

# The Roaring Twenties

*The Emergence of Modern  
America (1890–1930)*



**Economic growth**

Consumerism and culture

Social intolerance

## Thematic Icons



Economics and business



Geography and environment



Historical concepts and questions



Politics, government and citizenship



Society and culture



War, diplomacy and foreign policy

**Icons:** For more detailed instructions, see the *User Guide*



Flash activity (these activities are not editable)



Teacher notes included in the Notes page



By the end of this section, you will learn about economic growth in the 1920s and be able to answer these key questions:

- How did post-war politics help to create a boom economy in the 1920s?
- What were the effects of mass production and installment plans?
- Who was not affected by the prosperity?





In order to contextualize the Roaring Twenties, use this timeline to recap previous key historical events. Either press on a date or drag the pointer along the timeline to find out information about what happened in each year.

Press **start** to begin.

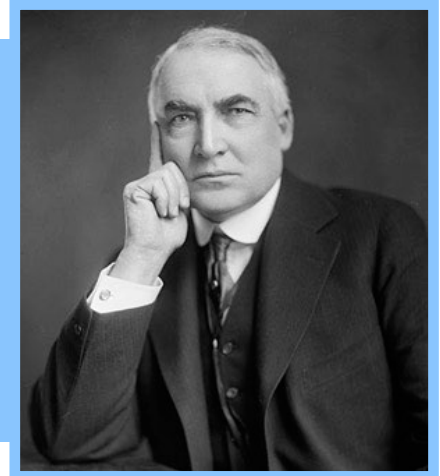
**start**





Following World War I, the U.S. economy went into a recession. The war industry, which had fueled growth, dropped off, and men returning from the war flooded the job market just when there were fewer jobs to be filled.

**Warren G. Harding** was elected president in 1920 on his motto of “A return to normalcy” and moved away from **Progressivism**. He began to decrease public spending and cut taxes as a way of pulling the economy out of its slump.



Harding’s administration was hit by scandal as members of his government sold off assets and took bribes. The biggest scandal was **Teapot Dome** in 1923.





# A boom economy

By 1922, the economy was turning around. The **Fordney-McCumber Tariff**, the highest **tariff** in U.S. history, increased import taxes. Americans were encouraged to buy goods manufactured in the U.S., helping to create a boom.



Harding's successor, **Calvin Coolidge** was also strongly pro-business.

“The chief business of the American people is business. They are profoundly concerned with producing, buying, selling, investing and prospering in the world.”

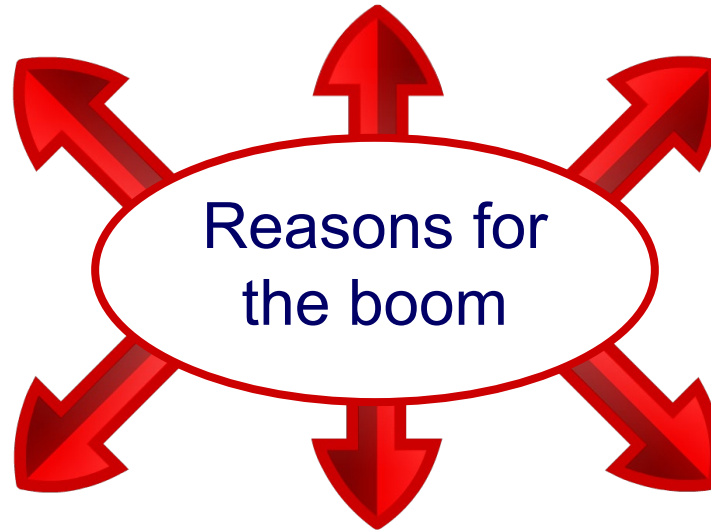


There were numerous causes of the economic boom:

People bought and sold **stock** and **shares** to make money.

Higher wages and lower taxes increased **disposable income**.

Unemployment fell due to the growth of new industries, e.g. chemicals, cars.



High tariffs caused more sales of American goods.

Readily available **credit** allowed people to borrow.

**Mass production** reduced the cost of manufacturing.

Did the boom last? What happened in 1929?



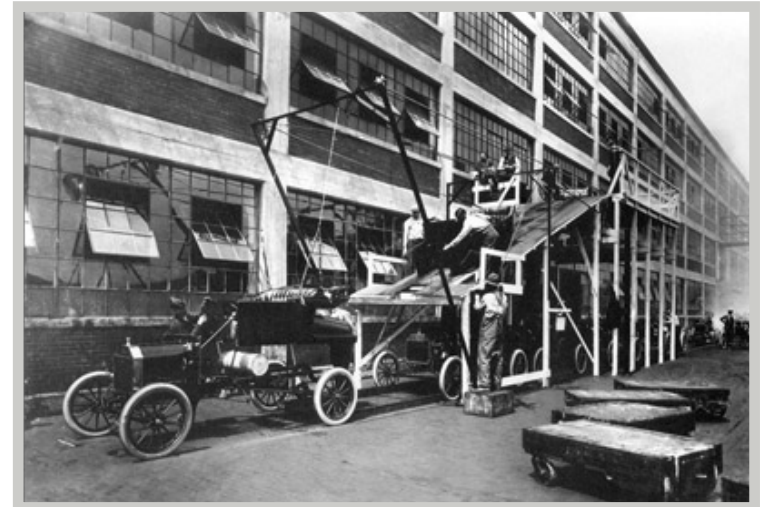


# Mass production



The **assembly line** broke down jobs into smaller tasks. People could then specialize in one task and be able to do it quickly. This meant that less skilled people could be hired. Producing standardized items in bulk – mass production – had a number of effects:

- cheaper production of goods
- an increasing number of people being employed in cities
- higher wages meant people had more disposable income and contributed to an increased feeling of prosperity.



How did each of these things contribute towards higher living standards and the birth of consumer culture?





**Installment plans** were a new way of borrowing money to purchase goods and pay for them over a period of time. Drag each statement to the correct place, depending on whether it is an advantage or a disadvantage of installment plans.

Press **start** to begin.

start



What do you know about current lending practices?



During the 1920s, the workplace underwent some changes, building on the earlier work of industrialization and progressive reforms.

Press the buttons to find out about the role of organized labor and the changing role of women in the workplace.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Many people were economically better off and saw a rise in their standard of living in the 1920s. However, the distribution of wealth was uneven and the prosperity did not affect everyone. Can you match each group to the reasons why they missed out on the prosperity?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**

