

AP United States History
Unit 7: A Colossus Emerges
Topic- The Interwar Years: Reading Selections

The 1920s– Innovations in Communications and Technology

Explain the causes and effects of the innovations in communication and technology in the United States over time.

New technologies and manufacturing techniques helped focus the U.S. economy on the production of consumer goods, contributing to improved standards of living, greater personal mobility, and better communications systems.

The 1920s was a decade of unprecedented innovation in both technology and in communications. It was the first decade of the modern communications revolution that began the process of linking people together around the world, but especially here in the United States, as magazines and newspapers began to be supplanted by both radio and film. Consumer goods and appliances such as refrigerators, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners made household chores easier for women and therefore gave families much more leisure time than ever before. Radio and film changed our culture. Prior to the 1920s, Americans identified with each other more on a regional basis, in terms of culture. But, if there was one innovation to begin with which changed the way Americans lived and worked in the 1920s and connected them fundamentally, it was without a doubt, the automobile.

During the years leading up to World War I, a revolution in manufacturing shaped the way Americans were able to both produce goods and consume them. The development of electrical motors and assembly lines changed the American manufacturing process. The development of efficient electric motors and the electrification of American cities meant that Americans could enjoy goods produced at a faster pace, and enjoy life twenty-four hours a day. Factories, shops, restaurants, and offices lit by light bulbs, heralded a new workplace in American life in the 1920s. Assembly lines also improved manufacturing, making the process faster and more efficient. Henry Ford did not invent the assembly line, but his Ford Motor Company did make effective use of the technique (one that he, in fact, borrowed– ironically– from meat-packing plants) to mass produce automobiles. Throughout the decade of the 1920s, the Ford Motor Company mass-produced its famed Model T cars. By 1925, a family could purchase a car for about \$325 (which would be about \$30,000 in 2023). With a top speed of less than 30 miles-per-hour, the Model T might not have felt like a revolution in transportation, but for the time it was a game-changer, as people and goods could move more quickly than ever before. Unlike trains, which required a massive infrastructure of steel tracks to run on and which could therefore, only go certain places, the automobile gave Americans a sense of independence that other societies around the world would not so readily share. The mass manufacturing of automobiles also opened the door for other industries to come of age during the decade in advertising (on road signs), paint, glass, upholstery, and oil and gas. It was a booming industry which led to tremendous economic growth– though, it would be the introduction of a highly efficient highway system in the 1950s which would lead to the growth of the modern interstate highway system that we enjoy today.

Household appliances also played a major role in the development of a modern American culture in the 1920s. The appliances that we think of in a modern household were invented by the 1920s, including gas stoves, vacuum cleaners, washing machines, and refrigerators. The gas stove enabled kitchens to be placed inside the home and food to be cooked efficiently. Vacuum cleaners were a tremendous time saver and enabled American women to clean their homes with an efficiency that was never before possible. Refrigeration, invented as early

as the late 1860s, now came in the form of ice boxes (or deep freeze refrigerators) and in stand-up refrigerators that enabled a new industry— frozen foods to begin to flourish. With the preservation of food in the home, Americans began to have healthier diets and life expectancy rose. But, it was the invention of the humble washing machine (and later, the dryer) which changed the game for American households. Washing clothes used to take an entire day away from a family, now with the electric washing machine, clothing for an entire household could be washed in a matter of hours— freeing up both women and children to be able to have more leisure time and with a new level of disposable income. But, while household appliances freed up American women and children to enjoy new leisure pursuits, it was the theater and the new film industry which brought entertainment from Hollywood Land, (later, shortened to just Hollywood) to their communities, and the radio which brought mass entertainment right into their own homes for the entire family to be able to enjoy for the first time.

New forms of mass media, such as radio and cinema, contributed to the spread of national culture as well as greater awareness of regional cultures.

The 1920s were the first decade of modern mass media. Newspapers had always been important in American life. During the Progressive Era, it was magazines and books that the muckraking reformers used to get their message across to the American public. In the 1920s, newspapers, magazines, and books remained important sources of information, but it was radio that truly changed the lives of ordinary Americans. AM radio first appeared with voice in 1910, but it was the announcement of the presidential election results on KDKA in 1920, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which ushered in the era of radio news. Now people all across America could listen to the news at home. But, the radio did more than just carry the news, it also broadcast live shows (episodic serials, or stories), live sporting events (such as baseball games and boxing matches), and live music— the first broadcast in 1910, had featured the New York Metropolitan Opera live, by 1925 WSM in Nashville was broadcasting the legendary Grand Ole Opry to listeners throughout the South and baseball games and boxing matches could be heard in most homes around the country. AM radio stations carried programming— sometimes live— to listeners across the country as Americans tuned-in together, as families, and as small communities or neighborhoods, gathered around the radio, to listen to professional baseball games, church services, the news (local and national), and popular music (jazz, blues, ragtime, and swing were all incredibly popular during the 1920s). Listening to the radio became a shared communal experience. Much like the automobile, the radio unified Americans in a way in which no other mass form of communication had ever done before. It began the process of unifying Americans, many of whom had been immigrants that had arrived in the country in the years leading up to World War I.

But, the radio was not the only means of popular entertainment during the decade. Films dazzled audience goers throughout the decade of the 1920s. Until 1927, each film that was produced during the period was silent, but *The Jazz Singer*, starring Al Jolson, was the first to feature sound. Stars such as Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Clara Bow, and Douglas Fairbanks became popular figures. Films gave families a chance to escape the everyday world and movies were popular with Americans of all ages. (Films also gave Americans the chance to experience places and events in a way in which they never could before.) In sports, two heroes captured the imagination of fans across the country. The New York Yankees featured the most popular sports figure of the 1920s and the 1930s— Babe Ruth, whose home run records and indelible smile made him one of the most popular figures in the history of sports. He was joined in popularity by Jack Dempsey, who was one of the greatest boxers in the history of the sport. Sports connected families and communities as each would root for their favorite teams— giving Americans a sense of local and or regional pride. They also gave Americans an escape from their ordinary everyday lives, and the sense that fun could also be a part of life. With the advent of the car, Americans began to travel about the country on vacations— once only the province of the very wealthy, now these trips to see other parts of the country could be available to anyone with a car. Advertising became an important industry for the first time during the 1920s, as ad agencies used sports and film stars to sell products in the growing consumer culture of the period. (For example, Babe Ruth was used to sell everything from cereal to kids, to cigarettes for adults.) Thanks to radio and film, an American culture began to slowly develop that was more homogenized by the listening and viewing experiences. But, while Americans were

being entertained and a popular consumer culture was developing during the period, as American urban areas began to surpass their rural counterparts in population for the first time in American history, there were crucial cultural and political battles which also defined the decade of the 1920s.

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The 1920s– Cultural and Political Controversies

Explain the causes and effects of international and internal migration patterns over time.

By 1920, a majority of the U.S. population lived in urban centers, which offered new economic opportunities for women, international migrants, and internal migrants.

After World War I, nativist campaigns against some ethnic groups led to the passage of quotas that restricted immigration, particularly from southern and eastern Europe, and increased barriers to Asian immigration.

By 1920, America had undergone a seismic demographic shift, as more Americans lived in cities and fewer lived on farms for the first time in the nation's history. The mechanization of agriculture was a game-changer. New innovations such as tractors, combines, and mechanized threshers meant that fewer people than ever were needed in the agricultural labor force. Just as the car had started replacing the horse throughout the 1920s, the tractor had also started replacing the horse on American farms. Commercial agriculture expanded dramatically during the period from 1915-1925, in large part because of the war effort. American farms expanded to feed the world during a time of crisis– though this will have tremendous implications later. It also meant that with fewer people needed in the labor force, and as families tended to be large during period leading up to the 1920s, more Americans than ever before were looking for work, and as America's cities continued their industrial expansion, new migrants from America's farming communities found homes and work in these bustling urban centers throughout the decade. For American women in particular, the decade opened up more opportunities than ever before, as women became teachers, nurses, and secretaries in ever-increasing numbers, but also became radio, film, and advertising stars, as well. Women had gained the right to vote in 1920, and though very little during the period changed for women living on America's farms and in its small towns. It was in the cities where women moved in search of opportunities and during the period began to become a vital component of America's labor force.

Cities had been magnets for international migrants from the end of the Civil War up until the 1920s, with more immigrants coming into the country from Southern, Central, and Eastern Europe during the decades from 1890-1910, than ever before. It was the war which slowed immigration into the United States– almost bringing it to a halt, due to the fact that so many of the immigrants that were coming into the country up until that time were from the nations (or regions) that were at war with one another. With the tremendous casualties from the war, the mass death that stemmed from the pandemic, and the panic with the rise of the Soviet Union out of the ashes of the Russian Revolution, Americans entered the decade with a Red Scare. In 1920, after a series of bombings on Wall Street in New York City, the Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer and the Justice Department rounded-up suspected radicals in what has become known as the Palmer Raids and had them deported. Fears of the spread of communism also, as we saw earlier during World War I, would have a tremendous impact on the labor union movement. And as had been discussed in an earlier unit, at the end of World War I, Americans had been fearful of labor strikes, protests, and of the immigrants who had come into the country in the years leading up to the war. This led to widespread nativism, the quotas that were implemented in the Immigration Act of 1924, which heavily restricted immigration from Europe during the period, and such events as the trial of Sacco and Vanzetti, which tremendously divided the nation and created an uproar in Europe. Nativism led to the rise of a new version of the Ku Klux Klan which was focused on both enforcing the color line and on subduing what it saw as the immigrant menace to America. The organization was at its height by 1924, but a series of leadership scandals led to its decline as an organization until the 1950s when it reemerged to battle

the nascent civil rights movement in the South. Immigration was heavily restricted from Asia during the period, and as we have seen, immigrants were banned almost entirely from both China and Japan by the 1920s. However, the new immigration quotas and restrictions did not apply to Latin America, and after the Mexican Revolution (1910-1920), more immigrants came from Mexico into America to escape the destruction of their farms, homes, and property, and to escape the impoverished conditions which plagued the country in the aftermath of the conflict than ever before. Like each group of immigrants during the period, the new immigrants from Latin America faced the weight of prejudice and discrimination, but filled-in positions in the economy as industrial laborers, farm workers, and construction workers— many of them, as migrants.

Explain the causes and effects of developments in popular culture in the United States over time.

Migration gave rise to new forms of art and literature that expressed ethnic and regional identities, such as the Harlem Renaissance movement.

In the 1920s, cultural and political controversies emerged as Americans debated gender roles, modernism, science, religion, and issues related to race and immigration.

As migrants moved to different parts of the country, they brought their cultural identities with them and in doing so, influenced the growth of urban American culture during the 1920s. One of the best examples of this phenomenon in the 1920s was the influence that the Great Migration would have on the development of an urban culture in such cities as Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and especially New York City. In New York City, the Harlem Renaissance became a cultural phenomenon. Musicians such as Count Basie, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Duke Ellington, writers such as Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston, and thinkers such as W.E.B. DuBois and Marcus Garvey, became the faces of a movement which forever shaped the cultural landscape of America— shaping the roots of today's popular culture in art, literature, and music. New forms of music were introduced which swept America, inspiring dance crazes and shifting the perspective, albeit slowly, of African-American culture such as blues, jazz, and swing music. Those who were fortunate to visit Harlem and to go to places such as the famous Cotton Club, would be treated to the great music of the period. Through his poetry, Langston Hughes would influence a future generation of African-American writers. Marcus Garvey, became a civil rights activist and preached to a generation of African-Americans that America was a place of segregation and violence and became the major proponent of the back to Africa movement, which sought (as a generation prior to the Civil War did as well, including such figures as James Madison, Henry Clay, and for a time, Abraham Lincoln) to colonize African-Americans in the West African nation of Liberia— which had been created during the administration of James Monroe (1817-1825) just for that purpose. But, while African-Americans were launching a cultural revolution, the shift from a rural to an urban American culture led to tensions which are still present in our country today.

By the time of the 1920 census, more Americans for the time lived in cities than in its small towns and rural areas. This led to a tremendous cultural shift. No group embodied this shift more than American women during the period. As more women became educated and entered the workforce, with the development of a middle class in American life came more social freedoms. Some women became flappers— smoking, cutting their hair short, and dressing in ways that were more provocative than ever before. The flapper was the embodiment of the rebellion of women against the strict mores of the Victorian era that preceded World War I, but she was a product of the American urban culture of the 1920s. In rural America, it was as if the Victorian Era had not come to an end, even for American women who lived in these areas of the country. Religious revivals swept the rural areas of the country during the 1920s, railing against the vices it perceived to be found in America's cities— the night clubs, dancing, Jazz music, films, and the development of a consumer culture which saw the development of department stores that has replaced the traditional mom-and-pop stores that could still be found in America's small towns. If Prohibition was meant to cure what had ailed American society before the war, in the 1920s, it led to organized crime in the cities where gangsters like Al Capone controlled certain sections of cities such as Chicago, to moonshine stills which produced bootleg liquor in America's rural areas. As progressivism had existed in America's cities, fundamentalism took hold in its rural areas. While

Progressives had sought to use the power of science to effect social change, Fundamentalists rejected modernity and sought to have a literal interpretation of the scriptures and to hold onto what they viewed as a traditional way of life. This culminated first in the Scopes Trial, a trial in which a Tennessee biology teacher was convicted for teaching the principles of evolution in his classroom, which at the time, was against the law in the state of Tennessee. The trial pitted one of the greatest trial lawyers in history, Clarence Darrow, against the fundamentalist politician, none other than William Jennings Bryan. Though Scopes was found guilty and had to pay a small fine, it was just the beginning of a sign of the clash between science and religion and just as much so, the divisions that were developing between those who lived in America's cities and those who lived in its small towns. But, the rural-urban divide in American life that developed in the 1920s would foreshadow the tremendous divisions that would develop in the nation that would encompass both economics, civil rights, and the role of the federal government in American society that came after the close of the experiences of both the Great Depression and the Second World War.

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The Great Depression

Explain the causes of the Great Depression and its effects on the economy.

The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an urban, industrial economy led by large companies.

Episodes of credit and market instability in the early 20th century, in particular the Great Depression, led to calls for a stronger financial regulatory system.

During the 1920s, America continued its transition from a rural agrarian economy to an urban industrial one. Throughout the period, three conservative Presidents, Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover, would take a laissez-faire (hands-off) approach to the growth of American big business and banking. But, the build-up to World War I, and the aftermath of the conflict had also sowed the seeds for an economic crisis that was in the making, as commercial agriculture blossomed during the war to feed the warring nations of Europe, but once that conflict ended, so did the demand for agricultural goods as European farms began to recover from the ravages of war. In the 1920s, the availability of new consumer goods and the use of credit to purchase them for the first time became a problem. The consumer society that developed in America during the decade was based on products that were built to last for long periods of time, which meant that once you purchased a product, there was little need for replacing it. In foreign affairs, Americans began once again to raise tariff rates, which led to a temporary boom in business at home, but slowed global trade with the nations of Europe who were trying to rebuild their economies in the wake of the war. Each of these factors would eventually lead to the greatest economic calamity in global history (but, it started in America)-- the Great Depression.

With the outbreak of World War I, American businesses went into overdrive producing products to support the Allied war effort. This increase in production escalated when the United States entered the war. As the war came to an abrupt conclusion, businesses continued producing consumer goods at a quickened pace. When Warren G. Harding became president, he promised Americans a return to normalcy. One aspect of normalcy also meant that big business regulations went by the wayside. And with the reputation of labor unions damaged by the wartime experience, big business was free to operate as it had during the Gilded Age. The major problem was that when the war ended so abruptly, it left industries which had expanded in a lurch-- they either had to scale down, or find new customers after the war in an environment where conflict was to be avoided. Another problem was in the agricultural or farming sector. In the years leading up to our involvement in the war, American farms were already in the process of expanding to feed the Allied war effort, plus new machinery, such as tractors, threshers, and combines continually meant less labor was needed for farming. As we have seen, this process led more Americans to continue to migrate into its rapidly growing cities. But, during the rapid expansion of agriculture, had taken out long-term loans through the banking system, to purchase more land, equipment, and supplies. However, when the war came to an end so abruptly, farms across Europe that had once been ravaged by the conflict, now recovered rapidly to their pre-war state. This meant trouble for American farmers, who were now without the large-scale demand that the war had once provided. Another major problem was the consumer society, which was based on products that were built to last. Consumer devices such as refrigerators, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners were built to last, not to be replaced every few years or so, as they are today. This meant that quite quickly factories could easily overproduce these particular products. But, how these products were purchased was also a major problem. Quite often, customers

purchased these products through the use of credit on installment plans. In more than a few cases, some families were paying for multiple items at a time. Quite simply, most American families built-up huge amounts of personal debt.

But, there were other factors to consider. With very few banking regulations, credit, loans, and mortgages were easy to obtain for the few that were very wealthy, but throughout the period, the gap between the rich and the poor across the country continuously widened. Those with wealth were partly to blame— spending their wealth on themselves— lavish homes, vacations, and other luxuries, rather than investing it in the salaries of their struggling workers. The idea of taxing wealth was an anathema at the time. Purchasing items on credit was one problem, investing in the stock market by buying on margin was another issue. Buying on margin was risky on its face— a person would purchase a stock on credit, hoping for a big return to make some money after paying back the loan. With the economies of Europe in shambles after the war and generations of their own labor forces lost on the battlefields of the conflict, the great powers of Europe were struggling throughout the decade. This set of circumstances left American companies with fewer customers than ever before. As the nation was on the gold standard, as banks failed the Federal Reserve raised interest rates and tightened the money supply. This created a crisis for American businesses, as high interest rates made it difficult for them to repay their loans. Credit simply dried up. To make matters worse, during the onset of the depression experience, Congress voted to implement the Smoot-Hawley Tariff which raised rates across the board which slowed global trade to a halt.

The onset of the Great Depression hit with the crash of the stock market on October 28, 1929. However, most Americans were not heavily invested in the stock market. It was the cascading effects of bank failures throughout 1930-1932, that destroyed the economy and crushed the spirit of the American people. As the banks began to close their doors, nervous patrons rushed to get their money out of them. Some families lost all of the money that they had ever earned. Then the crisis ensued— businesses closed their doors, workers lost their jobs, farms and homes were repossessed by banks desperately searching for assets. It was a disaster. Over 9,000 banks closed their doors, some with anxious patrons banging on their doors (50% of all American banks were completely shuttered). The stock market dropped almost 90%-- the value of American industry and the investments in it, were wiped-out almost overnight. Prices dropped 25% for goods and services, but this is not a positive outcome, at all, because it meant that people who now had no money, now could not make enough money to escape the downward spiral in the economy. Unemployment rose to 25% (it has never been above 11% since the beginning of America's involvement in the Second World War), but that number does not address the number of people who were underemployed during the period. Evictions and repossessions occurred throughout the period. Some families tried in desperation to sell their children. Some simply starved to death. Some committed suicide. Some lost their homes and farms. And, some young men simply hopped on a train and rode the rails, desperately trying to find work. It was the greatest economic catastrophe the nation had even seen.

Episodes of credit and market instability in the early 20th century, in particular the Great Depression, led to calls for a stronger financial regulatory system.

During the 1930s, policymakers responded to the mass unemployment and social upheavals of the Great Depression by transforming the U.S. into a limited welfare state, redefining the goals and ideas of modern American liberalism.

We have to remember that it was the financial crisis of the 1780s, at the close of the Revolutionary War which gave us the Constitution. America, by 1929, had been no stranger to financial panics. In 1819, 1837, 1857, 1873, 1893, and again in 1907, the nation had suffered through financial downturns that each had significant consequences for the growth and development of the country. In 1913, primarily due to the financial crisis of 1907, the Federal Reserve System had been created to regulate America's currency and banking system. But, during the early years of the crisis, the FED, as it is referred to today, made matters worse rather than better by raising interest rates (the amount of money, or percentage that a bank can charge to let you borrow) and by taking money out of circulation. The response to the end of the First World War was to let the markets correct

themselves. President Herbert Hoover, who had been elected to the presidency in 1928, had been a successful entrepreneur prior to his career in politics. His reaction to the Great Depression sealed his fate as President of the United States. At first, Hoover and his advisers believed that the economy would simply correct itself and opposed any government intervention. But, as the situation continued to deteriorate, Hoover and his advisers slowly corrected course. In the beginning, volunteerism was a part of the plan for the Hoover administration. With volunteerism, public and private charities, and soup kitchens were to help those in need due to the consistent lay-offs that were a result of the escalating business closures and bank failures which plagued the economy. But, these organizations were simply overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people who would need assistance due to the conditions of the Great Depression. By 1932, the situation had become unbearable and the Hoover administration began to act. His administration pushed through an act creating the Reconstruction Finance Corporation which began to enact loans to businesses that were struggling and to create public works programs, but it was too little, too late. Hoover's administration had slowly worked to create a federal government that could use its power to address the crisis, but it never implemented these ideals on a mass scale, nor did it foresee the use of the power of deficit spending— using the power of the federal government to invest in the private sector, despite the accumulation of large amounts of public debt. Hoover's campaign for the presidency in 1932 was a forgone conclusion. Everywhere he looked, the American people were suffering and his name was attached to it— empty pockets became Hoover Flags, shanties of shacks were called Hoovervilles, and at his campaign rallies people were angry. The final straw came with the Bonus Army Incident. A group of World War I veterans who were not due until 1945 to get paid bonuses for their service had camped out near the White House in a ramshackle make-shift shanty town with their families. When the Bonus Marchers threatened to march on the capital in protest, Hoover used federal troops to put down the protest. The federal troops under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur did more than just put down the protest, they burned the encampment, or shanty town to the ground forcing the veterans and their families to flee. In the election of 1932, it was not close, as New York Governor, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected as the next President of the United States. He promised a New Deal for the American people.

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The New Deal

Explain how the Great Depression and the New Deal impacted American political, social, and economic life over time.

Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal attempted to end the Great Depression by using government power to provide relief to the poor, stimulate recovery, and reform the American economy.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt took the oath of office on March 4, 1933, he inherited a crisis like no other in American history. Born into a wealthy family, well-educated, and well-connected, Roosevelt, was a blue-blood in that he rose from American royalty. His distant cousin, Theodore Roosevelt, was one of the most popular figures to ever become President of the United States, and in 1905, he married the niece of TR, Eleanor Roosevelt. Like TR, FDR rose through the ranks of politics— first becoming elected to the New York State Senate as a Democrat in 1910. After supporting Woodrow Wilson's bid for the presidency in 1912, he was rewarded with the position (just like TR before him) of Assistant Secretary of the Navy, which he held through World War I and up until Wilson left the presidency in 1921. He was then nominated for the Vice-Presidency on the Democratic ticket in 1920 to be the running mate for James M. Cox of Ohio, but the ticket was defeated by the Republicans and their standard-bearer, Warren G. Harding. In 1922, while vacationing, he contracted polio and was crippled from that point forward for life. He never fully regained the use of his legs. He would create a place for polio victims and those who suffered from paralysis in Warm Springs, Georgia, and inspired and served as the director for the March of Dimes, a charity for the victims of paralysis which eventually helped fund the first polio vaccines. In 1928, he reemerged in politics to become the Governor of New York where he had already started the process of using public works programs to combat the Great Depression in his state. But, Roosevelt faced a desperate American public in 1932 as he ran for the presidency and when he was elected, he assured them that his administration would create a New Deal for the American people. In his inaugural address, he told the American people that, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself." It was an ominous line, as many in the country feared that the American experiment as they had known it was coming to an end.

The New Deal that FDR's administration would create was the product of his cabinet of advisers, who he often referred to as the Brain Trust. His administration developed a series of programs that would regulate American capitalism, not scrap it entirely. It would use the power of the federal government and deficit spending to put people back to work and money into the economy. The program would also create agencies that would regulate businesses, agriculture, and housing. It created a pension system for the elderly and the indigent. But, in his First 100 Days, his first order of business was to establish confidence in the banking system. He ordered a "Banking Holiday," in which all of the banks across the country were closed and then reopened them after they had been inspected and their deposits insured— to that end, the Glass-Steagall Banking Act was passed and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was created (which still insures bank accounts to this day). He then turned to the radio in the first of his famed, "Fireside Chats," and spoke directly to them, urging them to put their money back into the banking system. It worked. For the very first time, since the beginning of the crisis, deposits exceeded withdrawals. The banking system reopened for business, credit flowed, and loans and mortgages— now protected by insurance became available once more. His administration then created the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), which regulated the stock market and its relationship with both businesses and consumers, took the nation off of the gold standard, gave the Federal Reserve additional

powers, and passed the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, which brought the hated practice of Prohibition to an end. The agencies that were passed as part of the New Deal suite of programs were intended to address three major issues: relief, recovery, and reform. Examples of these agencies, often referred to as alphabet agencies, are listed below.

- Relief programs were intended to give direct aid to the suffering of the poor and unemployed. (example– the Civilian Conservation Corps, or the CCC and the Works Progress Administration, or WPA)
- Recovery programs were designed to shore up the economy, and to create jobs and business growth by restarting the flow of consumer demand. (example– the Agricultural Adjustment Act, or the AAA and National Industrial Recovery Act, NIRA, or the NRA)
- Reform programs were supposed to alleviate the economic crisis, and prevent future financial crises from happening again. (example– the Federal Deposit Insurance Program, or the FDIC and the Social Security Act, or SSA)

Radical, union, and populist movements pushed Roosevelt toward more extensive efforts to change the American economic system, while conservatives in Congress and the Supreme Court sought to limit the New Deal's scope.

During Roosevelt's first two terms in office, the New Deal was in full effect, but it was not without its critics. One critic of the New Deal, a Senator from Louisiana, and then the governor of the state, Huey P. Long (no relation to me) charged that Roosevelt did not go far enough and promised to soak the wealthy in America with taxation plans that would reduce socio-economic inequality in the country. He was assassinated in 1935, at the height of his political power after having run the state of Louisiana with almost dictatorial powers. Roosevelt feared Huey P. Long, who was a demagogue (a person who will do anything for political power)— calling him one of the two most dangerous men in America (the other was General Douglas MacArthur who had destroyed the Bonus Army shanties, the spectacle of which, probably elected FDR in 1932). Another critic was Dr. Francis Townsend, who advocated for a system of pensions for the elderly and the indigent. His criticisms became the basis for the Social Security Act of 1935, which became a critical component of the New Deal. The final critic was Dr. Charles Coughlin, another dangerous demagogue who railed against the presence of Jewish bankers at the time of the crisis. His anti-semitic tropes gained a huge following during the crisis as he also railed against Roosevelt and the New Deal. Eventually, his anti-semitism turned off enough viewers of his radio show that he sank into obscurity. Roosevelt never could get all of his plans for the New Deal through Congress, as it was dominated by southern segregationists whose conservative views were often at odds with the expansion of the power of the federal government through the New Deal.

But, perhaps the most difficult opponent Roosevelt faced was with the aging and conservative Supreme Court. In the case of *Schechter Poultry vs. the U.S.* the NIRA was declared unconstitutional, because Congress, not the President, could regulate interstate commerce. In 1936, the Supreme Court declared the AAA unconstitutional. Roosevelt was furious. After winning in a landslide in 1936, he proposed an ambitious court-packing scheme to add new justices to the court to dilute the conservative slant of the older justices on the court (and to persuade some of them to retire). Despite his tremendous popularity with the American people, his plan to expand the Supreme Court was highly unpopular as most— on both sides of the political aisle viewed it as a power grab. But, when challenged, the Supreme Court began to uphold such famous pieces of legislation as the Wagner Act (which gave labor unions the power to bargain, organize, and strike) and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (which ended child labor, gave us workplace safety regulations, and provided us with an 8-hour workday and a 40-hour work week). Though it had dinged him politically, Roosevelt would be re-elected easily in 1940. While FDR fended off the critics of the New Deal, the nation was also enduring an ecological crisis, one which set millions of Americans in motion to places such as California from the Great Plains region. It was the Dust Bowl.

Although the New Deal did not end the Depression, it left a legacy of reforms and regulatory agencies and fostered a long-term political realignment in which many ethnic groups, African Americans, and working class communities identified with the Democratic Party.

The increased demand for war production and labor during World War II and the economic difficulties of the 1930s led many Americans to migrate to urban centers in search of economic opportunities.

The Dust Bowl started on the Great Plains and encompassed the states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and the Texas Panhandle. The root causes for this disaster were the following: overgrazing by cattle, overplowing the soil, and then a series of droughts beginning in 1930. From 1934-1939, the Dust Bowl was the worst ecological disaster Americans had ever experienced. The rich topsoil of the Great Plains blew away causing huge dust storms which blanketed the skies. So much dust was blown into the air that it covered the exterior of homes, cars, and tractors in a blanket of soil. It blackened the skies, so much so in 1937 in Clayton, New Mexico, that it delayed their high school graduation ceremonies for weeks into the summer. It also damaged the food supply, as many Americans struggled to find enough food and or medical care to survive. It led to respiratory ailments and complications for those who experienced it, even long after the dust had quite literally settled. The Dust Bowl had two important consequences, as it led to soil and farming conservation efforts and to the development of new and more effective farming techniques, but it also led to mass migration, as thousands of families packed up what was left of their belongings to move to the promised land for them—California. Some of the most indelible images of the Great Depression experience come to us from those who had migrated westward to escape the horrors of the Dust Bowl experience. By 1940, America was beginning the slow process of recovery and the Great Depression was beginning to ease. It was World War II and the aftermath of the Cold War that eventually brought the country out of the Great Depression.

The legacy of the New Deal is mixed. On the one hand, it did not bring the Great Depression to an end. The massive government spending and the mobilization on a mass scale for the Second World War was what returned the U.S. to pre-Depression levels of economic development. Therefore critics of the New Deal abound— in both directions— as some charge that it never went far enough to be effective in the use of government spending and investment, while others charge that it enlarged the federal government to a point that it had become too intrusive into the practices of American businesses and farms. However, it completely altered the relationship between the federal government and the American people. Prior to the New Deal, the only contact that the majority of the American people had with their government was through their local post office. FDR's use of radio, in his "Fireside Chats," brought comfort to Americans during some of the darkest days that they had ever experienced. New Deal agencies such as the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) created, expanded, and developed national and state park facilities throughout the country, the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) brought electrical power into the homes of some of the poorest Americans, and the WPA (Works Progress Administration) employed thousands of architects, engineers, laborers, artists, filmmakers, writers, and photographers who built schools and public buildings throughout the country and documented the experiences of the American people throughout the crisis. It also led to a political realignment, as despite the fact that the New Deal did little to address civil rights directly, it began the process of building a relationship between women, immigrants, minorities (especially African-Americans) and the Democratic Party which became increasingly more progressive, and those who opposed to the New Deal, slowly moved into the camp of the Republican Party which became more and more connected to the interests of big business and therefore, increasingly more conservative. The Great Depression was a global phenomenon, though it started in the United States. Despite the New Deal, it was not the United States which recovered the most quickly from the Great Depression, it was Germany, the Soviet Union, Italy and Japan, each of which would play critical roles in the opening of the next great crisis to come— World War II.

AP United States History
Unit 7: A Colossus Emerges
Topic- The Interwar Years: Reading Selections

Through the Eyes of the American People– The 1920s, the Great Depression, and the New Deal Experience

Document Analysis Assignment Set:

Document One- Warren G. Harding– Return to Normalcy, Speech to the Home Market Club of Boston, May 14, 1920.

My best judgment of America's need is to steady down, to get squarely on our feet, to make sure of the right path. Let's get out of the fevered delirium of war, with the hallucination that all the money in the world is to be made in the madness of war and the wildness of its aftermath. Let us stop to consider that tranquility at home is more precious than peace abroad, and that both our good fortune and our eminence are dependent on the normal forward stride of all the American people. We want to go on, secure and unafraid, holding fast to the American inheritance, and confident of the supreme American fulfillment.

Document Two- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself--nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

Document Three- Ellen Welles Page, A Flapper's Appeal to Parents, 1922.

We are the Younger Generation. The war tore away our spiritual foundations and challenged our faith. We are struggling to regain our equilibrium. The times have made us older and more experienced than you were at our age. It must be so with each succeeding generation if it is to keep pace with the rapidly advancing and mighty tide of civilization. Help us to put our knowledge to the best advantage. Work with us! That is the way! Outlets for this surplus knowledge and energy must be opened. Give us a helping hand. Youth has many disillusionments. Spiritual forces begin to be felt. The emotions are frequently in a state of upheaval, struggling with one another for supremacy. And Youth does not understand. There is no one to turn to--no one but the rest of Youth, which is as perplexed and troubled with its problems as ourselves. Everywhere we read and hear the criticism and distrust of older people toward us. It forms an insurmountable barrier between us. How can we

turn to them? In every person there is a desire, an innate longing, toward some special goal or achievement. Each of us has his place to fill.

Document Four– Bertha McCall, Testifies Before Congress- On America's Moving People, 1940

In the 2 years from 1929 to 1931 there was special cause for migration. For those in our country who had remained stationary for many years, carrying on the work of the world, came the closing of shops and factories and the loss of jobs that had seemed as permanent as life itself. It is not necessary to recall the problem of transiency in the days of 1930 and 1931. The Federal Government felt the pressure of this and called upon such agencies as the National Y. W. C. A., the Family Welfare Association, the National Travelers Aid, to advise in planning for this special problem. Community after community reported that it was swamped with the numbers of people moving around, especially the young because one was doing one thing in one area and one in another. The problem of transiency and migration was not new in 1931. We had known about it off and on for many years. I recall from my own experience seeing the letters that came into the Federal Government agency, the reconstruction group of Washington, stacked very high, from all parts of the country, saying, "Come out and help us." We have known for a long time the nature of the people in this group. We have evidence to prove from private agencies, from public agencies, from direct association with the transients themselves, that a transient population differs very little from the average static population. ... We all know that there was a period in which the general public looked upon transients as bums and hobos. The Federal transient program records show that most of these people were enterprising and energetic. Many of them had good social backgrounds and good educational preparation. Except for the fact that these people are nonresidents, they are not a distinct and separate group of Americans.

Document Five- Allan Locke, Enter the New Negro, 1925

First we must observe some of the changes which since the traditional lines of opinion were drawn have rendered these quite obsolete. A main change has been, of course, that shifting of the Negro population which has made the Negro problem no longer exclusively or even predominantly Southern. Why should our minds remain sectionalized, when the problem itself no longer is? Then the trend of migration has not only been toward the North and the Central Midwest, but city-ward and to the great centers of industry—the problems of adjustment are new, practical, local and not peculiarly racial. Rather they are an integral part of the large industrial and social problems of our present-day democracy. And finally, with the Negro rapidly in process of class differentiation, if it ever was warrantable to regard and treat the Negro en masse it is becoming with every day less possible, more unjust and more ridiculous. ... If in our lifetime the Negro should not be able to celebrate his full initiation into American democracy, he can at least, on the warrant of these things, celebrate the attainment of a significant and satisfying new phase of group development, and with it a spiritual Coming of Age.

Document Six- Leslie Hunter, "I'd Rather Not be on Relief," 1938

We go around all dressed in rags

While the rest of the world goes neat,

And we have to be satisfied

With half enough to eat.

We have to live in lean-tos,

Or else we live in a tent,

For when we buy our bread and beans

There's nothing left for rent.

I'd rather not be on the rolls of relief,

Or work on the W. P. A.,

We'd rather work for the farmer

If the farmer could raise the pay;

Then the farmer could plant more cotton

And he'd get more money for spuds,

Instead of wearing patches,

We'd dress up in new duds.

Images for Analysis

Image One- Babe Ruth hits his 30th home run, July 19, 1920



Image Two- Dorothea Lange, "Family walking on the highway, five children." June, 1938 (WPA)



Image Three- A 1920's Kitchen- McFarland Historical Society



Wherever Two or Three Are Gathered Together



AP United States History
Unit 7: A Colossus Emerges
Topic- The Interwar Years: Assignment Items

The 1920s– Innovations in Communications and Technology

1. How did the automobile change the American way of life?
2. What was the importance of each of the following innovations?
 - The refrigerator
 - The vacuum cleaner
 - The washing machine
3. How did the following new forms of mass media impact American society?
 - Radio
 - Film

The 1920s– Cultural and Political Controversies

1. Why was there a “Red Scare,” in America at the dawn of the 1920s? How did Americans deal with this first, “Red Scare?”
2. What was the importance of the Immigration Act of 1924? How did Americans view immigrants during the 1920s? What led to their fears of immigration?
3. How did the Great Migration influence cultural change in America? What was the importance of the Harlem Renaissance?
4. What cultural conflicts became a part of American life during the 1920s?

The Great Depression–

1. How did World War I become a major factor that would lead to the Great Depression?
2. What were the primary causes for the Great Depression?
3. How did Herbert Hoover’s administration begin the process of dealing with the Great Depression?
4. Why did Herbert Hoover’s administration change the nature of the way in which it dealt with the Great Depression by 1932?

The New Deal–

1. How did FDR's administration deal with the crisis of the Great Depression during his first 100 days in office?
2. Describe the purpose of the following types of New Deal programs:
 - Relief
 - Recovery
 - Reform
3. What were the criticisms of the New Deal? Evaluate the New Deal– where did it fail, and where did it succeed?
4. What were the causes and effects of the Dust Bowl?

Through the Eyes of the American People– The 1920s, the Great Depression, and the New Deal Experience:

1. For each textual document, complete a HIPP analysis.
2. For each image, complete an OPTIC analysis.
3. What do the documents reveal to us about the differences between the experiences of the American people in the 1920s vs. the Great Depression which dominated the 1930s?
4. What experience in American life is represented in each of the images in this collection from the 1920s and the Great Depression?

