



The Year 1919 and History Today

Some historians relate history to the past. For example, 1919 and 1968 are considered the two worst years in American history. Often, we are told we should learn from history so as not to repeat past mistakes. However, history does not repeat itself; instead, it is more like poetic rhyming sequences. Events cause actions and reactions, and those actions and reactions create similarities. See if you can recognize the “rhymes” from the year 1919.

Fear of communism swept the nation, as evidenced by the Red Scare. Anarchists set off bombs in major American cities and sent mail bombs to individuals. The government responded with the Palmer Raids, arresting approximately 10,000 individuals and deporting 249 of them to Finland, which allowed them to walk into the new Soviet Union.

A series of labor strikes, including the Seattle general strike, the Boston Police strike, and the Boston telephone strike, and riots, including the May Day Riots, caused unrest nationwide. This unrest spilled over into race relationships, creating the tension behind the race riots of the Red Summer and the Ku Klux Klan holding power in 27 states.

The Treaty of Versailles was signed in Europe, but the United States did not sign. Though the federal budget was under \$19 billion, President Wilson faced attack from Congress over the Treaty of Versailles and civil rights issues. Women were given the right to vote, and the 18th Amendment began to shape the American culture.

Increasing in popularity, jazz music now had its roots in the city of Chicago. The first Felix the Cat cartoon was broadcast, and Ripley published Believe It or Not. The newly introduced rotary-dial telephone, the pop-up toaster, and the short-wave radio all brought convenience and new opportunities for communication into American homes.

In science, Albert Einstein's Theory of General Relativity was confirmed in an eclipse. However, the third wave of the flu pandemic took more than 185,000 lives that year.

Scandal rocked America's favorite pastime when news broke that the Chicago White Sox had thrown the World Series. Players accepted money from crime bosses and earned a new nickname—the Black Sox. Hollywood began coming into its own, creating a plethora of films to fill Americans' newly-found leisure time.

Two pounds of roast beef could be purchased for 38 cents, a quart of milk for 9 cents, and a loaf of bread for 7 cents. Oregon passed the first tax on gasoline in the nation. Thanks to Henry Ford, the Model T was available for \$400 “in any color”—though the most common color coming out of the factory was black.

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