

## The Roaring 1920s

### Events and Policies

- WARREN G. HARDING (1865-1923, in office 1921-1923, 29<sup>th</sup> President)
- CALVIN COOLIDGE (1872-1933, in office 1923-1929, 30<sup>th</sup> President)

### **The Lost Generation**

- Europe reconstructs after WWI, US engages in no important affairs, both Europe and US experience disillusion
- some American intellectuals and writers leave for Europe and try to find new values to replace the lost old ones
- other Americans at home seek to re-establish the old values of patriotism, religion, family values, success in life

### **Nativism**

= heightened nationalism, xenophobia, in America opposition to immigration, especially war immigrants

- JOHNSON-REED Act, or, the Immigration Act (1924): limited the quote of immigrants to 2% of the number of people of the given nationality who were already living in the US in 1890
- First **Red Scare**: the Russian Revolution (1917) removed the Tsarist autocracy and established the Soviet Union, awoke in the US a fear of communism
- SACCO and VANZETTI: two Italian-born anarchists tried for robbery and murder, sentenced to death, and electrocuted
- Ku Klux Klan (since 1865): in 1920s began opposing immigrants, 'hyphenated Americans' (Woodrow Wilson's term), mainly German-Americans

### **Fundamentalism**

- a militant Protestantism against Darwinian theory and for a literal interpretation of the Bible
- WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN: spokesman for Fundamentalism, supporter of Anti-Evolution Laws prohibiting teaching the theory, the laws were passed in several states, especially in Tennessee
- **Scopes Monkey Trial**: JOHN SCOPES taught the evolution in Tennessee, was persecuted by Bryant, lost the case, but his defender CLARENCE DARREN ridiculed the idea of Fundamentalism

### **Prohibition**

- the **Volstead Act** (1919, in effect 1920-1933): prohibited the manufacture and sale of alcohol for consumption
- alcohol consumption did not stop, rather contributed to organized crime and corruption in law enforcement
- speakeasies: bars selling spirits during Prohibition (*The Cotton Club*, a bar with jazz, dancing, and drinking)
- AL CAPONE: a crime syndicate leader dedicated to smuggling and bootlegging of liquor, gambling, and prostitution
- new morals: a carpe diem stance to life after the WWI, connected with the Prohibition, also with Freud's theories
- the **flapper**: an emancipated woman with short hair, in short skirts, smoking, drinking, driving, flying, etc.

### Culture

- fashion: elegant slim dresses with lowered waists and hats for women
- leisure activities: **vaudeville**, entertainments with dancing, music listening, and drinking
- sports: BABE RUTH, a baseball player
- Miss America: started in 1921, the first winner was MARGARET GORMAN

### **Music**

- the **Jazz Age**: jazz arrives from the South to big cities and becomes the prominent genre
- BESSIE SMITH: an African-American blues and jazz singer
- King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band: a group led by the jazz cornet player JOE KING OLIVER, including LOUIS ARMSTRONG
- DUKE ELLINGTON: an African-American jazz pianist, composer, and bandleader
- GEORGE GERSHWIN: a pianist and composer of Russian descent, author of *Rhapsody in Blue* for piano and jazz band
- dances: Charleston, Foxtrot, Black Bottom; **dance marathons**
- 'I'm Just Wild about Harry': a popular song for the first African-American Broadway musical
- FRED AND ADELE ASTAIRE: a brother and sister dancing couple
- JOSEPHINE BAKER: an African-American dancer, singer, and actress, the first world famous black dancer

### **Film**

- RUDOLPH VALENTINO: an Italian silent film actor, sex symbol, and pop icon, star of *The Sheik* (1921)

- CLARA BOW: a silent film actress, star of *Wings* (1927, the winner of the first Oscar awarded)
- GLORIA SWANSON: a silent film actress, later played a silent film star in the talkies era in *Sunset Boulevard* (1950)
- LON CHANEY (*The Phantom of the Opera*, 1925), JOHN BARRYMORE (*Don Juan*, 1926), LIONEL BARRYMORE, JOAN CRAWFORD, GRETA GARBO
- **slapstick** actors: HAROLD LLOYD (*Safety Last*, 1923), CHARLIE CHAPLIN, BUSTER KEATON, LAUREL and HARDY
- *The Jazz Singer* (1927): the first feature-length sound film, a musical film starring MAY McAVOY and AL JOLSON
- later films about 1920s: *The Public Enemy* (1931, on Prohibition); *The Roaring Twenties* (1939, on Prohibition); *They Shoot Horses, Don't They?* (HORACE MCCOY's novel from 1935, Sydney Pollack's film from 1969, on a dancing marathon); *Inherit the Wind* (play from 1955, film from 1960, on Scopes Trial)

## Architecture

- **Art Deco** (1925-1939): a decorative and glamorous mixture neoclassical, modernist, and art nouveau elements
- skyscrapers: Chicago Tribune Tower, Wrigley Building in Chicago, Illinois, resemble Victorian Gothic revival
- FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT: Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, Japan; Ennis House, Hollyhock House in Los Angeles, California

## Visual Arts

### Modernism

- GEORGIA O'KEEFFE: painter of flowers, rocks, and landscapes with sexual innuendos
- MORGAN RUSSELL: pioneer of **Synchromism**, an abstract style attempting to make painting reproduce the sound
- STANTON MACDONALD-WRIGHT: painter of Synchromism
- MAN RAY: painter, experimental film maker, photographer, author of collages and installations of found objects
- LEE MILLER: Man Ray's lover and assistant, a fashion model, photographer, author of photojournalism from WWII

### Realism

- THOMAS HART BENTON: murals, rural landscapes
- EDWARD HOPPER: common life pictures
- GRANT WOOD: the rural Midwest
- HORACE PIPPIN: African-American life scenes
- N. C. WYETH: illustrations

## Literature

- **Lost Generation**: GERTRUDE STEIN, FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD, ERNEST HEMINGWAY, MALCOLM COWLEY
- Harlem Renaissance: LANGSTON HUGHES, CLAUDE MCKAY, ZORA NEAL HURSTON, COUNTTEE CULLEN
- Southern Renaissance: WILLIAM FAULKNER, ERSKINE CALDWELL, JOHN DOS PASSOS
- **crime** fiction: DASHIELL HAMMETT, RAYMOND CHANDLER
- milestone publications: T. S. ELIOT's *The Waste Land* (1922), FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), ERNEST HEMINGWAY's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), WILLIAM FAULKNER's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929)