

THE ROARING TWENTIES



**LIFE & CULTURE
IN AMERICA IN
THE 1920S**

CHANGING WAYS OF LIFE

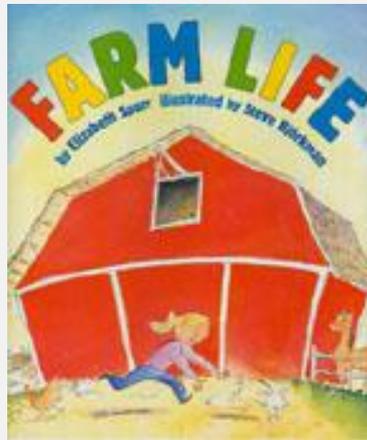
- ❑ During the 1920s, **urbanization** continued to accelerate
- ❑ For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than in rural areas
- ❑ New York City was home to over 5 million people in 1920
- ❑ Chicago had nearly 3 million



URBAN VS. RURAL



Cities were
impersonal

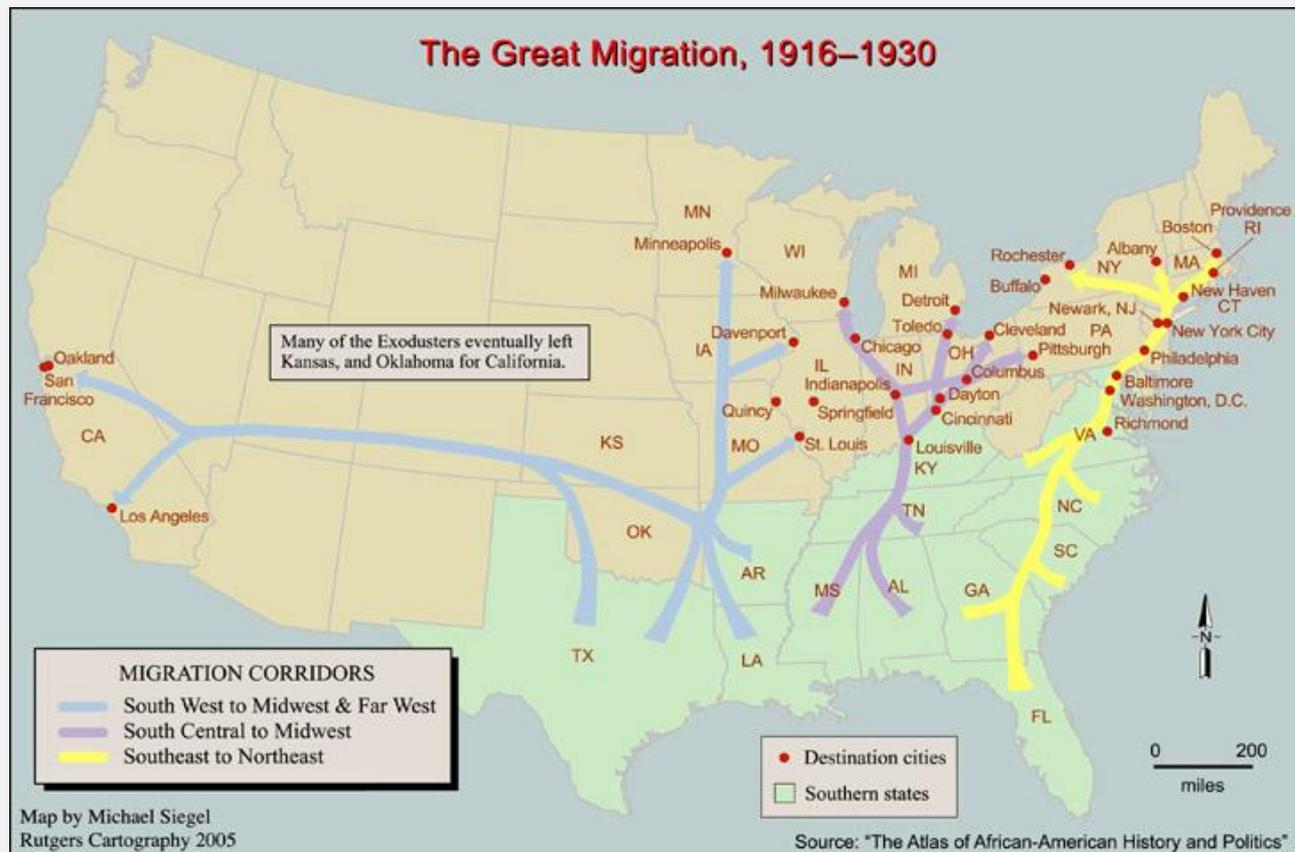


Farms were
innocent

- ❑ Throughout the 1920s, Americans found themselves caught between urban and rural cultures
- ❑ Urban life was considered a world of anonymous crowds, **strangers**, moneymakers, and pleasure seekers
- ❑ Rural life was considered to be safe, with close personal ties, hard work and **morals**

THE GREAT MIGRATION

- ❑ Between 1910 and 1930, more than one million African Americans moved out of the South to cities in the North, Midwest, and West.
- ❑ They sought economic opportunity, freedom from racial segregation, and safety from lynching and other kinds of racist violence.



WHY WERE AFRICAN AMERICANS LEAVING THE SOUTH?

- Segregation
- Increase in the spread of racist ideology
- Widespread lynching
- Lack of social and economic opportunities in the South
- Labor shortages in northern factories brought about by World War I resulted in thousands of jobs in steel mills, railroads, meatpacking plants, and the automobile industry
- Labor agents sent by northern businessmen to recruit southern workers. Northern companies offered special incentives to encourage black workers to relocate, including free transportation and low-cost housing

HOW DID IT IMPACT THE RURAL SOUTH

- Drained off the rural black population of the South, and for a time, froze or **reduced African-American population growth** in parts of the region
- The **labor force was leaving** and it caused white employers to worry about the south going bankrupt. They increased their wages to match those on offer in the North, and some individual employers opposed the worst excesses of Jim Crow laws.
- A series of directives were put into place with the goal of restricting black mobility, including local vagrancy ordinances, "work or fight" laws demanding all males either be employed or serve in the army, and conscription orders.
- **Intimidation and beatings** were also used to terrorize blacks into staying.

HOW DID IT IMPACT THE INDUSTRIAL REGIONS OF THE NORTHEAST AND MIDWEST?

- Inspired African Americans to be creative in new ways (art, music, writing)
- Resulted in the **Harlem Renaissance** (intellectual, social, and artistic explosion that took place in Harlem, New York, spanning the 1920s)
- Many blues singers migrated from the Mississippi Delta causing **Jazz** to **take off**
- The northern "**Black metropolises**" **developed** an important infrastructure of newspapers, businesses, jazz clubs, churches, and political organizations that provided the staging ground for new forms of racial politics and new forms of black culture

CONSUMER CREDIT

- Individual borrowing contributed to the **economic boom**
- Pre-1920s most Americans considered debt shameful
- **Attitudes changed** and many bought into “buy now and pay in easy installments”
- Americans bought 75% of their radios and 60% of their automobiles on the installment plan

CONSUMERISM

- **Consumerism**: the theory that it is economically attractive to encourage the attainment of goods and services in ever-increasing amounts
- Increased due to technical advances and innovative ideas and inventions in the areas of communication, transportation and manufacturing
- **Mass advertising** and marketing techniques in newspapers and on the radio saw a massive increase in sales via easy consumer credit.

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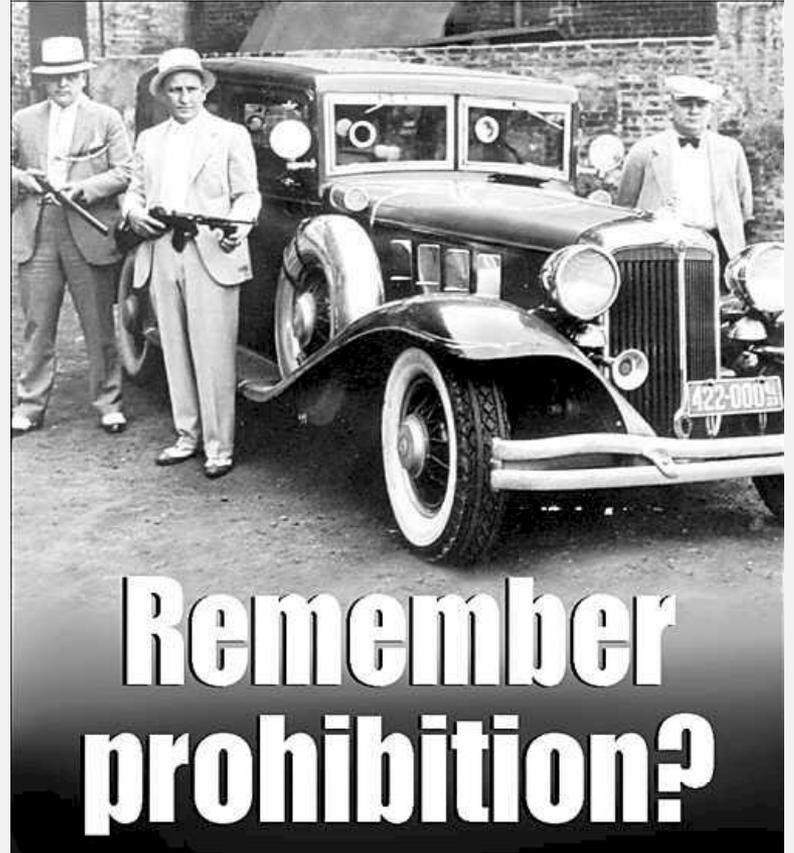
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LET'S DISCUSS:

- How do you think the expansion of credit had an effect on the economy?

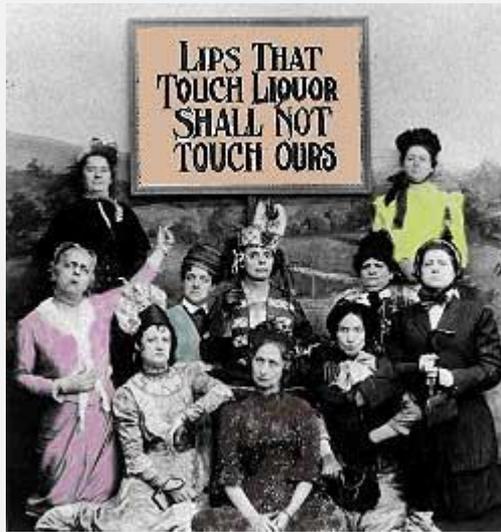
PROHIBITION

- ❑ One example of the clash between city & farm was the passage of the 18th Amendment in 1920
- ❑ This Amendment launched the era known as **Prohibition**
- ❑ The new law made it illegal to make, sell or transport liquor



Prohibition lasted from 1920 to 1933 when it was repealed by the 21st Amendment

SUPPORT FOR PROHIBITION



- ❑ Reformers had long believed alcohol led to crime, child & wife abuse, and accidents
- ❑ Supporters were largely from the rural south and west
- ❑ The church affiliated Anti-Saloon League and the Women's Christian Temperance Union helped push the 18th Amendment through

HELP ME to keep Him
PURE



**PLEASE
VOTE**

**“AGAINST THE SALE
OF LIQUORS”**

*Poster
supporting
prohibition*

SPEAKEASIES AND BOOTLEGGERS

- ❑ Many Americans did not believe drinking was a sin
- ❑ Most immigrant groups were not willing to give up drinking
- ❑ To obtain liquor illegally, drinkers went underground to hidden saloons known as **speakeasies**
- ❑ People also bought liquor from **bootleggers** who smuggled it in from **Canada, Cuba and the West Indies**

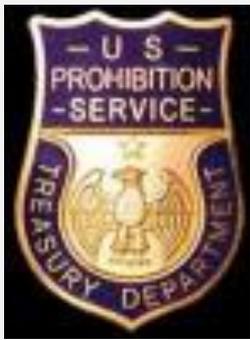


ORGANIZED CRIME



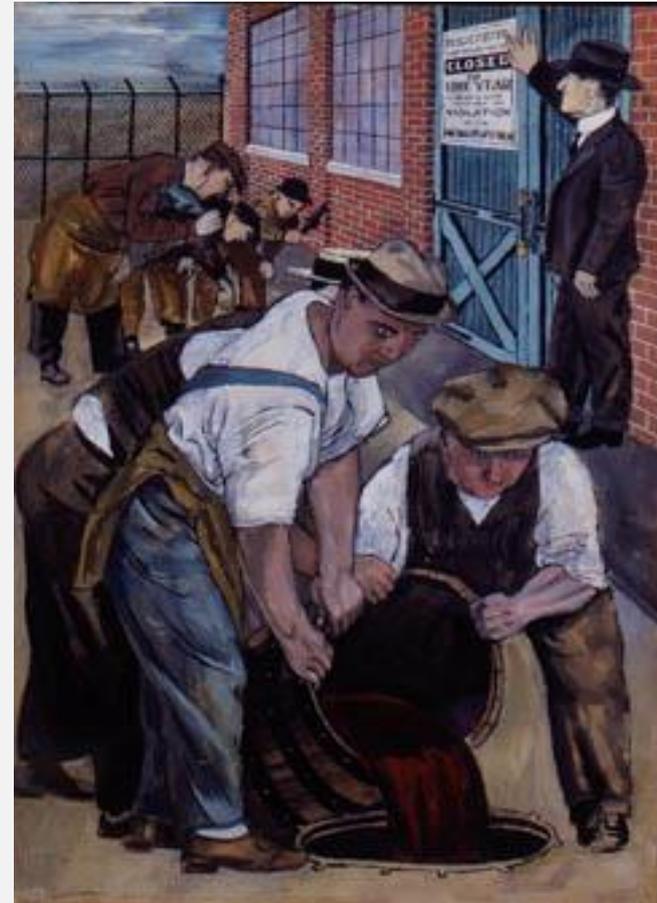
- ❑ Prohibition contributed to the growth of organized crime in every major city
- ❑ Chicago became notorious as the home of **Al Capone – a famous bootlegger**
- ❑ Capone took control of the Chicago liquor business by killing off his competition

Al Capone was finally convicted on tax evasion charges in 1931



GOVERNMENT FAILS TO CONTROL LIQUOR

- ❑ Eventually, Prohibition's fate was sealed by the government, which failed to budget enough money to enforce the law
- ❑ The task of enforcing Prohibition fell to 1,500 poorly paid federal agents --- clearly an impossible task



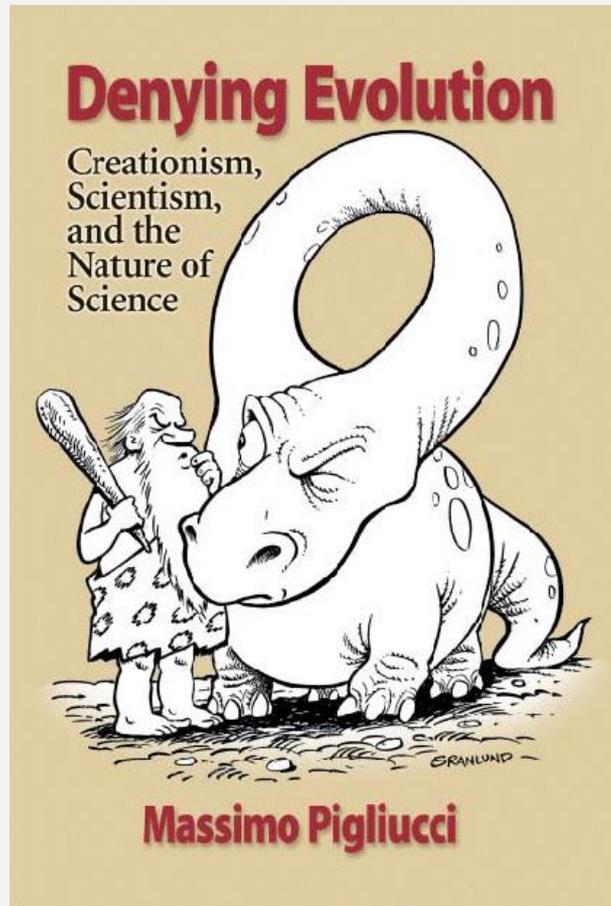
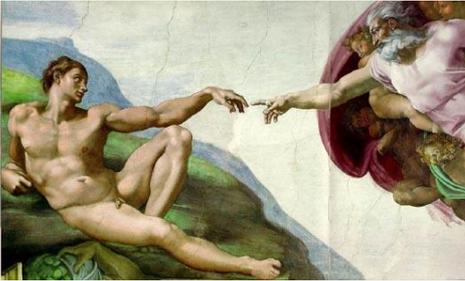
Federal agents pour wine down a sewer

SUPPORT FADES, PROHIBITION REPEALED

- ❑ By the mid-1920s, only 19% of Americans supported Prohibition
- ❑ Many felt Prohibition caused more problems than it solved
- ❑ The 21st Amendment finally repealed Prohibition in 1933

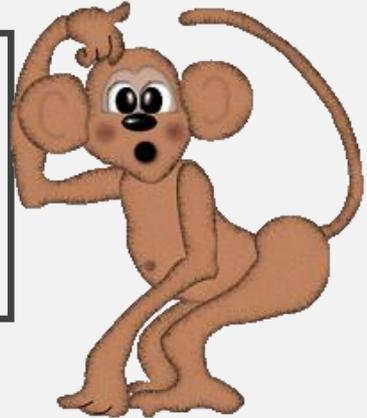


SCIENCE AND RELIGION CLASH



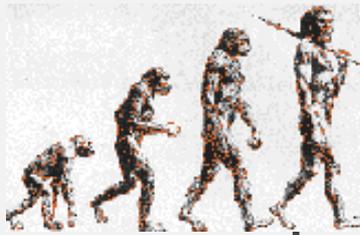
- ❑ Another battleground during the 1920s was between **fundamentalist religious groups** and secular thinkers over the truths of science
- ❑ The Protestant movement grounded in the literal interpretation of the bible is known as fundamentalism
- ❑ Fundamentalists **found all truth in the bible** – including science & evolution

SCOPES TRIAL



Scopes was a biology teacher who dared to teach his students that man derived from lower species

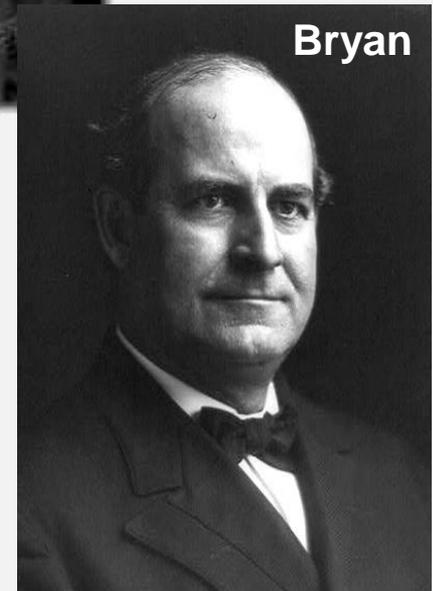
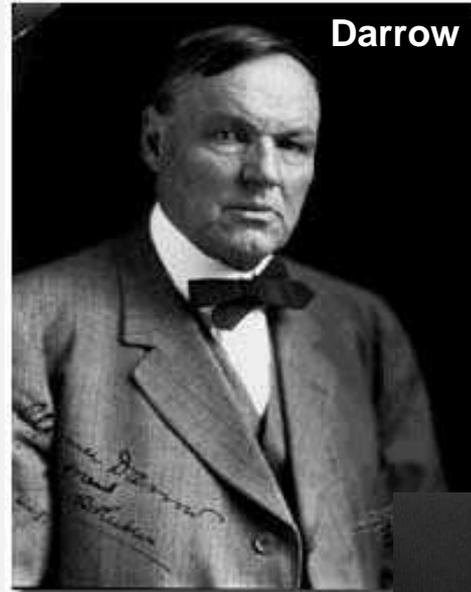
- ❑ In March 1925, Tennessee passed the nation's first law that made it a **crime to teach evolution**
- ❑ The ACLU promised to defend any teacher willing to challenge the law – **John Scopes** did



SCOPES TRIAL

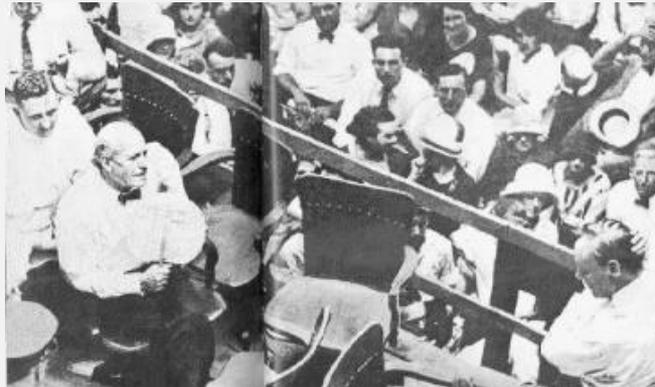
□ The ACLU hired **Clarence Darrow**, the most famous trial lawyer of the era, to **defend Scopes**

□ The **prosecution** countered with **William Jennings Bryan**, the three-time Democratic presidential nominee



SCOPES TRIAL

- ❑ Trial opened on July 10, 1925 and became a national sensation
- ❑ In an unusual move, **Darrow called Bryan to the stand** as an expert on the bible – key question: *Should the bible be interpreted literally?*
- ❑ Under intense questioning, Darrow got Bryan to admit that the bible can be interpreted in different ways
- ❑ Nonetheless, **Scopes was found guilty** and fined \$100



Bryan Darrow



[10] "Papa!" (Thomas in the *Detroit News*)



Despite the guilty verdict, Darrow got the upperhand during his questioning of Bryan

SECTION 2: THE TWENTIES WOMAN



Chicago
1926

- ❑ After the tumult of World War I, Americans were looking for a little fun in the 1920s
- ❑ Women were becoming more independent and achieving greater freedoms (right to vote, more employment, freedom of the auto)



THE FLAPPER

- ❑ During the 1920s, a new ideal emerged for some women: the Flapper
- ❑ A **Flapper** was an emancipated young woman who embraced the **new fashions and urban attitudes**



NEW ROLES FOR WOMEN



Early 20th Century teachers

- ❑ The fast-changing world of the 1920s produced new roles for women
- ❑ **Many women entered the workplace** as nurses, teachers, librarians, & secretaries
- ❑ However, **women earned less than men** and were kept out of many traditional male jobs (management) and **faced discrimination**

THE CHANGING FAMILY



Margaret Sanger and other founders of the American Birth Control League - 1921

- ❑ **American birthrates declined** for several decades before the 1920s
- ❑ During the 1920s that trend increased as birth control information became widely available
- ❑ **Birth control clinics opened** and the American Birth Control League was founded in 1921

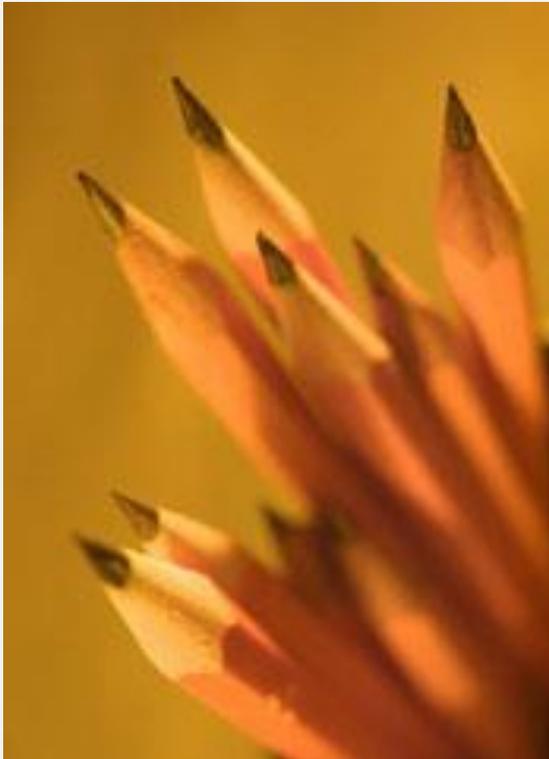
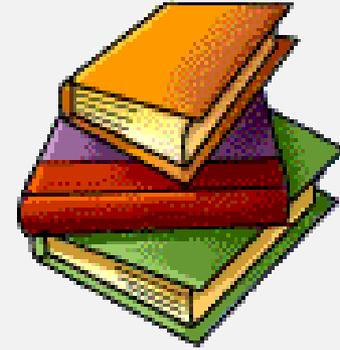


MODERN FAMILY EMERGES

- ❑ As the 1920s unfolded, many features of the **modern family** emerged
- ❑ Marriage was based on **romantic love**, **women managed the household** and finances, and children were not considered laborers/ wage earners but rather developing **children who needed nurturing and education**



SECTION 3: EDUCATION AND POPULAR CULTURE



- ❑ During the 1920s, developments in education had a powerful impact on the nation
- ❑ Enrollment in high schools quadrupled between 1914 and 1926
- ❑ Public schools met the challenge of educating millions of immigrants

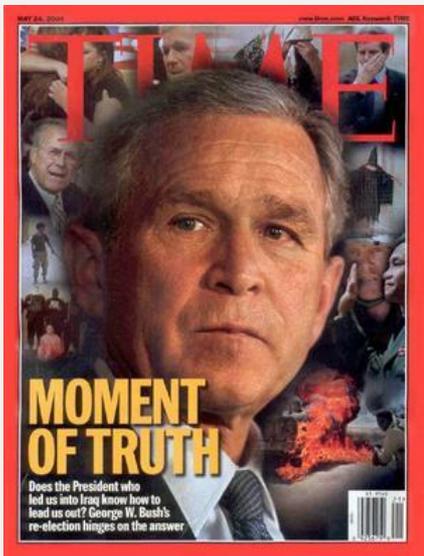
EXPANDING NEWS COVERAGE



❑ As literacy increased, **newspaper** circulation rose and mass-circulation **magazines flourished**



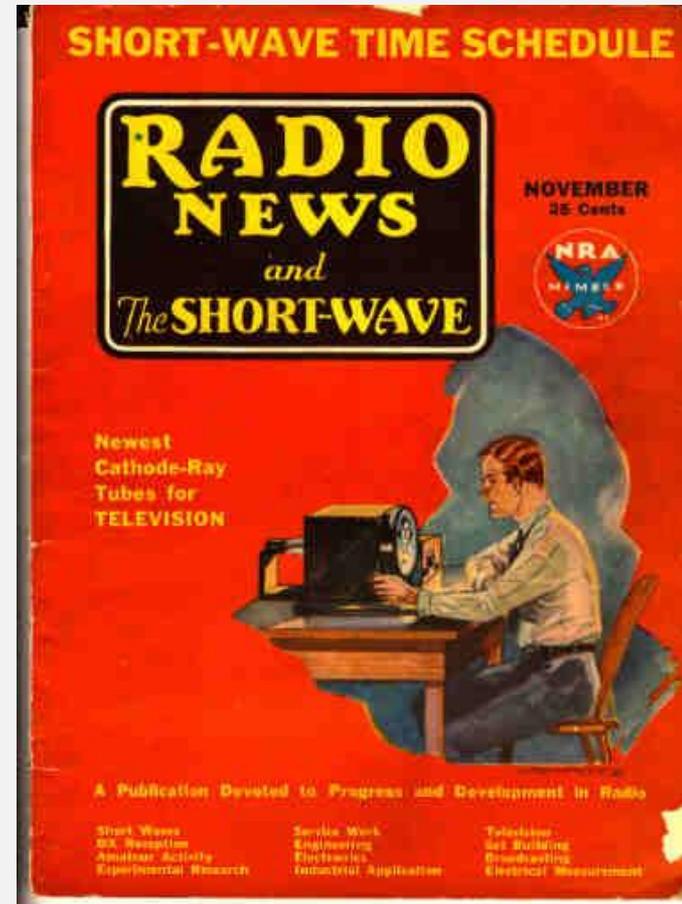
❑ By the end of the 1920s, ten American magazines -- including *Reader's Digest* and *Time* -- boasted circulations of over 2 million



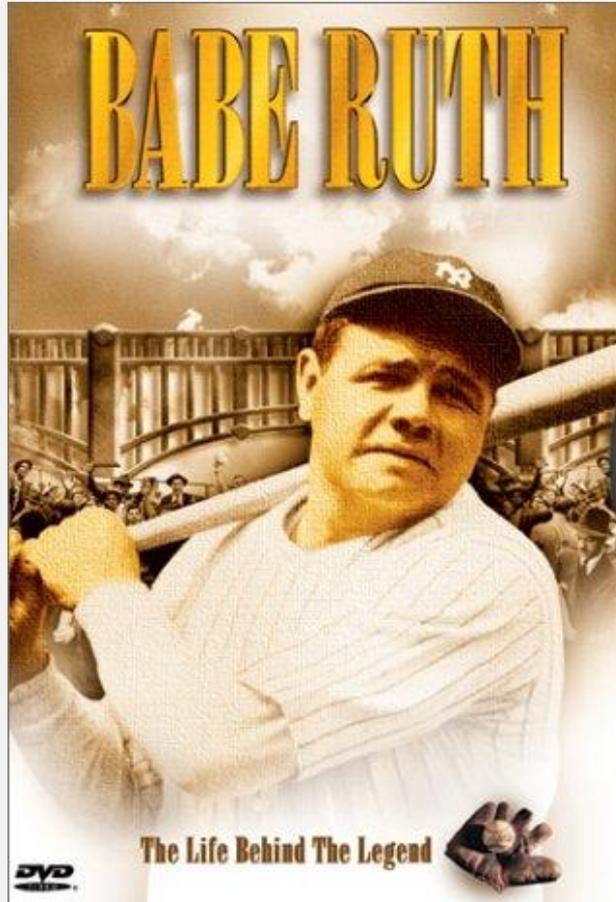


RADIO COMES OF AGE

- ❑ Although print media was popular, **radio was the most powerful communications medium to emerge in the 1920s**
- ❑ News was delivered faster and to a larger audience
- ❑ Americans could hear the voice of the president or listen to the World Series live



AMERICAN HEROES OF THE 20S

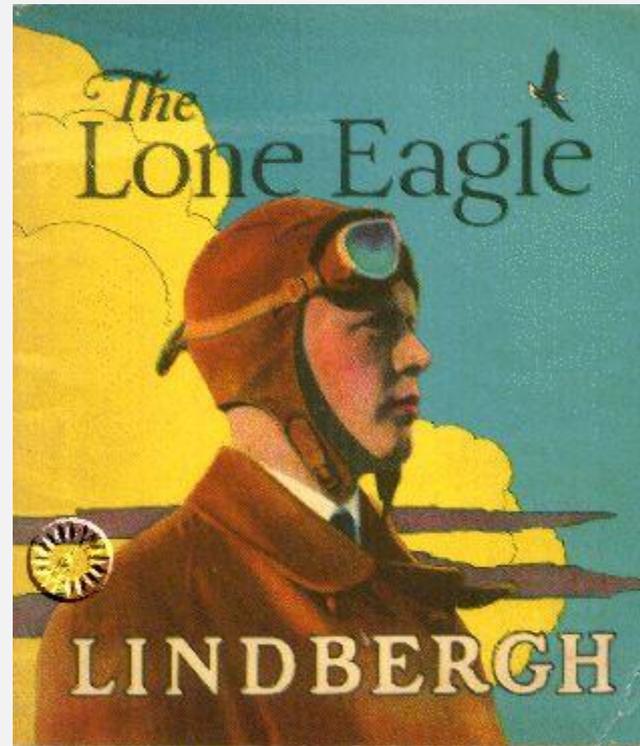


- ❑ In 1929, Americans spent \$4.5 billion on entertainment (includes sports)
- ❑ People crowded into baseball games to see their heroes
- ❑ **Babe Ruth** was a larger than life **American hero** who played for Yankees
- ❑ He hit 60 homers in 1927

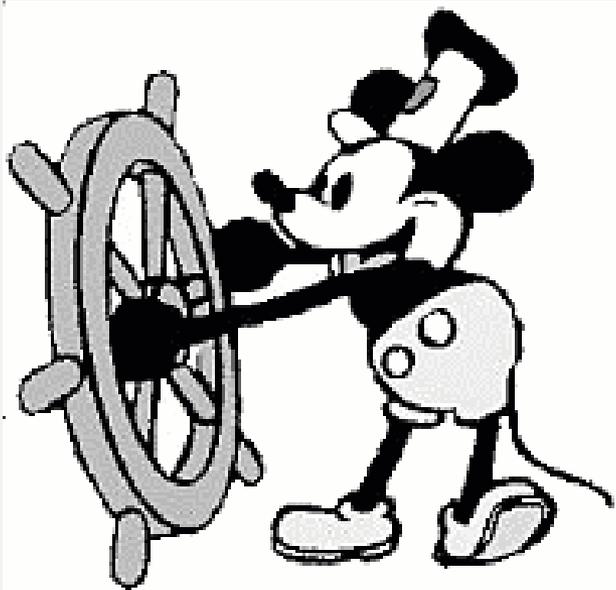


LINDBERGH'S FLIGHT

- ❑ America's most beloved hero of the time wasn't an athlete but a small-town pilot named **Charles Lindbergh**
- ❑ Lindbergh **made the first nonstop solo transatlantic flight**
- ❑ He took off from **NYC** in the *Spirit of St. Louis* and arrived in Paris 33 hours later to a hero's welcome



ENTERTAINMENT AND ARTS



STEAMBOAT WILLIE

Walt Disney's animated *Steamboat Willie* marked the debut of Mickey Mouse. It was a seven minute long black and white cartoon.

- ❑ Even before sound, movies offered a means of escape through romance and comedy
- ❑ First sound movies: *Jazz Singer* (1927)
- ❑ First animated with sound: *Steamboat Willie* (1928)
- ❑ By 1930 millions of Americans went to the movies each week

MUSIC AND ART

- ❑ Famed composer **George Gershwin** merged traditional elements with **American Jazz**
- ❑ Painters like **Edward Hopper** depicted the loneliness of **American life**
- ❑ **Georgia O' Keeffe** captured the grandeur of **New York** using intensely colored canvases



Gershwin

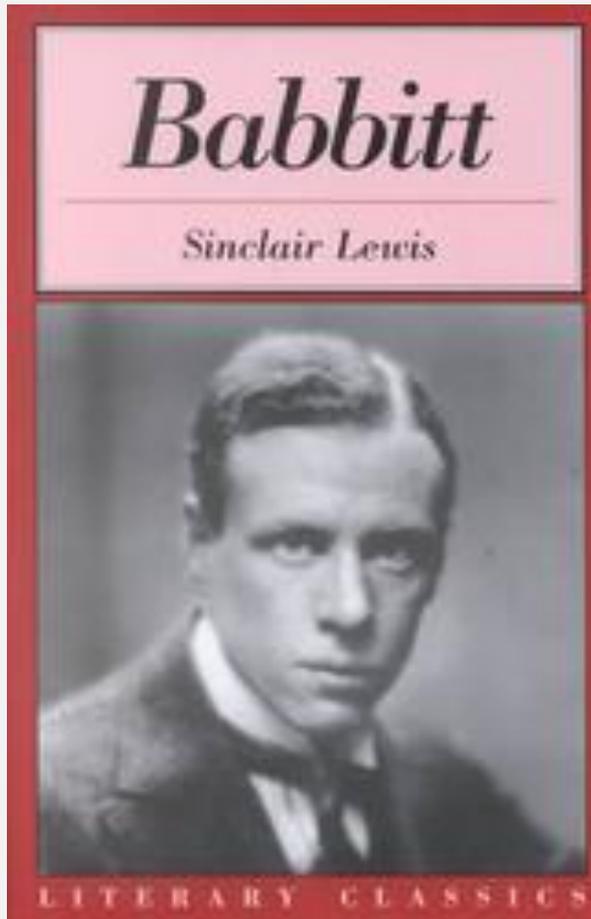
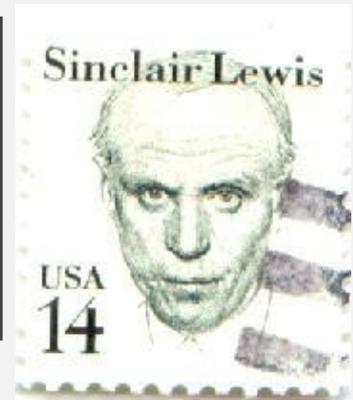


Radiator Building, Night, New York, 1927
Georgia O'Keeffe



Hopper's famous "Nighthawks"

WRITERS OF THE 1920S

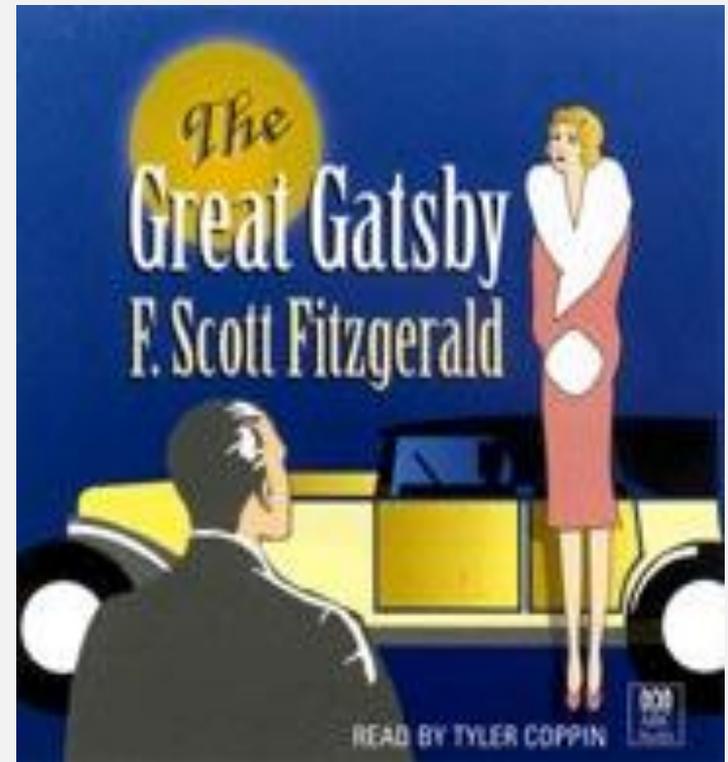


- ❑ The 1920s was one of the greatest literary eras in American history
- ❑ **Sinclair Lewis**, the first American to win the Nobel Prize in literature, wrote the novel, ***Babbitt***
- ❑ In *Babbitt* the main character ridicules American conformity and materialism



WRITERS OF THE 1920S

- ❑ **Writer F. Scott Fitzgerald** coined the phrase “Jazz Age” to describe the 1920s
- ❑ Fitzgerald wrote *Paradise Lost* and *The Great Gatsby*
- ❑ *The Great Gatsby* reflected the emptiness of New York elite society



WRITERS OF THE 1920S

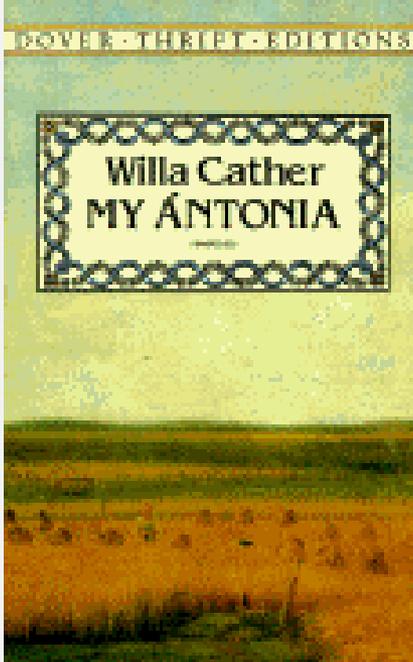


The Age of Innocence



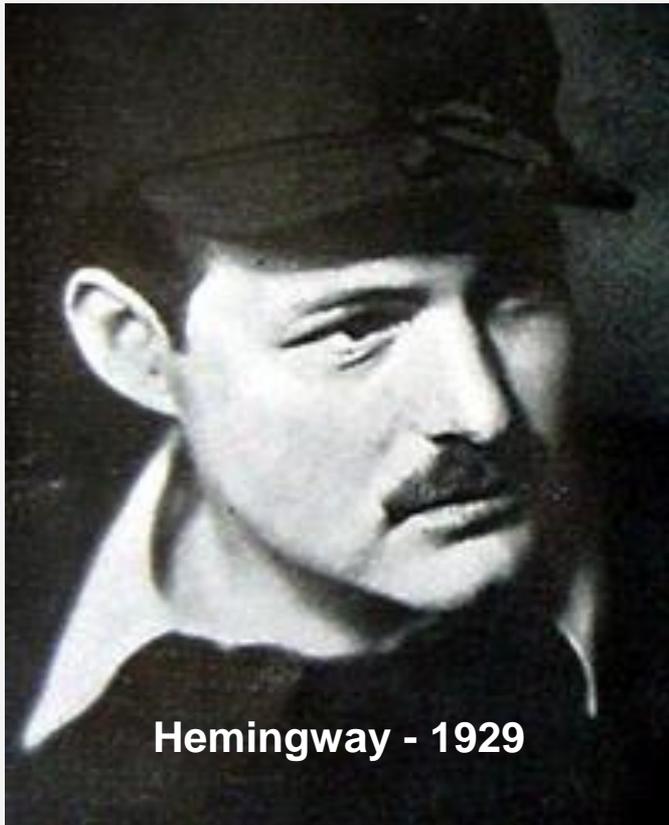
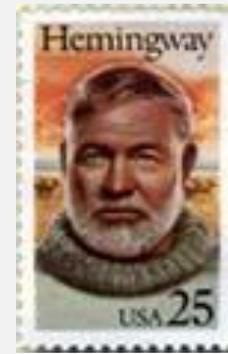
Edith Wharton

□ **Edith Wharton's *Age of Innocence*** dramatized the clash between traditional and modern values



□ **Willa Cather** celebrated the simple, dignified lives of immigrant farmers in Nebraska in *My Antonia*

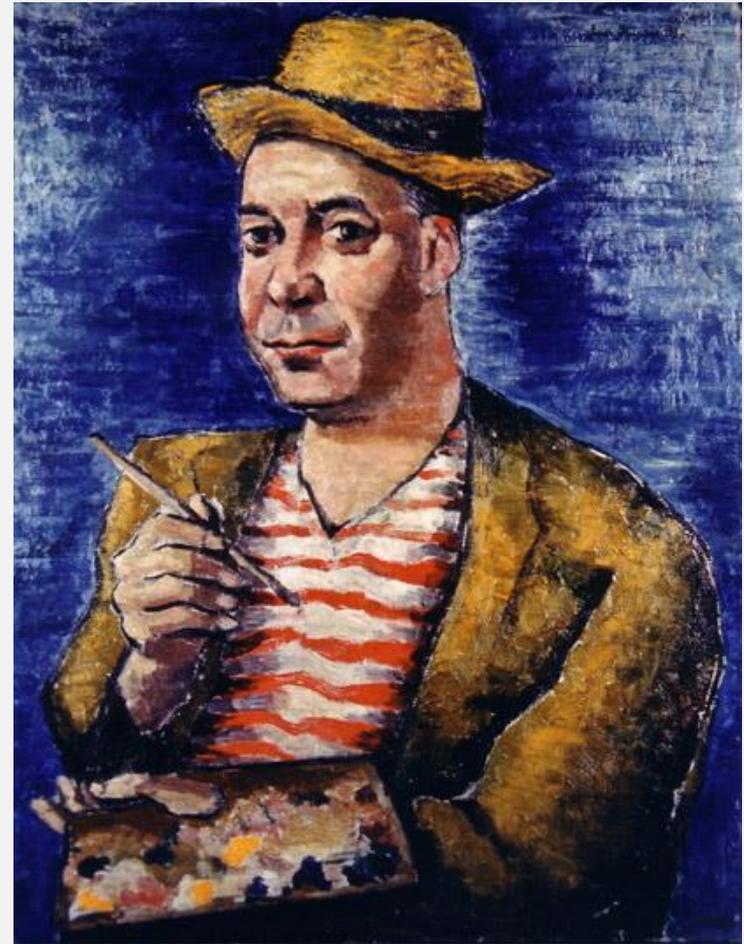
WRITERS OF THE 1920



- ❑ **Ernest Hemingway**, wounded in **World War I**, became one of the best-known authors of the era
- ❑ In his novels, ***The Sun Also Rises*** and ***A Farewell to Arms***, he criticized the glorification of war
- ❑ His simple, straightforward style of writing set the literary standard

THE LOST GENERATION

- ❑ Some writers such as Hemingway and **John Dos Passos** were so soured by American culture that they chose to settle in Europe
- ❑ In Paris they formed a group that one writer called, **“The Lost Generation”**



John Dos Passos self – portrait.
He was a good amateur painter.

SECTION 4: THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE



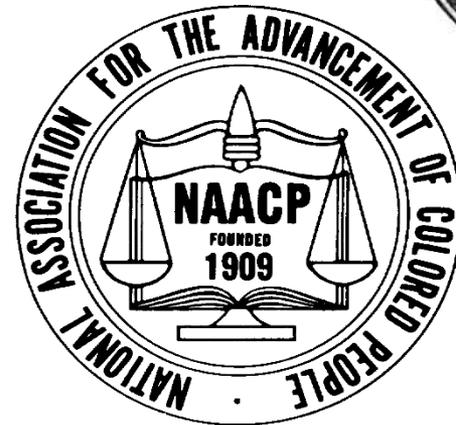
Migration of the Negro by
Jacob Lawrence

- ❑ Between 1910 and 1920, the **Great Migration** saw hundreds of thousands of African Americans move north to **big cities**
- ❑ By 1920 over 5 million of the nation's 12 million blacks (over 40%) lived in cities

AFRICAN AMERICAN GOALS

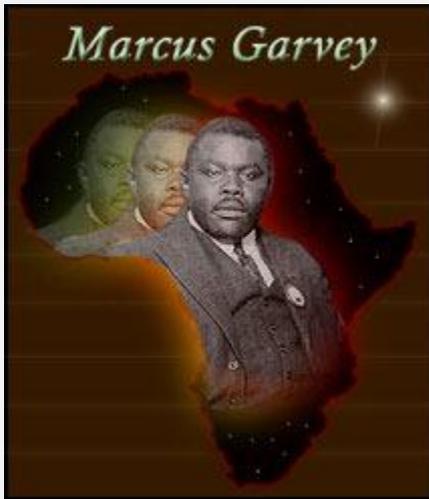
❑ Founded in 1909, the **NAACP** urged African Americans to protest racial violence

❑ **W.E.B Dubois**, a founding member, led a march of 10,000 black men in NY to protest violence



NAACP

MARCUS GARVEY - UNIA

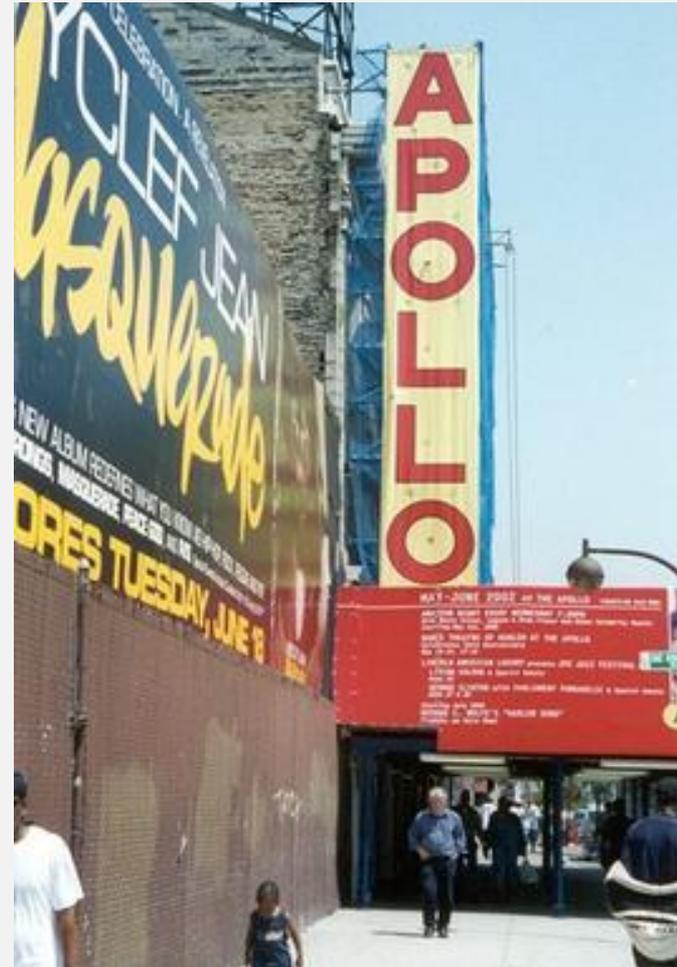


Garvey represented a more radical approach

- ❑ Marcus Garvey believed that African Americans should build a separate society (Africa)
- ❑ In 1914, Garvey founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association
- ❑ Garvey claimed a million members by the mid-1920s
- ❑ He left a **powerful legacy of black pride**, economic independence and Pan-Africanism

HARLEM, NEW YORK

- ❑ Harlem, NY became the **largest black urban community**
- ❑ Harlem suffered from overcrowding, unemployment and **poverty**
- ❑ However, in the 1920s it was home to a literary and artistic **revival known as the Harlem Renaissance**

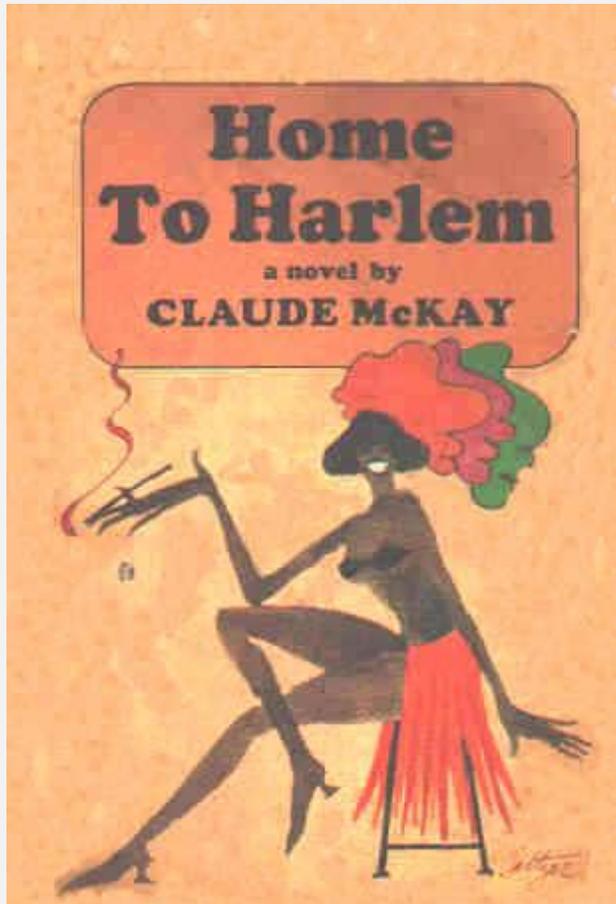
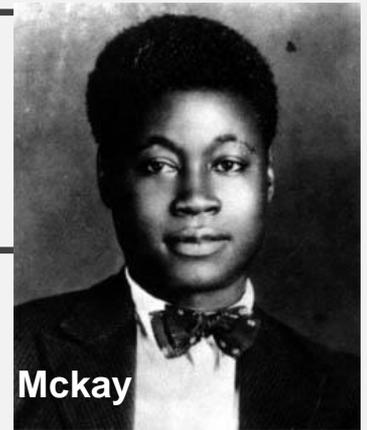




THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

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AFRICAN AMERICAN WRITERS

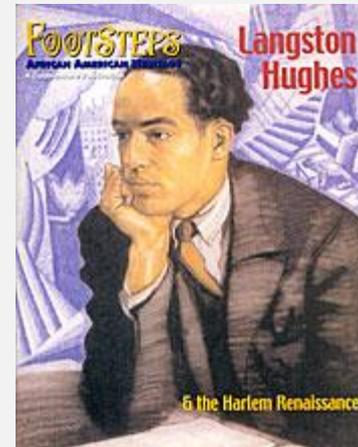


- ❑ The Harlem Renaissance was primarily a literary movement
- ❑ Led by well-educated blacks with a new sense of pride in the African-American experience
- ❑ **Claude McKay's** poems expressed the pain of life in the ghetto



LANGSTON HUGHES

- ❑ Missouri-born **Langston Hughes** was the movement's best known poet
- ❑ Many of his poems described the **difficult lives of working-class blacks**
- ❑ Some of his poems were **put to music**, especially jazz and blues



ZORA NEALE HURSTON



- Zora Neale **Hurston** wrote novels, short stories and poems
- She often **wrote about the lives of poor, unschooled Southern blacks**
- She focused on the culture of the people—their **folkways and values**

AFRICAN-AMERICAN PERFORMERS



- ❑ During the 1920s, black performers won large followings
- ❑ Paul Robeson, son of a slave, became a major **dramatic actor**
- ❑ His performance in **Othello** was widely praised



LOUIS ARMSTRONG



- ❑ Jazz was born in the early 20th century
- ❑ In 1922, a young trumpet player named **Louis Armstrong** joined the Creole Jazz Band
- ❑ Later he joined Fletcher Henderson's band in NYC
- ❑ Armstrong is considered the **most important and influential musician** in the history of jazz



EDWARD KENNEDY “DUKE” ELLINGTON

❑ In the late 1920s, Duke Ellington, a **jazz pianist** and composer, led his ten-piece orchestra at the famous **Cotton Club**

❑ Ellington won renown as one of **America’s greatest composers**



BESSIE SMITH



- ❑ Bessie Smith, blues singer, was perhaps the **most outstanding vocalist** of the decade
- ❑ She achieved enormous popularity and by 1927 she became the **highest-paid black artist in the world**