplin** (†1977) was an **English** comic actor and film director of the **silent film era**. He became one of the best-known film stars in the world before the end of the First World War. Chaplin used mime, slapstick and other visual comedy routines, and continued well into the era of the talkies, though his films decreased in frequency from the end of the 1920s.

***The Great Dictator* (1940): Chaplin's first talking picture.** This movie was an act of defiance against Nazism, filmed and released in the United States one year before the U.S. entry into the Second World War. Chaplin played the role of "Adenoid Hynkel", Dictator of Tomania, modelled on German dictator Adolf Hitler.