



## How the Twenties Roared

The Roaring Twenties was a period of rapid change. Wars and conflicts broke out in a Europe that was marching toward dictatorship. This country saw the Red Scare cause terror in the country with bombings. At the same time, the Spanish influenza was at the end of its death path through the world, and treaties were being drawn up with new nations in an effort to establish peace. This change affected almost every part of the cultural and social world.

Women won the right to vote with the 18th Amendment and pushed for equal treatment. Dresses became shorter, and the bathing suit caused outrage and had to be measured from the bottom of the suit to the knee. Young women called flappers showed their energetic freedom with bobbed hair and drinking and smoking in public. The 19th Amendment forced drinking behind closed doors of speakeasies. The cocktail drink was created to move the barroom to the lounge. The automobile had the impact of change on the relationship of courtship, going from “gentleman calling” to “dating.” The supply of alcohol gave birth to bootlegging, which later would develop into today’s NASCAR through the rural mechanics souping-up car engines to stay ahead of the Feds.

The American economy expanded to a world market wanting new devices. As President Calvin Coolidge said, “the business of America is business.” American business moved into the world market from an industrial society that was still intact after the war. The Hoover vacuum cleaner was so popular in England that the British still refer to a vacuum as the “Hoover.” Americans benefitted from electrical appliances in their homes and kitchens—irons, refrigerators and electric stoves. The radio was broadcast from KDKA and advertised soap on programs, creating the popular term *soap opera*. The country was becoming more urban. *The New York Times* newspaper ridiculed Robert Goddard’s ideas of rockets.

The yeoman farmer was becoming the “hick” or “hillbilly.” The Scopes Trial portrayed rural America as backward and uneducated. The change in values had a reaction of allowing the new Ku Klux Klan to spread its expanded hatred of race and religion under the guise of American virtue of the Cross and Flag. The public could hear the news over the radio, listen to sporting events, and go to the movie theater to watch silent films and a new cartoon based on a mouse. By the end of the decade, films would have added sound to create the talkies. Americans would see films of Charles Lindbergh landing in Paris and Amelia Earhart’s successful flight across the Atlantic.

All in all, the 1920s saw social and culture change in a time period that is glossed over as a period of jazz, literature and political corruption. So, take some time to read about the 1920s!

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