Unit 3 - The Tumultuous Twenties

6.4 - Effects of the War

Focus Question: What political, economic, and social effects did World War I have on the United States?

1. Flu Epidemic
   1. Where it began - In 1918 a deadly form of the flu virus showed up. It is believed that it started in Minnesota and that American soldiers carried it overseas with them.
   2. Human Cost - WWI killed an estimated 16 million. the Flu virus killed an estimated 50 million worldwide.
2. Economic changes -
   1. Recession - as the war came to an end so did the economic opportunities that were gained by women and African Americans. A competitive marketplace erupted.
   2. Women - lost their jobs to the returning men. They returned to being housewives and normal jobs.
   3. African Americans - many had moved North to work in factories as part of the Great Migration. Now that the men from war came back, they were the first fired.
      1. Racial Tensions Rose - The Summer of 1919 - also known as the red summer of hate. 13 days of rioting in Chicago set up by the drowning of a black man at a lake. This was followed by another in Tulsa, OK in 1921 where at least 10 whites and 26 African Americas were dead when a armed African Americans tried to prevent a man from being lynched.
   4. Inflation – rising prices this was controlled during war, but now it was unchecked. Once the war was over people wanted to buy the consumer goods - all those things they had avoided during the war. Prices for food stuffs dropped as it was not in as much demand and farmers went into debt.
      1. Labor Unrest - a direct result of the inflation - people couldn’t buy as much as they could during the war so they began to strike for better wages. In 1919 20% of the workforce went on strike at one time. Whenever a strike turned violent, the press blamed radicals.
3. The Red Scare - part 1
   1. What is it?

The labor upheaval that was caused by many radicals and socialists had a negative reaction from the rest of America. This was coupled with the fact that the Soviet Union rose out of the failed democracy in Russia. Their new leader, Vladimir Lenin pushed his communist ways and supported wide scale revolution on the part of the workers. This led to several communist revolutions throughout Eastern Europe. The result was a fear of communism and anything associated with Eastern Europe

* 1. Palmer Raids – the Red Scare was made real by a series of revolutionary threats in the United States including bombs sent through the mail to several prominent businessmen and government officials, including A. Mitchel Palmer – the attorney general. In retaliation, he created a series of raids from 1919-1920 targeting radicals and other Eastern European Immigrants. Most were never charged with a crime, but still deported.
     1. The ACLU – American Civil Liberties Union was formed to protest these raids and became involved in several court cases dealing with civil liberties
  2. Sacco and Vanzetti – one of the most controversial cases. Sacco and Vanzetti were two Italian Immigrants that were charged, convicted, and executed over a robbery and murder. All the information was circumstantial, the judge was prejudice. Many believe they were found guilty as a result of their ethnicity

1. A return to Normalcy – eventually things calmed down in the United States and by the summer of 1920 the Red Scare was over
   1. President Harding – A Republican that ran on a platform that rejected Wilsonian idealism He wanted to end the progressive reforms and called for a return to normalcy. He won by a landslide.
   2. U.S. role in World Economy – although Harding had spoken about returning to his isolationist views, the U.S. had become a world economic leader and was not giving that up. The U.S. was the production giant and the demands for American goods continued to increase. Many countries had to borrow from American banks to be able to buy the American products. The U.S. became known as a creditor nation – meaning other countries owed the U.S. money.
   3. Changes in the world – lots of changes were taking place throughout the world. German and Russian monarchies were replaced with democracies and communist states. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires ceased to exist, Britain and France were victorious but poor. The U.S. was the only country that came out on top.

7.1 A Booming Economy

Focus Question: How did the booming economy of the 1920s lead to changes in American life?

1. The Automobile – helped lead an economic comeback. With the use of the assembly line, cars were produced faster and more efficiently so everyone could afford them.
   1. Social Impact – prompted a new sense of freedom and prosperity. People were now mobile which was a new thing. Ownership symbolized participation in the American dream. Changed where people lived since they could drive to work now and helped in the creation of suburban communities.
   2. Economic Impact – helped stimulate growth in other industries such as rubber, gasoline, tourism, wood, insurance, etc. New road were built which also led to service (gas) stations, motels, diners. But other forms of ground transportation suffered, railroads and trolleys began to decline
2. A Consumer Market – new affordable goods were available to the public. Advertising was a big part of all of this. It wasn’t about what you needed anymore, but about what you wanted
   1. Installment Buying – a new way of buying that helped spur on the consumer market. People would make a small down payment and the pay off the rest of the debt in regular monthly payments. So now they could own stuff they really couldn’t afford.
   2. Stock Market – more and more people began participating in the buying of stocks. It was considered a bull market where prices of stocks were continuing to rise. Roughly 4 million Americans owned stock by 1920. This desire to own things led to people buying on margin – where you would pay 10% down and then the would pay for the rest of the stock over time – usually with the dividends they received on the stock. This was great if the prices continued to go up, but not so good if the prices went down. Most people knew it was shaky but ignored the warning signs.
3. Was it prosperity for all?
   1. Farmers – their income continued to decline as Europe began to produce again so the demands were high. They also didn’t get to participate in the consumer benefits of the cities.
   2. Minorities – many were faced with hardships, both economically and socially. Lynching was on the rise, and Jim Crow laws were in full effect.

7.2 Business of Government

Focus Question: How did domestic and foreign policy change direction under Harding and Coolidge?

1. Harding’s Goals – wanted to return to normalcy – depending on who you asked you got a different definition as to what exactly this meant – some thought it was becoming isolationist, some thought it was about moving away from Progressivism. He wanted to lower income taxes – he actually hated the 16th amendment, reduced government spending, raised the Tariffs by 25% (this was both good and bad – in retaliation, European countries raised their tariffs so Americans couldn’t sell their goods elsewhere, wanted a hands off or laissez faire approach to government
   1. Ohio Gang – Harding was not the most capable of leaders and he trusted his friends to do the right thing. So as his cabinet he appointed several of his buddies from Ohio and they became known as the Ohio Gang. They used their appointments as ways to get rich quick.
   2. Teapot Dome Scandal – Although there were several scandals in his cabinet – the worst was this one. Teapot Dome had an oil reserve that was intended for Navy use in time of emergency. Secretary of the Interior – Albert Fall transferred it from the Dept. of the Navy to the Dept. of the Interior and then leased the land out to private oil companies in return for “loans” that were actually bribes. It was investigated and he was found guilty and sentenced to a year in prison. Harding was never really implicated in the scandal until after his death.
2. Coolidge’s Goals – Coolidge became president upon Harding’s death. – He believed the creation of wealth benefited everyone. He is quoted as saying the “Business of America is business”. He continued to reduce the national debt, trim federal spending and lowered taxes. As a result, the economy saw a boom.
3. America’s role in the world – the U.S. continued to have an important role in world affairs throughout the decade. One of its goals was to make sure another war was avoided.
   1. Washington Naval Disarmament Conference – held in 1921 and 1922, the goal was to reduce the arms that each country had. They agreed to limit the amount of navy ships they were building
   2. Kellogg Briand Pact – another attempt to avoid war. U.S. Secretary of State and French Foreign Minister drew up a treaty that outlawed war “as an instrument of peace”. 62 countries ratified it, but it was unenforceable.
   3. Dawes Plan – another problem that the U.S. faced after the war was collecting the money that was owed it. Germany had large payments to France and England that they couldn’t’ make because they had no industry (Treaty of Versailles) and if they couldn’t repay their loans to Europe, than Europe couldn’t repay their loans to the U.S. The Dawes Act was the solution that allowed American banks to make loans to Germany who would then use that money to repay Europe who could then repay the U.S. This was all great until 1929 when the U.S. had no more money to lend.

7.3 Social and Cultural Tensions

Focus Question: How did Americans differ on major social and cultural issues?

1. Traditionalism vs Modernism -
   1. Urban America – more people lived in Urban areas than ever before. Consumerism was high, more leisure activities. Becoming more modern – like secular values over traditional – especially over religion.
   2. Rural America – were not fully involved in consumerism, didn’t get the new leisure time and were very traditional regarding religion, science, and culture.
2. Religion
   1. Fundamentalism – the belief in the literal translation of the Bible. This grew as the traditional values of the U.S. were coming under question due to the consumerism, new developments in science.
3. Scopes Trial – traditional and modern Americans struggle becomes a clash with the Scopes Trail. Ultimately this was about teaching evolution in schools. But it became about the changing values of American society and the clash between creationism and evolution.
4. Immigration – another cultural clash centered on the boom in immigration
   1. Nativism – the belief that white native born Americans are better. They were worried about the policy and that many outsiders with outside beliefs were coming into the United States.
   2. Emergency Quota Act 1921 – the first attempt at restricting immigration – It established a quota system that limited the amount of immigrants from particular countries in Europe. Originally this was set at 3% of the census in 1910
   3. National Origins Act 1924 – this just made the previous act more strict by limiting it to 2% of the census of 1890
   4. Who did they target? Eastern European immigrants would be here at that time.
5. New Ku Klux Klan
   1. Origins – started as a social group of Confederate soldiers. Became a way for the Southern Democrats to terrorize the freed slaves who wanted to vote and end Reconstruction.
   2. New goals – a resurgence happened in 1915 and targeted Jews, Catholics and immigrants. They opposed labor unions, and against lawbreaking and immorality. They would boycott businesses, but would also terrorize citizens in the night
   3. End of the KKK – throughout the decade they became very corrupt. Eventually they fell apart when one of their members told about the secret happenings and the violence and everyone began to separate themselves from it.
6. Prohibition and Crime
   1. 18th Amendment – banning of alcohol. Actually forbade the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol. It was enforced by the Volstead Act.
      1. Reasons for it – it is referend to as the noble experiment – they said it improved individuals, families, stopped gambling and domestic abuse, as well as made people healthier.
      2. Volstead Act – this was the law that enforced the 18th amendment. – this stopped people from the ability to legally purchase the drinks.
   2. Reason why it stayed so long – Prohibition lasted until 1933 and the 21st Amendment. The law was difficult to enforce and the demand was extra high. It gave rise to organized crime as there was a lot of money to be made. When people tried to stop it, rural Americans would not budge as they continued to tie alcohol to crime (which in reality was a result of Prohibition in the first place.)

7.4 A New Mass Culture

Focus Question: How did the new mass culture reflect technological and social changes?

1. Leisure Time – began to increase as work time dropped from 70 hours in 1850 to 55 in 1910 and 45 in 1930. The workweek also changed from seven to six to five. At the same time, wages went up.
2. Movies – most of the movies were silent, but that didn’t stop people. Roughly 30-100 million Americans saw movies on a weekly basis. The silence was not a big deal since many people didn’t speak English. The Jazz Singer was released in 1927 and it was the first movie with synchronized sound.
3. Radio – another form of entertainment came from the radio. It helped create a standardized American culture as families would gather around the radio to listen to nightly shows.
4. Sports – Hollywood rivaled sports for national heroes. Baseball, boxing, and football athletes grew in fame with the broadcast of their games via radio. Part of the reason that their fame grew had to do with the advent of sports writing. They portrayed them as immortal gods that could do no wrong. WWI had many people questioning their faith in progress and provided hope that Americans could overcome and were capable of great feats.
5. Charles Lindbergh – one of the most famous of stars was Lindbergh. He was the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic from Long Island, to Paris, France non stop. Others had made the trip – but never alone and never as a non-stop flight.
6. Women – were more liberated. Traditional roles had lessened. Dresses were shorter, as were hair styles. She had the same political rights as men and it showed. A new style of woman developed – the flapper. Although she was normally young with short hair and short skirts – not really short but showed her ankles – it represented the freedom than many American women wanted. Other advancements for women came with the first being elected as state governors (Nellie Ross of Wyoming and Miriam Ferguson of Texas). The National Women’s Party introduced the Equal Rights Amendment that would demand political economic and social equality.
7. Lost Generation

7.5 The Harlem Renaissance

Focus Question: How did African Americans express a new sense of hope and pride?

1. Marcus Garvey – Jamaican immigrant who believed blacks were exploited everywhere.
   1. Back to Africa Movement – unlike other African American leaders, he believed that there should be separation of the races. He believed in the idea of universal black nationalism . To spread his message he founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association and the advocated black pride and black support of black owned businesses.

His movement fell apart when he was deported as a result of mail fraud.

* 1. Black power – Garvey’s insistence on black pride continued throughout the century and saw resurgence in the 1960s under the Nation of Islam. This movement was about self reliance and cultural ties to Africa.

1. The Jazz Age – this term was coined by F. Scott Fitzgerald, but it was African Americans who introduced jazz- which is based on improvisation. The music is a combination of African American blues and ragtime as well as European based popular music. Jazz began in the south and was centered in New Orleans. It spread throughout the U.S. with the Great Migration during WWI. Louis Armstrong is the unofficial ambassador of the genre. The music was a symbol of the time period. It was linked to the night clubs of Prohibition, but it also showed the African American culture. Its showed the U.S. was about shared cultures and traditions
2. The Harlem Renaissance – This was a time period of the “flowering” of African American culture. It was more than just music, but art and literature as well. A new term the “new negro” was introduced to highlight the fact that the African Americans were no longer willing to silently accept being subservient. The joys and pains of being Black in America was expressed through these artists. McKay wrote about the good and the bad and showed the struggle that they faced daily, Langston Hughes, a poet, celebrated the culture. Zora Neale Hurston collected folk tales of rural African Americans that showed the longing for independence of the African American women. Overall the Harlem Renaissance changed how many white Americans views African American culture and even the way that African Americans viewed themselves.