



CHAPTER **13** The Roaring Twenties

SSUSH16 How did political, economic, and cultural developments after WW I lead to a shared national identity?

- a. How did fears of rising communism and socialism in the United States lead to the Red Scare and the restriction of immigration?
- b. What were the effects of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments?
- c. How did mass production and advertising lead to increasing consumerism, including Henry Ford and the automobile?
- d. How did the radio and movies act as unifying forces in national culture?
- e. How did modern forms of cultural expression emerge in this period, such as jazz and the Harlem Renaissance?

Terms and Concepts You Should Know

Communism

Socialism

“Red Scare”

“Palmer Raids”

immigration

quota

Emergency Quota Act (1921)

National Origins Act (1924)

Eighteenth Amendment

Prohibition

Organized crime

Nineteenth Amendment

Women’s suffrage

Flappers

Mass production

Henry Ford

Assembly line

Suburbs

Consumerism

Advertising

Advertising agency

Installment purchasing

Radio

Motion picture

“Great Migration”

Harlem Renaissance

Langston Hughes

Marcus Garvey

Jazz

Louis Armstrong

Georgia “Peaches” of Wisdom



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1. The triumph of communism in Russia, the formation of the Communist Labor Party of America, widespread strikes and a series of bombings in the United States led many Americans to fear communists and socialists during the “Red Scare” of 1919. Thousands of foreign-born radicals were arrested and several hundred were deported in the “Palmer Raids.” Two Italian anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, were convicted for murder in 1920 on flimsy evidence.

2. Prejudice against immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, a desire to preserve America’s “Anglo-Saxon” and Protestant heritage, and the “Red Scare” led to the first limits on immigration from Europe. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924 imposed harsh restrictions on immigration in order to preserve America’s existing ethnic composition.

3. The Eighteenth Amendment (1919) outlawed the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Its passage had long been the goal of the Temperance Movement. Anti-German sentiment against German-sounding brewers of beer helped to secure its ratification. The amendment laid the basis for Prohibition. Foreign-born immigrants and city-dwellers opposed Prohibition, encouraging widespread defiance of the law and the growth of organized crime. Criminals like Al Capone supplied illegal alcohol to consumers. Prohibition led to the unintended consequence of the growth of organized crime. It was considered a failure and repealed in 1933.

4. The Nineteenth Amendment (1920) gave women the right to vote in all states. It was the goal of the women’s suffrage movement. Ratification of the amendment symbolized women’s equality and encouraged women to become more assertive and independent in the Twenties. More women worked outside the home and a few pursued higher education and professional careers. “Flappers” wore loose clothing and went out without chaperones. Politicians had to pay more attention to women’s issues since they could now vote.

5. The spread of the automobile and new electric appliances contributed to the economic prosperity

of the decade. Automobile-maker Henry Ford introduced the use of the conveyor belt to his assembly-line production.

This method was so efficient that he could raise his workers’ wages while lowering the prices of his cars. Ford’s Model T changed automobiles from a luxury product to one that many middle-class Americans could afford. Manufacturers followed his example in other industries, bringing down the prices of goods and promoting economic prosperity. The spread in the use of the automobile required steel, oil, roads, and gas stations, propelling the entire economy forward.

6. Mass production required new marketing techniques to reach consumers across the nation. Manufacturers relied on advertising on billboards, in newspapers and magazines, on the radio and in movie theaters to promote their products, while new installment payment plans made buying goods easier. The lower prices of mass-produced goods, advertising, and installment plans promoted mass consumerism.

7. Radio broadcasts and motion pictures with sound were both introduced in the 1920s. They helped to create a shared national identity in which Americans listened to the same radio programs and watched the same movies and newsreels.

8. During the “Great Migration,” many African Americans moved from the South to the cities of the Northeast and Midwest. The Harlem Renaissance saw a flourishing of African-American culture, with essays, novels, short stories, and poetry. Its writers and painters produced great works of literature and art based on the African-American experience. Marcus Garvey encouraged African Americans to rely more on themselves and to separate from whites. Jazz music, a fusion of African-American and European musical traditions, became popular among both whites and blacks. Despite these successes, African Americans continued to face Jim Crow laws, lynchings, and economic inequality in the South, and even in Northern cities, they faced racism and violence.

After the reforms of the Progressives and the sacrifices of World War I, many Americans embraced the call of Warren G. Harding, who was elected President in 1920, for a “return to normalcy.” America needed a rest. Instead of trying to save the world, Americans would focus on earning money and spending it. But this was a far cry from a simple return to the

pre-war days: the Twenties were a period of profound change. Political, economic and cultural developments in this period helped build a shared national identity. The rise of the “media” (radio and movies), consumerism of mass-produced goods, the greater freedom enjoyed by women, a flourishing of African-American culture, and a fear of foreign influences all contributed to this process.

The “Red Scare”

The Twenties began with a short phase of uncertainty and fear. A group of **communists** seized power in Russia in November 1917, while World War I was still raging. These communists not only pulled Russia out of the war but also opposed private property, religious beliefs, and free enterprise. They were therefore viewed as anti-American.

President Wilson authorized U.S. troops in Russia to intervene on the side of the “Whites,” the opponents of the communists (or “Reds”) in the Russian Civil War. American troops stayed in Siberia until 1920, but they failed to prevent a communist victory. American leaders refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the new Russian government. Meanwhile, communists threatened to seize power in both Germany and Hungary.

In the United States, workers expressed concern over the future as the war came to an end. A wave of strikes took place across the United States in 1919. In Boston, police went on strike; in Seattle, workers staged a general strike. Workers at U.S. Steel, many of whom were immigrants from Eastern Europe, demanded the right to organize into unions and also went on strike. So did coal workers in Indiana. Meanwhile radical socialists formed the Communist Labor Party of America in August 1919.

The success of communists in Russia, the communist attempts in Central Europe, the wave of strikes across the United States, and the formation of the Communist Labor Party made many Americans fearful of a communist revolution happening here. Because

Socialism, communism and anarchism were ideologies that developed in response to the Industrial Revolution. **Socialists** believe that governments should take over certain basic industries, such as transportation, and should provide basic benefits to all citizens, including education, health care, and retirement pensions. **Communists** believe that all history is the story of class struggle—one social group oppressing another. They think workers can only improve their conditions by seizing power through a violent revolution. Once they obtain power, communists plan to establish social equality by abolishing private property altogether. Everyone in a communist society was supposed to share their talents and help each other out. **Anarchists** believe that all organized governments are harmful. They favor a society without government, in which people can act freely.

communists had adopted the color red as their symbol, this popular fear became known as the “Red Scare.”

The “Palmer Raids”

Mitchell Palmer, a Pennsylvania Quaker and a Progressive Democrat, was appointed as Attorney General by President Wilson in March 1919. Only a month after his appointment, letter bombs sent by Italian-born anarchists (*people who opposed organized governments*) were found in the U.S. mail. One of these bombs was addressed to Palmer. In June, a bomb actually exploded on Palmer’s porch while other bombs exploded in several cities.

Palmer created a new group inside the Justice Department, led by an energetic young lawyer, J. Edgar Hoover. In November, Hoover

supervised the arrest of Russian workers suspected of radical activity in twelve cities: more than 200 of them were deported (*sent out of the country*). In January 1920, Hoover directed simultaneous raids without search warrants in 30 cities, known as the “Palmer Raids.” About 6,000 suspects were arrested. Most of them were foreign-born residents from Russia and Germany, who could be deported after a brief hearing without a jury. Palmer would have deported most of the arrested suspects, but the Department of Labor believed many of the arrests were illegal and refused to deport more than 556. The rest of the suspects were released. Emma Goldman, a prominent radical activist, was one of those deported. Palmer predicted there would be a communist uprising in the United States, but this never happened.

The Historian’s Apprentice

“Like a prairie fire, the blaze of revolution was sweeping over every American institution of law and order a year ago. It was eating its way into the homes of the American workmen . . . burning up the foundations of society. Robbery, not war, is the ideal of communism. This has been demonstrated in Russia, Germany, and in America. . . . Obviously, it is the creed of any criminal mind . . . By stealing, murder and lies, [Communism] has looted Russia, not only of its material strength but of its moral force . . . My information showed that communism in this country was an organization of thousands of aliens who were direct allies of Trotsky [*a Russian Communist leader*]. . . The Government is now sweeping the nation clean of such alien filth . . .”

—A. Mitchell Palmer, “The Case against the Reds” (1920)

“Every human being is entitled to hold any opinion that appeals to her or him without making herself or himself liable to persecution. . . . It requires no great prophetic gift to foresee that this new governmental policy of deportation is but the first step towards the introduction into this country of the old Russian system of exile for the high treason of entertaining new ideas of social life and industrial reconstruction. Today so-called aliens are deported, tomorrow native Americans will be banished.”

—Emma Goldman, speaking at her deportation hearing (October 1919)

- ◆ Imagine that you are a newspaper editor in 1920. First read the excerpts from Palmer’s pamphlet and Goldman’s speech above. Then write your own editorial on whether the Palmer Raids were justified.



Nicola Sacco Bartolomeo Vanzetti

Two Italian immigrants, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (a shoemaker and a fish seller) were arrested in 1920 for murders committed during a payroll truck robbery. Not only were they immigrants, Sacco and Vanzetti were also anarchists—radicals who opposed

organized government. The trial judge made several statements against the accused outside the court. Although the evidence was unclear, they were convicted and sentenced to death. Despite new evidence and multiple appeals, requests for a retrial were denied. After a legal battle that lasted seven years, Sacco and Vanzetti were finally executed in 1927. There were loud outcries of injustice both at home and abroad. Almost a century later, it remains a subject of controversy whether or not Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty of the robbery, but there is general agreement that their trial was unfair.

Restrictions on Immigration

The Twenties also saw new limits on immigration. Immigration from Europe had been unrestricted before World War I. During the war, submarine warfare made it dangerous to cross the Atlantic. The great flood of immigration that had begun in the late nineteenth century was temporarily halted. In 1917, Congress passed a literacy test over President Wilson's veto. The new law required immigrants to read and write in their own language. This was intended to keep out poorer, uneducated, and unskilled immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Even so, about 800,000 newcomers still arrived between June 1920 and June 1921.

Nativist sentiment, agitation by labor unions fearing competition from cheap labor, and popular prejudice against Southern and Eastern Europeans had been growing for decades. Many Americans believed people coming from these other places were inferior. They further wanted to keep traditional American culture the way it had been before World War I—dominated by white, “Anglo-Saxon,” Protestants (“WASPs”).

The Ku Klux Klan (“KKK”) was also revived in the 1920s. The Klan opposed immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe much as it supported racial segregation. The “Red Scare” also contributed to anti-immigrant feeling. These forces now led to the passage of laws restricting immigration from Europe for the first time in our history.

Emergency Quota Act (1921)

During the 1920 election campaign, Harding had called for limits on immigration. Soon after he took office, Congress passed the **Emergency Quota Act of 1921**. A “quota” refers to a fixed number of people permitted to do something. The Emergency Quota Act limited the total number of immigrants who could lawfully enter the United States in any one year to 350,000. This was fewer than half the number admitted in 1920.

Under the new law, each foreign country was assigned its own quota, or maximum number of immigrants, based on the number

of immigrants from that country living in the United States in 1910. The new quota system was aimed at drastically reducing the number of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe. Immigration from most of Asia had already been banned in 1917, except for immigrants from the Philippines. Immigration from Latin America, however, remained unrestricted.

The National Origins Act (1924)

When Harding died in 1923, Calvin Coolidge became President. Coolidge believed that “Nordics” (people from Northern and Western Europe) were superior to other ethnic groups. During his Presidency, restrictions on immigration were further tightened. Experts testified before Congress that people from Eastern and Southern Europe were genetically inferior. The **Immigration Act of 1924** lowered the total number of legal immigrants per year to 150,000 (this was 2% the number of foreign-born residents living in the United States in 1890).

The quota for each country was also changed. The date on which it was based was pushed back from 1910 to 1890, a time before the large influx of “New Immigrants.” The way in which the quota for each country was calculated was changed too. In 1921, this had been based on the percentage of immigrants of each nationality compared to all immigrants living in the United States. In 1924, it was based on the percentage of people of each national origin compared to all Americans. For this reason, the 1924 law is sometimes known as the “**National Origins Act.**”

The total effect of these changes was to reduce drastically the number of immigrants coming to the United States from Southern and Eastern Europe. For example, before World War I about 200,000 Italians migrated to the United States each year. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 reduced this number to 40,000. Under the 1924 Immigration Act, a mere 4,000 Italians could be legally admitted into the United States.

The Historian’s Apprentice

1. Your class should debate the following resolution:

Resolved: The United States should have continued to permit unrestricted immigration from Europe.

2. How important was the “Red Scare” to the passage of new laws restricting immigration?

The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments

During the Twenties, two important amendments were shaping American life—the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Amendments. Each amendment introduced a change that had long been sought by Progressive reformers. The two

amendments differed, however, in their degree of success. One led to permanent changes in American society, while the other became a social experiment that failed.

The Historian's Apprentice

Eighteenth Amendment (1919)

Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all the territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation . . .

Nineteenth Amendment (1920)

Section 1. The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Section 2. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

* * *

1. Based on the excerpts above, what did each of these amendments do?
2. Why did these changes have to be made by Constitutional amendment rather than by a simple federal law?
3. Why did both amendments give Congress the power to enforce them by “appropriate legislation”?

Prohibition

As you know, the **Temperance Movement** began in the nineteenth century. Supporters believed that alcoholic beverages caused poverty, crime, sinful behavior and the breakdown of families. They called for laws outlawing alcoholic drinks. Protestant church groups and women reformers were especially active in this movement. Temperance also appealed to the residents of small towns. Nineteen states had banned alcohol by the beginning of World War I.

The **Eighteenth Amendment** extended this “noble experiment”—a clear attempt to legislate public morality—to the national level. The amendment was ratified by the states by the beginning of 1919. Anti-German feeling helped

win support for ratification, since many breweries (like Pabst and Busch) had German-sounding names. The amendment prohibited “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors,” including their importation. The amendment gave both Congress and state governments powers of enforcement. In October 1919, Congress passed the Volstead Act, a federal law that defined “intoxicating liquors” to include both wine and beer. The law provided penalties for the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages, but not for their consumption. It also permitted limited production of alcohol for medical or religious purposes.

Prohibition—the *prohibiting* of alcoholic drinks—proved difficult to enforce. The federal



Authorities disposing of illegal alcohol

government did not set aside enough money for enforcement. There were very few enforcement agents. Most European immigrants and many city-dwellers did not believe it was wrong to drink alcohol and refused to obey the law. “Bootleggers” brought beer and whiskey across from Canada. Others made their own brew in secret stills. Illegal nightclubs—known as “speakeasies”—served liquor in cities. Even President Harding secretly served alcohol to his guests in the White House.

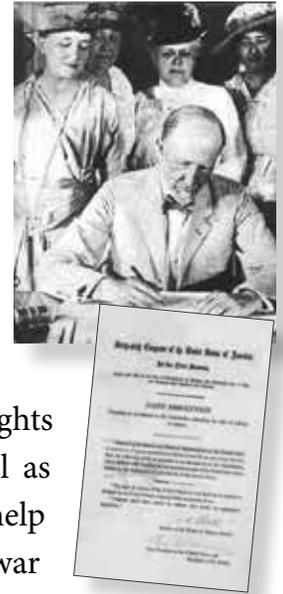
As a result of Prohibition, some people began to lose their respect for the law in general. The manufacture, transportation, and sale of alcohol was largely taken over by criminal gangs. Criminal bosses like Al Capone in Chicago made fortunes selling bootlegged liquor. Organized crime used its increased wealth and power to move into gambling, prostitution, and the collection of money from local businesses. Although Prohibition reduced social drinking, its unintended consequence—the rise of organized crime—turned out to be far worse than any of its benefits. The “noble experiment” failed, and Prohibition was repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933.



Chicago Police Department mug shot of Al Capone

Women’s Suffrage

The decade also opened with ratification of the **Nineteenth Amendment** (1920), which guaranteed women the right to vote in federal elections. The amendment was recognition that women were entitled to the same rights of citizenship as men, as well as an acknowledgement of the help that women had given to the war effort.



During the Twenties, women’s roles continued to change. More women joined the work force, finding employment outside the home as secretaries, sales clerks, telephone operators, nurses, and factory workers. Some entered occupations traditionally reserved for men. A small number—graduates of women’s colleges—became professional “career women.” Meanwhile new household appliances—such as the refrigerator, electric washing machine, and vacuum cleaner—gave middle-class women more leisure time.

Manners and morals were also changing. In the 1920s, many women became more assertive. Some smoked and drank in public. They stopped wearing restrictive clothing like petticoats, corsets, broad hats, and long dresses. “Flappers” were fashionable young women who wore lipstick, short hair, and straight simple dresses or pleated skirts that only reached to their knees. The name “Flapper” referred to their greater freedom—they were birds “flapping” their wings.

With a greater number of women living in cities and a growing number of cars, many young women began going out without

chaperones (*an older person accompanying a younger unmarried woman*). In general, women not only gained the right to vote in the Twenties but also enjoyed greater freedom of self-expression and independence.

Passage of the Nineteenth Amendment also meant that candidates for public office had to seek the support of women voters and pay more attention to issues of concern to women.

The Historian's Apprentice

- ◆ Why was women's suffrage (Nineteenth Amendment) more successful than Prohibition (Eighteenth Amendment)?

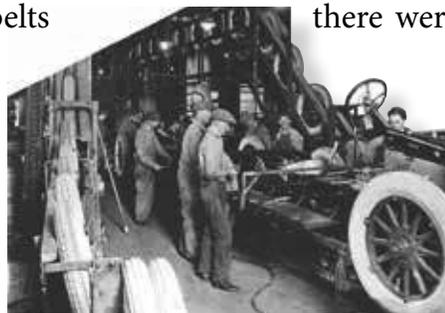
Boom Times: Economic Prosperity in the Twenties

For most Americans, the 1920s were a period of economic prosperity. More jobs were available and wages increased. Profits and production soared. Republican Presidents encouraged business growth with low taxes, fewer regulations and higher tariffs. Mass production and advertising led to increased **consumerism**. Consumerism, in turn, increased the demand for goods, helping businesses, boosting production, and creating additional jobs.

Mass Production

One of the keys to the prosperity of the 1920s was **mass production**—the use of machines to produce a large number of identical copies of a good. The techniques of mass production greatly increased the efficiency of American industry.

In 1914, the car manufacturer **Henry Ford** introduced electric conveyor belts to his assembly lines. Each car chassis moved along the belt to different groups of workers who completed one small portion of the car's assembly. Production time was astonishingly



cut to one-sixth of what it had previously taken. Ford was able to lower the prices for his cars, increase his workers' wages, and still make more money than ever before.

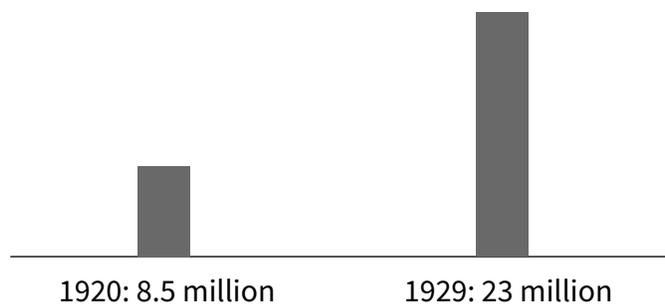
In the 1920s, the conveyor belt and other new techniques were adopted not only by the automobile industry but also by other manufacturers, making American workers more productive.

The Spread of the Automobile and Other New Industries

The product that most transformed American life in this period was the automobile. Ford's vision of mass-produced automobiles, built on an assembly line, brought the price of his basic "Model-T" car low enough to become affordable to middle-class purchasers instead of remaining a luxury item just for the very rich. In 1920, there were just over 8 million cars on the road; by 1930, there were three times that number, or one car for every six Americans.

A Ford assembly line

Annual Car Registrations in the United States



The production of automobiles required vast amounts of steel, glass, and rubber, stimulating those industries. Motorists required paved roads, bridges, garages, gas stations, gasoline and motor oil. All of this stimulated the economy. By 1929, one out of every nine workers was employed in an auto-related industry. The automobile had other effects as well. School buses allowed the creation of larger schools to serve wider areas. Tractors increased farm production. Trucks could deliver goods to areas not reached by train. Cars gave people greater mobility, allowing farmers to drive into town for shopping or families to drive away on vacation. People could travel and visit other parts of the United States. Automobile travel became a shared experience, reinforcing the development of a more national culture.

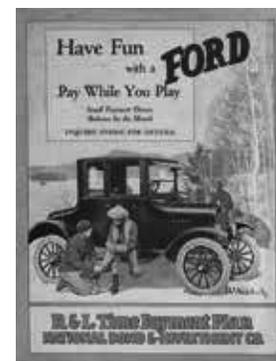
The construction of **suburbs**—living areas on the outskirts of cities with more open space—was greatly encouraged by the spread of the car. Real estate values rose. Along with the growth of suburbs was the appearance of the first shopping centers—groups of stores that could only be reached by car. Even “bootlegging” and the rise of organized crime were helped by the presence of cars and trucks, which transported hidden alcohol or helped criminals escape the scene of the crime.

Other industries also contributed to the national prosperity. **Airplanes**, using the same internal combustion engines as cars to drive their

propellers, began making commercial flights. The use of **electricity** by Americans more than doubled in the 1920s. New electric household appliances, like the vacuum cleaner, refrigerator, and electric toaster, became generally available for the first time (although the first home refrigerator cost more than a Model T car). The American chemical industry likewise greatly expanded in these years. Commercial broadcasts on radio first began in 1920 and led to the manufacture and sale of millions of radio sets. By the end of the decade, the new motion picture business was also becoming a large industry. The emergence of all of these industries created new jobs, generated profits, and changed the ways in which Americans lived, traveled, communicated, and enjoyed themselves. They contributed to a shared national identity.

New Marketing Practices in an Age of Increasing Consumerism

Mass production required **mass consumption**, which in turn required new ways to **market** (*promote the sale of*) goods. How would millions of consumers know what to buy? The growth of **advertising** informed potential consumers while creating a demand for products and services. New **advertising agencies** studied psychology and specialized in developing slogans and advertisements to attract customers. Advertisements were placed in newspapers and magazines, and on street signs and billboards. Businesses like the Ford Motor Company sponsored radio programs, so that they could have their advertisements read to listeners. Homes received



mail-order catalogs, while shoppers in cities visited giant department stores where clothing and household items from different manufacturers were displayed. All this advertising and marketing tied Americans together and again helped forge a new national culture.

Manufacturers and retailers developed special marketing practices to help their customers pay for products, such as **installment buying**.

The buyer had only to pay a small down payment to take an item home. The purchaser then paid the balance in small monthly payments (which included interest). Henry Ford was one of the first to introduce installment buying, letting his customers pay for their cars over two years. Consumers also used installment buying to purchase such goods as refrigerators and household appliances.

The Historian's Apprentice

- ◆ Look online to find advertisements from the 1920s. How are these advertisements similar to, and how are they different from, the advertisements we see today?

Radio and Movies Help Unify National Culture

Greater leisure time gave people more time for entertainment. By 1930, more than half the U.S. population was going to the movies once a week. More than half of all American families owned radios. Radio and motion pictures helped to forge a truly national culture as millions of Americans listened to the same voices on the radio or saw the same scenes in the movie theater.

Radio

In the late nineteenth century, scientists discovered that electromagnetic waves could travel through space. In the early twentieth century, an Italian inventor used these “radio waves” to transmit messages. The same inventor developed new transmitters so that radio waves could travel over longer distances. The invention of the vacuum tube made it possible to reproduce sound from radio waves more accurately.

During World War I, radio waves were used for military communications. Shortly after the

war, the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) began making the first regular radio broadcasts. NBC was founded in 1926 and CBS was founded in 1928 to make radio broadcasts.

Americans began buying radios so that they could listen to radio plays, sports events, musical concerts, and the news. Listening to the radio was free because radio programs were paid for by advertisers. For the first time, Americans could listen to the World Series or learn election results almost instantaneously. Families sat around their radio for evening entertainment, just as many families watch television today. Radio made it possible for people across America to listen to the same broadcasts and learn about the same



events at the same time—and more quickly than ever before.

Movies

Thomas Edison's company perfected the technology for **motion pictures**, or “movies,” at the end of the nineteenth century. Light was shown through a photograph printed on transparent film, projecting an image onto a screen. A shutter closed on each picture or frame, creating a short interval of darkness that the viewer could not see. Instead, the viewer saw a series of images that seemed to move. Edison set up the first film studio in New York and began producing films for the public as early as 1893.

Other companies set up rival film studios in New York, but several decided to move to avoid disputes with Edison over patent rights. In 1910, the director D. W. Griffith took a group of actors to Los Angeles. They settled in Hollywood, then a small village. In 1915, Griffith filmed *Birth of a Nation*, a silent film about the Civil War and Reconstruction, which became one of the most successful films of all time.

Soon other filmmakers, attracted by the warm and sunny weather, also moved to Hollywood. In 1927, *The Jazz Singer*, the first “talkie” film with sound, was released. The following year, Walt Disney introduced viewers



to Mickey Mouse in *Steamboat Willie*, an animated film with synchronized sound.

Movie studios like Paramount and Warner Brothers acquired their own movie theaters, where they showed their productions. Writers, directors, actors and actresses signed contracts with movie studios and received salaries and training, but they were only allowed to make films for the studio they contracted with. Hollywood began producing westerns, comedies, romances, and musicals.

More and more Americans became attracted to the movies as a form of entertainment. Movie stars like Rudolph Valentino, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, and Greta Garbo became household names. Movie houses often showed newsreels before the main feature, and thus became places where Americans learned more about current affairs.

Like radio, movies brought Americans together. Viewers from around the country shared the same experience. More Americans paid a weekly visit to the local movie theater than attended houses of worship. Films revealed how other people lived. Movie stars served as role models. These were all major steps in creating a shared national identity as Americans.

Modern Forms of Cultural Expression: The Harlem Renaissance and Jazz

The 1920s marked a great break from the more restrictive morals and social rules of the late nineteenth century. Women enjoyed greater freedom. Art became expressionist or abstract.

People became more open in expressing their feelings. African-American culture also flourished in these years, making important contributions to modern forms of cultural expression.

The “Great Migration”

By the late nineteenth century, there was a steady flow of African Americans from the South to the cities of the Midwest and Northeast. Their number only increased during World War I. They were escaping segregation and seeking new job opportunities. Many also moved because of the destruction of the cotton crop by the boll weevil. Their movement in this period is called the “Great Migration.” This migration and the participation of African Americans in the war effort set the stage for the successes of African-American writers, artists, and musicians in the Twenties.

The Harlem Renaissance

During the 1920s, African Americans developed a new sense of pride. There were approximately 15 million African Americans living in the United States. An important concentration of African Americans was located in **Harlem**, a neighborhood in New York City. Because discrimination often prevented them from finding apartments in other parts of the city, African Americans of different occupations and backgrounds mixed together in Harlem, living side by side.

African-American communities in New York and other Northern cities started their own daily newspapers, such as *The Defender* in Chicago, which reached 300,000 subscribers by 1930, and the *Pittsburg Courier* with 100,000 readers. The NAACP published its own monthly magazine, *The Crisis*, while the National Urban League published the magazine *Opportunity*. These magazines not only reported news events and rallied supporters, they also published the work of African-American writers and poets, giving birth to a flourishing of black culture that has become known as the “**Harlem Renaissance**.”

The Harlem Renaissance began with the publication of the essay “Enter the New Negro,” by Alain Locke, an African-American philosophy professor. Locke’s “New Negro” rejected the timidity and subservience of the “Old Negro”—African Americans who had attempted to reconcile themselves to white supremacy. Instead, the “New Negro” took pride in being black. With “renewed self-respect and self-dependence,” the New Negro would rise above racism: “[F]rom some inner, desperate resourcefulness,” wrote Locke, “has recently sprung up the simple expedient of fighting prejudice by mental passive resistance, in other words by trying to ignore it.”

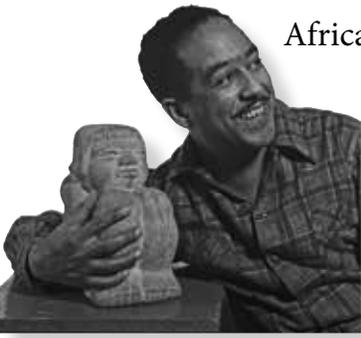
Some of the writers and artists who participated in the Harlem Renaissance were veterans of World War I. After fighting for democracy abroad, they resented second-class citizenship and white supremacy at home. One of their goals was to disprove racial prejudice by showing that African Americans were capable of creating great works of art and literature.

Note: You won’t be required to know the names of specific writers, artists, or musicians for the EOC Assessment, but it helps to know their work in order to understand what the Harlem Renaissance was about.

Among these writers was Countee Cullen, a poet who had studied English and French literature and married the daughter of NAACP founder W.E.B. Du Bois. Another participant was Jean Toomer, who wrote *Cane* (1923)—a modern novel consisting of short stories, poems and a play, all of which described



W.E.B. Du Bois



Langston Hughes

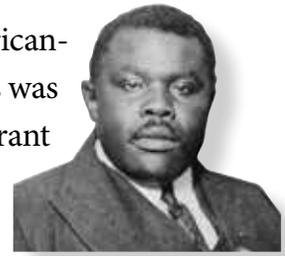
African-American experiences in both the South and the North.

The most celebrated poet of the Harlem Renaissance was **Langston Hughes**. Hughes aimed to capture “the spirit of the race” and inspire his people:

“Most of my poems are racial in theme and treatment, derived from the life I know.” Hughes was fluent in German, Spanish, and French. He had studied engineering at Columbia University and lived in Paris before returning to Harlem. His poems first appeared in the magazines *The Crisis* and *Opportunity*. In 1926, Hughes published his first complete volume of poetry.

Another writer, Claude McKay, came from Jamaica. McKay wrote *Home to Harlem* in 1928, a novel providing a realistic portrayal of African-American life in Harlem. McKay, Hughes and the other young writers of the Harlem Renaissance believed that they should uncover the terrible consequences of racism in their writings, including the conditions of poor African Americans in the North. Other important writers of the Harlem Renaissance included Zora Neale Hurston, who published short stories. Another writer, Wallace Thurman, believed that black writers should not have a specific agenda other than to express themselves. Thurman, Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes began publishing a literary journal, *Fire!!!*

The painter Archibald Motley is often considered a member of the Harlem Renaissance, even though he lived in Chicago. Motley is famous for his African-American portraits and scenes of nightlife. Other notable painters were Palmer Hayden and Aaron Douglas.



Marcus Garvey

The most prominent African-American leader in the Twenties was **Marcus Garvey**, another immigrant

from Jamaica. Born in Jamaica, Garvey traveled to both Latin America and England. Returning to Jamaica in 1914, he established the Universal Negro Improvement Association. In 1916, Garvey moved to Harlem. He believed that “black is beautiful,” and that all people of African heritage should take pride in their race. He emphasized the achievements of African history: “Negroes, teach your children that they are the direct descendants of the greatest and proudest race that ever peopled the earth.”

Garvey opposed cooperation with whites in organizations like the NAACP and encouraged African Americans to form their own businesses and act independently. Garvey set up stores, restaurants, a hotel and even published his own newspaper, *The Negro World*. He also established his own shipping line—the “Black Star Line”—with routes to the Caribbean—and started a “Back to Africa” movement.

Garvey soon had half a million followers. In 1920, he held the “International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World” in Madison Square Garden, where he had himself proclaimed as “Provisional President” of Africa. However, his shipping venture failed, and he made the mistake of meeting with Ku Klux Klan leaders in the South, enraging other African-American leaders. In 1923, Garvey was tried and convicted for mail fraud. He spent two years in prison and was deported to Jamaica in 1927. His movement never recovered, although some of his ideas would later re-emerge during the Civil Rights Movement.

While the 1920s saw the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance, it was also a period of increasing racial violence. In the South, African Americans suffered from a legal system of racial segregation, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan and repeated lynchings (*mob hangings*). In Northern cities, periodic spurts of violence sometimes ended in rioting and the destruction of African-American neighborhoods.

Jazz Music

With its syncopated (*shifted or unexpected*) rhythms from ragtime, its use of notes from the blues scale, and its emphasis on improvisation, jazz music became popular in the 1920s. Jazz had its roots in old work songs, the ragtime rhythms of pianist-composers like Scott Joplin, blues music from the South, and African-American spirituals. It began in New Orleans as a fusion of European and African music. After the war, many jazz musicians migrated to Chicago and New York. It was a unique African-American musical form.

Langston Hughes tried to capture the pulse of jazz in one of his poems: “In many of them I try to grasp and hold some of the meanings and rhythms of jazz. Jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world.”

Musicians such as Louis Armstrong, Cab Calloway, and Duke Ellington played jazz music in Harlem nightclubs. Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and Bessie Smith became famous as jazz vocalists. Radio stations began playing music and included jazz recordings. Jazz became popular across the country. Although African Americans continued to face prejudice and racism, jazz music was accepted and became part of the national culture. White New Yorkers flocked at night to the Cotton Club in Harlem, where black musicians played to white audiences. White composers like George Gershwin, created jazz compositions. F. Scott Fitzgerald popularized jazz in his books. The Twenties has become known as the “Jazz Age.”

Louis Armstrong (1901–1971), for example, was born in New Orleans. He became a cornet and trumpet player in New Orleans. In 1922, Armstrong moved with Joe “King” Oliver and his band to Chicago. Later, Armstrong left Oliver’s band to move to New York. Armstrong was one of the first jazz musicians to emphasize solo performances. He also became famous for his composing, recording and singing, including “scat singing” (singing sounds without words).



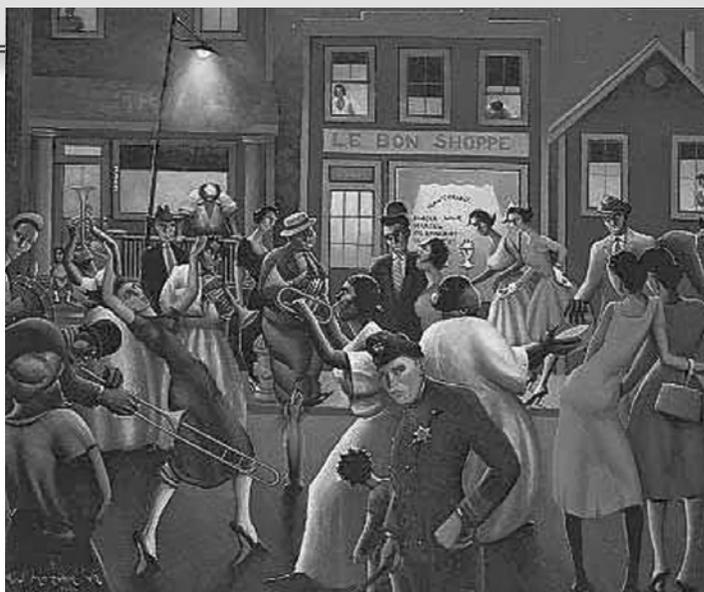
The Historian’s Apprentice

1. Look up one of the writers from the Harlem Renaissance on the internet or in your school library, and read an excerpt from his or her works. Write a short summary of the excerpt to share with your class.
2. Pretend your classroom is a jazz club. Have members of your class impersonate jazz musicians or writers and artists from the Harlem Renaissance. Have each participant tell the rest of the class about his or her work.

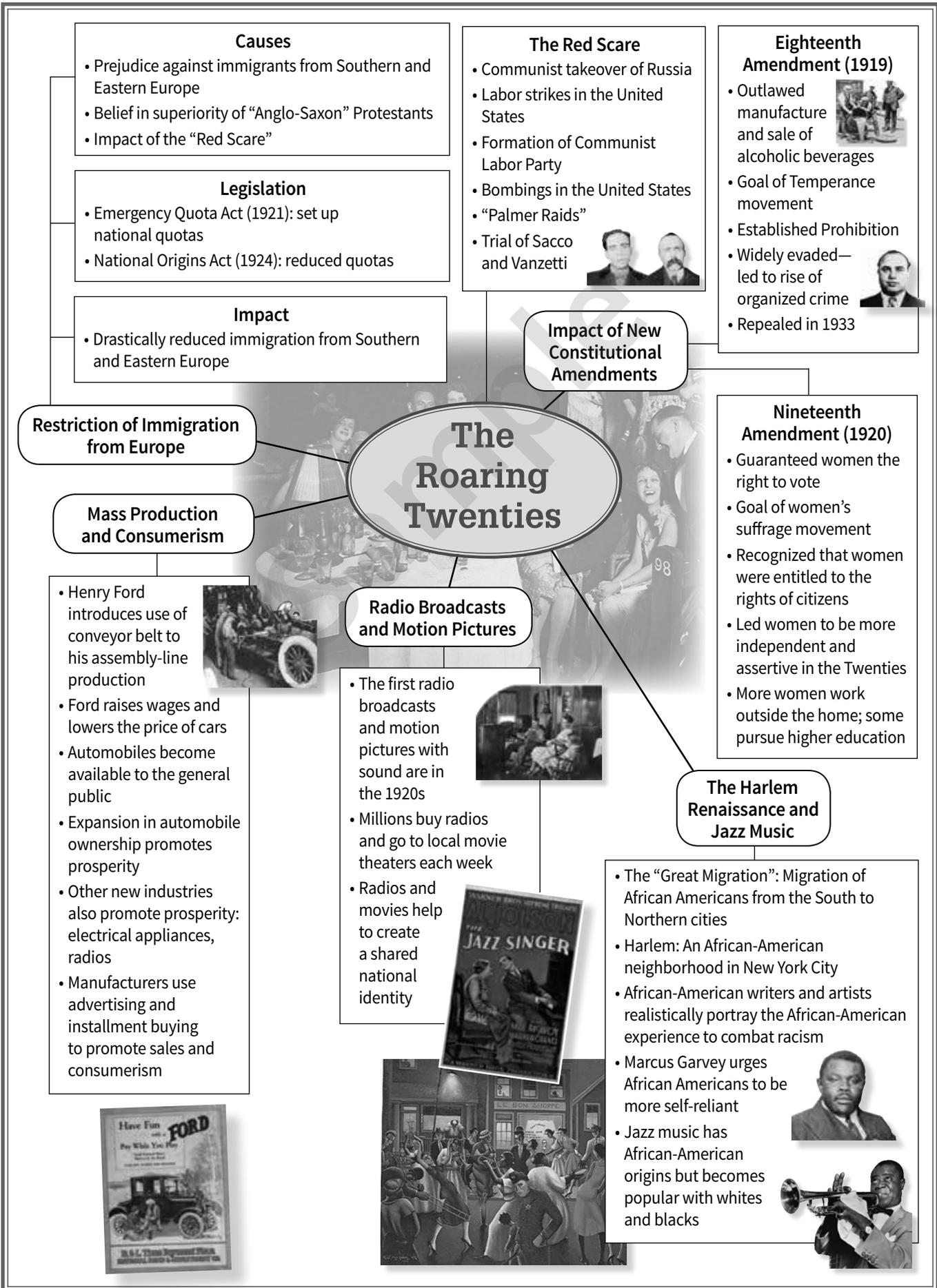
3. Write an essay explaining how the 1920s was a period of profound change that helped to shape our shared national culture.

For the Georgia Milestones EOC Assessment, you should know that . . .

- fears of rising communism and socialism in the United States led to the “Red Scare” (1919–1921)
- the Red Scare, belief in “Anglo-Saxon” superiority, and a dislike of Southern and Eastern Europeans led to the first restrictions on immigration from Europe, with the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and Restrictive Immigration Act of 1924
- the Eighteenth Amendment (1919) established Prohibition, forbidding the manufacture and sale of alcoholic drinks; it had the unintended consequence of leading to the rise of organized crime, and was subsequently repealed
- the Nineteenth Amendment (1920) gave women the right to vote, encouraging greater self-expression and self-confidence among women, leading women to enter into new occupations, and creating a new influence in elections
- the Twenties was a time of economic prosperity for many, when mass production and advertising led to increasing consumerism and helped to create a common national culture
- the Twenties saw a great spread in the use of the automobile, which contributed to the period’s economic prosperity and a shared national identity
- radio and movies were first introduced in the 1920s and acted as unifying forces in creating a national culture
- the Twenties was a period when modern forms of cultural expression emerged, such as jazz music and the Harlem Renaissance.



“Getting Religion” by Archibald Motley, an African-American artist associated with the Harlem Renaissance



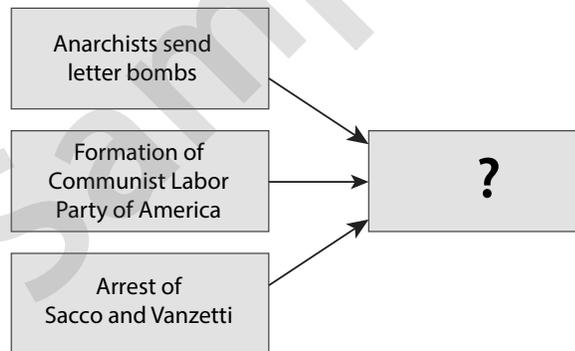
What do you know?

SSUSH16a

1. What was a consequence of rising fears of communism and socialism after World War I?
 - A. President Wilson invited Soviet leaders to visit the United States.
 - B. Americans decided to provide economic aid to Germany and Hungary.
 - C. Congress passed laws restricting immigration from Europe.
 - D. Most Americans preferred to listen to jazz rather than to music from Europe.

SSUSH16a

2. Use the diagram to answer the question.



Which word or phrase BEST completes the diagram?

- A. Prohibition
- B. Women's suffrage
- C. Red Scare
- D. Cold War

SSUSH16a

3. Use the excerpt to answer the question.

My information showed that communism in this country was an organization of thousands of aliens who are direct allies of [Russian communists]. The Government is now sweeping the nation clean of such filth.

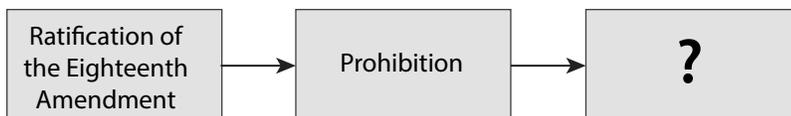
—Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, 1920

Which event is described in this excerpt?

- A. Progressive Era
- B. Cold War
- C. Red Scare
- D. Civil Rights Movement

SSUSH16b

4. Use the diagram to answer the question.



Which phrase **BEST** completes the diagram?

- A. Immigrants and city-dwellers abandon drinking
- B. Large-scale migration of Americans to Canada
- C. Widespread support for the law
- D. Rise of organized crime

SSUSH16b

5. Which **TWO** reasons **MOST LIKELY** spurred ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment?

- A. Reformers believed that alcoholic drinks caused immorality and crime
- B. Politicians hoped to raise money by selling expensive exemptions to the law.
- C. Anti-German sentiment during the war viewed beer drinking as unpatriotic.
- D. Immigrants wanted to assimilate more quickly into mainstream traditions.
- E. Scientists had published new evidence of the damaging effects of alcohol.
- F. The cost of importing wine and beer from Europe was hurting the U.S. economy.

6. Use the cartoon to answer the question.



What is the main idea of this cartoon?

- A. The land of opportunity is not for Russian immigrants.
- B. If an alien is from Latin America, he or she can be deported.
- C. Packing aliens together like sardines violates their human rights.
- D. Dangerous foreign-born socialists and communists should be expelled.

7. Use this list to answer the question.

1917 Literacy Test
 1921 Emergency Quota Act
 1924 National Origins Act

What do the elements in this list demonstrate?

- A. By 1924, there were more Catholics than Protestants living in the United States
- B. Most immigrants in the early twentieth century could not speak English.
- C. Many Americans thought immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were inferior.

- D. European immigrants faced greater discrimination than African Americans in the South.

SSUSH16b

8. Use the excerpt to answer the question.

The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

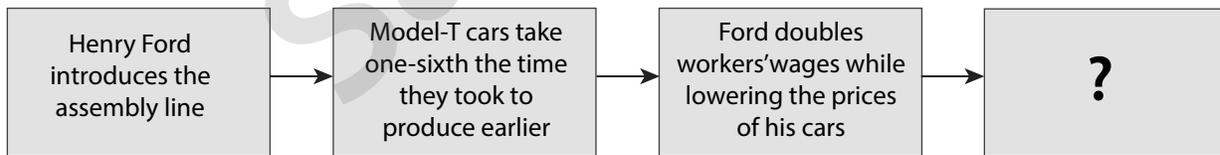
—19th Amendment, Section 1

Which statement **BEST** describes an impact of this section?

- A. Women no longer had to work outside the home.
- B. Women were paid as much as men who performed similar jobs.
- C. Politicians had to take the views of women voters into account.
- D. Clothes manufacturers continued to make restrictive clothing for women.

SSUSH16c

9. Use the diagram to answer the question.



Which phrase **BEST** completes the diagram?

- A. Most Americans still preferred to take trains to automobiles.
- B. More Americans can afford to buy their own car.
- C. Cars remain a luxury item for the very rich.
- D. Ford Motor Company faces bankruptcy, threatening the U.S. economy

SSUSH16d

10. Use the list to answer the question.

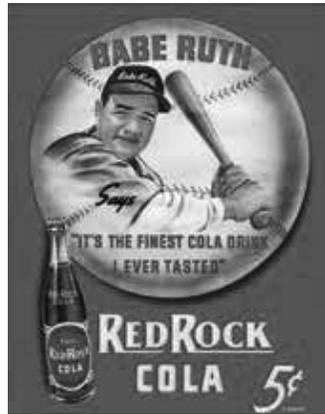
Mass-produced automobiles
Radios
Motion pictures

What was an important consequence of the items on the list?

- A. Reinforcement of local traditions
- B. Rapid growth of the national debt
- C. Americans imported more goods than they exported
- D. Development of a shared national identity

SSUSH16c

11. Use the image to answer the question.



Which phrase **BEST** describes the aim of this 1920s advertisement?

- A. to help readers overcome the “Red Scare”
- B. to inform readers about Babe Ruth’s achievements
- C. to give readers tips for improving their baseball batting averages
- D. to persuade consumers to purchase a mass-produced good

SSUSH16e

12. What did African-American writers and artists hope to achieve during the Harlem Renaissance?

- A. to display their ability as diligent workers in the workplace
- B. to show that the pursuit of material success often leads to tragedy
- C. to demonstrate that African Americans could produce great works of literature and art
- D. to reveal that conditions for African Americans in the South were almost as bad as in the North