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GCSE History Revision

USA: The Roaring Twenties

The USA's Reaction to WW1.

The league of nations was the idea of American president, Woodrow, Wilson.

But America never joined the league of nations. Wilson wanted USA to join the league, but he needed the approval of the US Congress.

The problem was that most Americans didn't want to join.

Many Americans had been against the USA getting involved in WW1 & were afraid by the loss of US lives. They worried if America joined the league, they'd be obliged to interfere in foreign conflicts.



Isolationism

Isolationism was where

America wanted to remain cut-off from other countries to avoid any further conflict.

Effects of Isolationism.

- Isolationism kept USA out of European affairs. It weakened the league of Nations.
- Isolationism had links with Racism & The Red Scare.
- Isolationism also helped bring about tariffs.
- It is a cause of The Wall St. Crash. (i.e. it led to the tariff war which led to america unable to export goods abroad.)

Immigration Control

- Before the first world war, America had an **‘open doors policy’** that allowed almost anybody to move to the USA. But some Americans started demanding this ‘door’ be closed.
- America was seen as a **‘melting pot’**.
- It was seen as a **‘land of opportunity’** because it was rich, had lots of jobs & was self-sufficient. The result was that many people emigrated there and it was a mixed society.

QUOTA - a limit on the number of immigrants allowed in a country.

- ❑ **The immigration law (1917)** required all immigrants to pass a literacy test.
- ❑ **The emergency quota act (1921)** limited the number of immigrants to 357,000 per year. The number of people coming to the USA from any one country could not exceed 3% of the number from that country already living in the USA in 1910.
- ❑ **The national origins act (1924)** reduced the quota to 2% & set the date back to 1890.
- ❑ In 1929, the number of immigrants each year was reduced to 157,000 and immigration from Asia was blocked altogether.

Tariffs

Tariffs - taxes or duties put on goods imported from other countries.

American businesses were afraid that USA would be flooded with cheap European imports. Unemployment was high in Europe so European workers were willing to work for lower wages. Businessmen worried American consumers would start buying cheap imports rather than expensive US products.

This would mean:

- The loss of US jobs
- Lower profits for US businesses
- Less money in taxes for the government.

Arguments for the Tariff Policy:

- American business had boomed during the war - possibly as countries involved in the war had not been able to sell good to the USA. American business leaders wanted this to continue.
- American wages were high. They feared that European firms that could pay low wages would undercut them as they would be able to produce goods at a lower cost and therefore sell them more cheaply. This put American jobs at risk.
- Primarily, tariffs stop imports and Americans thought that putting high tariffs in place would help businesses.

The Fordney Mccumber Tariff;

Passed in 1921 it had two main elements.

The scientific tariff which placed high tariffs on goods from countries with low wages

The American Selling Price which kept the selling price of American goods constantly lower than imported goods.

The 1920's Boom

The USA entered late and gained from WW1. the USA exported weapons and food to Europe during the war. Moreover, no fighting had happened on American soil. After the war, European countries whose industries had been damaged, brought American goods with the help of American loans. The economy BOOMED as a result.

There was low inflation, low unemployment & low interest rates.

Cities were built with tall skyscrapers & major road building programmes were under-taken.

More people could now afford to buy consumer goods.

Advertising encouraged spending and soon became a big business itself.

Hire purchase (buying in installment) was introduced to make goods more affordable to average earners who could only buy them on credit.

Republican government policies also contributed to prosperity (wealth.)

Causes of the Boom!

<u>Cause</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>How it helped the Boom.</u>
Impact of WW1	USA sold goods to Europe. They were undamaged by WW1.	USA became the richest country & a World Leader.
Natural Resources	USA was self-sufficient - didn't need imports from other countries.	They don't have to waste their money to other countries.
Republican Policies	'Laissez Faire' - government didn't interfere in business. Import Tariffs introduced.	Encouraged business to re-invest in industry. Encouraged people to buy American goods.
Mass Production	New techniques meant that goods could be produced much more cheaply.	Products were cheaper & less affordable.
Mass Marketing	Huge amounts spent on advertising. Travelling Salesmen.	Encouraged people to buy goods. Became a business itself.
Credit	Allowed people to borrow money. Kept the economy going.	Encouraged people to buy goods, they otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford.
Confidence	America's economic confidence was sky-high. People invested more & more	This kept the cycle of prosperity going.

Entertainment.

The 1920s was also known as the 'Jazz Age' due to the massive boom in jazz music.

Blues became very popular & both were available to buy on record & play at home on the phonograph.

Radio owners went from 60,000 in 1920 to 10 million in 1929.

By 1929, more than 110 million people were going to the movies each week.

The first 'talkie' came out in 1927.

Fashion & Trends

The jazz age had a massive effect on fashion & trends.

Young people copied famous actors / actresses & mirrored the new music they listened to in their flamboyant clothes and hair-styles.

'Flappers' hit the town in their daring outfits to dance the Charleston & the bunny hop.

Sport & stunts became ever more popular.

Henry Ford & the Motor Industry.

- Mass production - producing products in large quantities.
- Assembly Lines - Each person adds a bit during each stage. The car comes to the person - this speeded up production.
- Standardised - Each & every part was identical & only one colour & one engine size available')
- The jobs of 1 in 12 workers were linked to motor car production.
- Car production boosted other industries - steel, petrol, glass & rubber.
- Cars became more affordable; the 'Ford Model T' cost \$300.
- Ford needed fewer skilled workers, which cut the cost of paying wages.
- Although the Ford T was slow & ugly, by 1930 27 Americans owned a car (1 for every 5 people) compared to 7.5 million in 1920.



More jobs are created in other industries.

Steel (20%)

Glass (75%)

Rubber (80%)

Leather (65%)

More people with more jobs mean that they can afford to buy a car / spend money on consumer goods.

More standardised parts are needed.

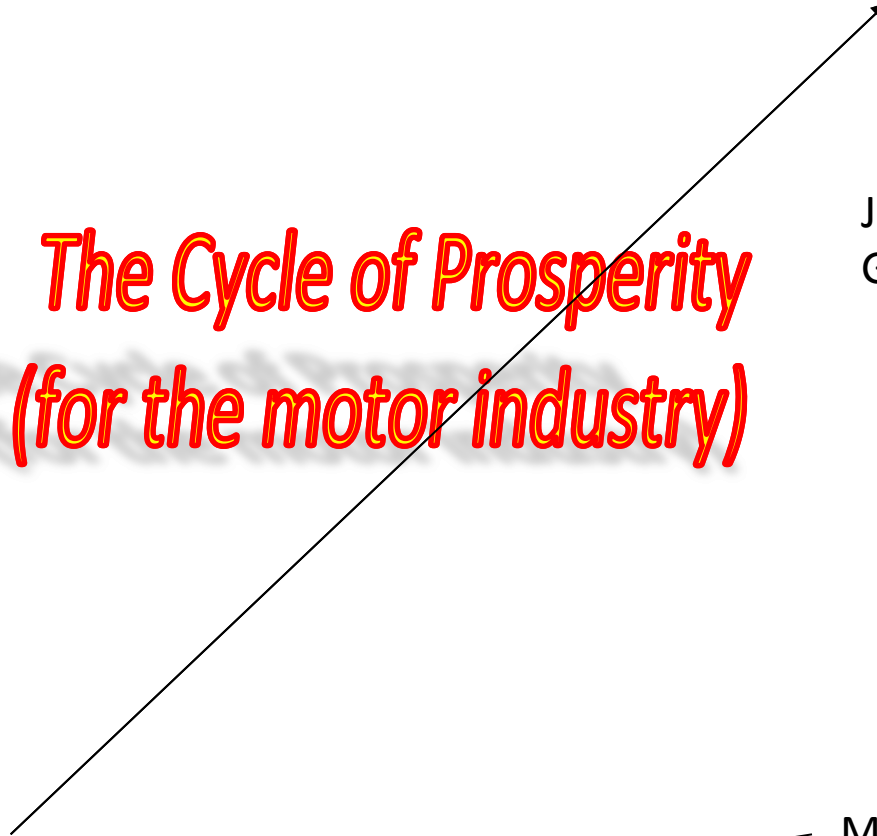
Car industry - mass production & standardisation leads to increased car sales.

Jobs in Diners, Motels & Gas Stations.

More oil is used.

More roads are built.

The Cycle of Prosperity (for the motor industry)



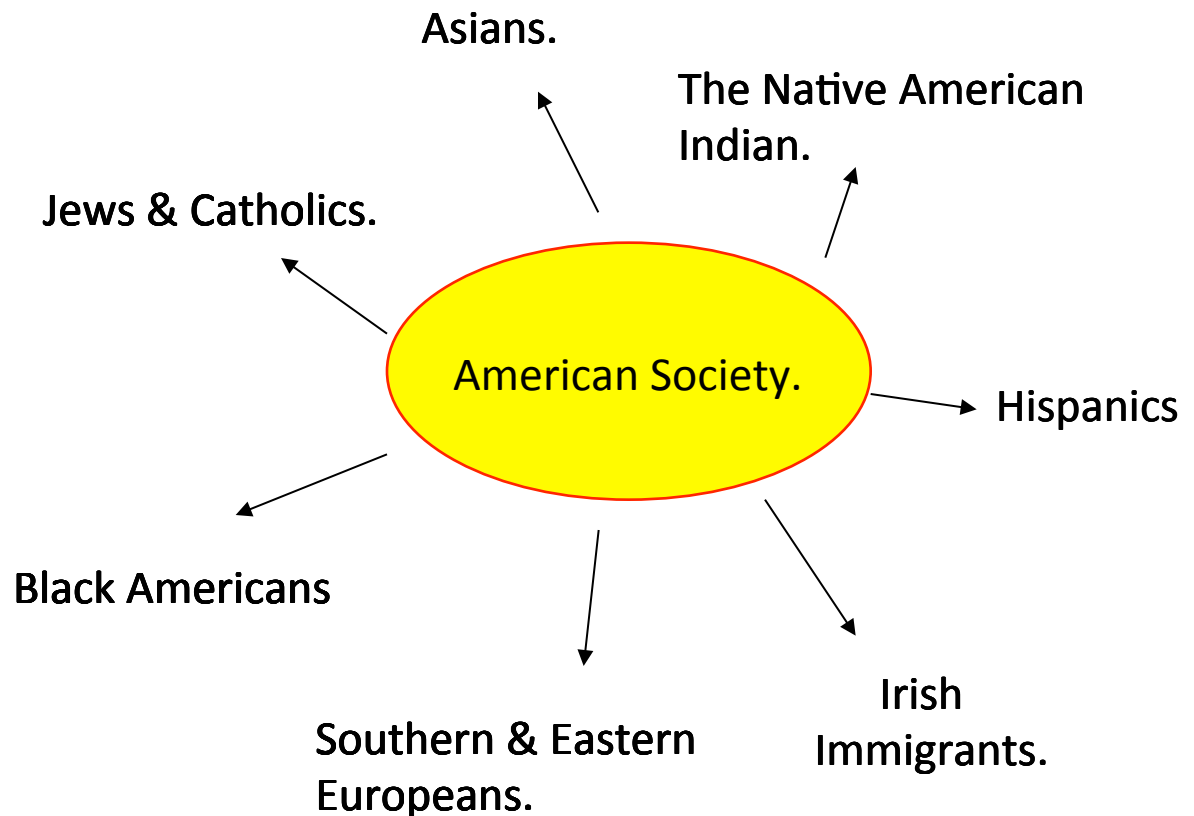
Intolerance.

Although life during the roaring twenties was filled with excitement & pleasure for many, there was also a dark side of intolerance & racism.

WASPs - White Anglo-Saxon
Potestants; who only wanted
America for themselves.

America wanted in particular to
keep people out form Eastern
Europe & Asia.

Their struggle for
equality was far from
over.



The Red Scare.

Especially after the Russian revolution of 1917, Americans greatly feared communism. In the early 1920s, this fear became wide-spread. The idea that immigrants were communists was called 'The Red Scare.'

On 16 September 1920, a bomb on a horse-drawn wagon was detonated outside the stock - exchange, Wall St. 38 people died & some 400 were injured. Italian anarchists were balmed.

In response to this event & other bombs, US attorney-general, Alexander Palmer, ordered the arrest of 10,000 people suspected of holding left-wing political views. ('The Palmer Raids')



The Sacco & Vanzetti Case

- May 1920
- Nicola Sacco & Bartolommeo Vanzetti
- Arrested & charged with a wages robbery in which two guard were shot dead.
- They were immigrants from Italy, living in Massachusetts.
- Spoke poor English
- Both were Anarchists - People who do not believe in society, the law or the government.
- Judge Webster Thayer - was a very dodgy Judge indeed!
- They were both carrying Loaded guns when arrested.
- Many people organised demonstrations
- Executed by electric chair.

Did Everyone Benefit from the Boom?

The land of Opportunity.

A lot of people benefitted from the economic boom. However some did not;

- The Brookings survey of 1929 found that 18 million people lived in poverty.
- Some industries were actually in decline during the 1920s. In the textile industry new techniques & synthetic products meant a decline in the older industries such as cotton.
- The new industries did not create many new jobs. Industries grew thanks to machinery & technology.

Blacks & Immigrants

The poorest families of all were African Americans who lived in the south.

They were paid very low wages for long hours on plantations such as cotton & tobacco.

They also suffered severe discrimination in daily life & lived in very rundown areas of towns & cities.

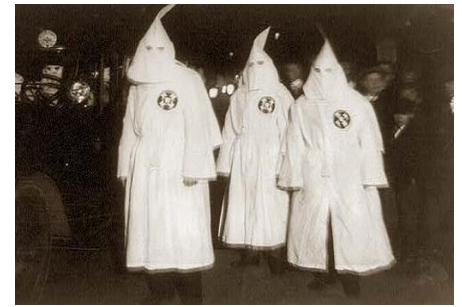
It was a similar story for immigrants who often arrived in the country poorly educated & lived in the poorest parts of the city.

Farmers

Farmers struggled during the 1920s and almost half of all American people were involved in farming. Tractors, combine harvesters & other new machinery helped farmers produce more food. However, farmers ended up producing a surplus of food. As a result, food prices dropped.

Many small farmers found themselves with a lower income & had difficulty keeping up with mortgage repayments. Some were evicted, others forced to sell off their land. Farm labourers found themselves out of work.

The Ku Klux Klan



1. The KKK launched what it saw a moral crusade to save the USA. In doing so, it stirred up racial and religious hatred. The Klan would accept as true Americans only those who were WASPs. They wanted to save the USA as they felt their jobs were threatened by people who were willing to work for lower wages.
2. Klan members most often attacked black people; they were beaten, raped or lynched (hung without trial), & their homes were set on fire / their property destroyed.
3. Klansmen who committed violence were often protected by police or judges who were themselves members of the Klan. In addition, while juries were reluctant to find people guilty of Klan activities.

Prohibition

Key Words:

- o **Prohibition** - when the sale of alcohol was banned in America.
- o **Bootleg** - illegally smuggled beer
- o **Moonshine** - home-made alcohol, often very dangerous.
- o **Still** - an illegal distillery to make moonshine.
- o **Temperance** - the term given to the movement campaigning for the introduction of prohibition.
- o **Speakeasies** - illegal bars in backrooms & hotels.
- o **Corrupt** - when officials accept bribes.
- o Bribery - paying officials to 'look the other way'
- o **Smuggling** - the other name for bootlegging.
- o **Racketeering** - illegally demanding money from businessmen for 'protection' & a promise not to trash their property.
- o **Dries** - people who didn't drink.

Prohibition *(continued.)*

<p>Causes of Prohibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In rural America, there was a very strong 'temperance' movements . They persuaded people to give up alcohol by using a mass leafleting campaign. • Leading businessmen believed workers would be more reliable if they didn't drink. • Men used their wages to buy alcohol. • The harmful effects of alcohol on social life. 	<p>Effects of Prohibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol consumption fell by 30% in the 1920s. • Isadore Enstein & Moe Smith (prohibition agents) made nearly 4,392 arrests. • It was impossible to prevent everyone from drinking - prohibition agents were poorly paid. • Gangs ran illegal bars with bootleg • Moonshine caused serious illness • Made people disrespect the government. • Increased the number of bars.
<p>Organised crime</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Made Americans disrespect the law. • Prohibition led to organised crime. • Gangs made so much money they could afford to become over the law. • Al-Capone • Racketeering • Corruption • Gangs took full advantage 	<p>Failure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 1933, many realised that prohibition had failed. • Instead of it making America a more honest & moral country, it had resulted in organised crime. • Despite the strength of the temperance movements, most people did not support it. • Prohibition ended in December 1933, when president Roosevelt repealed the 18th Amendment (the law banning alcohol)



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PAPER TWO - USA: The Roaring Twenties

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