

# 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 be able to explain how changes in the 1920s contributed to these conflicts within U.S. society:

- The “Red Scare” and fear of communism
- Xenophobia and restrictions on immigration
- Prohibition
- The clash of science and religion.



# Xenophobia and nativism

Between 1870 and 1920, about 20 million immigrants arrived in the U.S. Unlike the Northern European immigrants of previous years, most of these new immigrants came from Eastern and Southern Europe and Asia.

People were suspicious of immigrants because they were different – in terms of religion, ethnicity and language – and because they also competed for American jobs.

The response was **xenophobia**, the fear of foreigners, and **nativism**, the favoring of established inhabitants over immigrants.

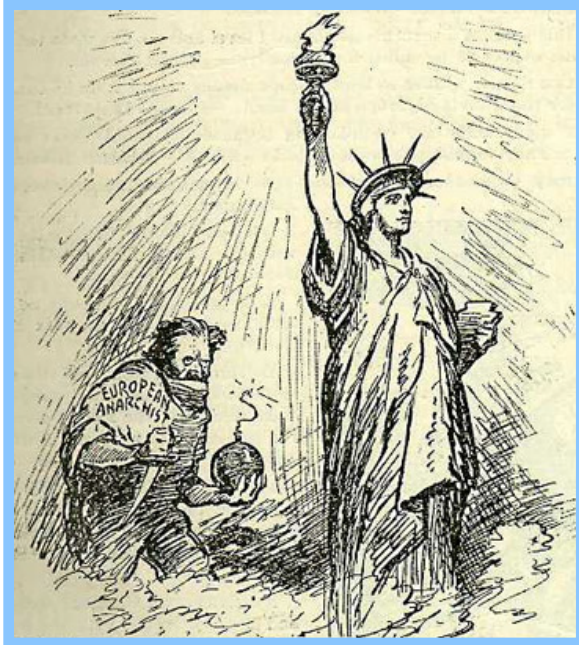




# The “Red Scare”



Resentment towards immigrants also focused on their politics. The growth of **communism** became a big fear at this time. It was prompted by the 1917 **Russian Revolution**, in which the people overthrew the Tsar. Power was seized by Vladimir Lenin, leading to the rise of communism and the Soviet Union.



Many people feared the same would happen in the U.S. Suspected **socialists**, communists, and **anarchists** were rounded up in the **Palmer Raids** of 1919 and deported without a trial.

However, there was no evidence of a conspiracy and the “**Red Scare**” died out.

Do you think a revolution was really likely to happen?



Increased xenophobia and nativism led the **Ku Klux Klan** (**KKK**) to broaden its prejudices. The KKK came to oppose:

- black people
- immigrants
- Catholics
- Jews.



The Klan had a presence throughout the country and had significant political power in some places. It also conducted terror campaigns and began using the burning cross as its symbol. Membership peaked in 1925, before its campaign of violence and terror sparked widespread public backlash.



The federal government put caps on the number of immigrants from each nation. In 1921 the cap was set at 3% of the number of immigrants from each country already in the U.S. In 1924, the cap went down to 2%. Guess how many immigrants entered the U.S. in 1921 and 1926 by plotting the figures on the graph. Press the play buttons below each bar to reveal the actual figures.

Press **start** to begin.

start



Do you think immigration should be capped?



After World War I, the U.S. pursued a policy of **isolationism** and withdrew from world affairs. It did this across a range of different policy areas.

Drag the labels to the correct places in the table to show the relevant acts for each policy area and their effects.

Press **start** to begin.

start







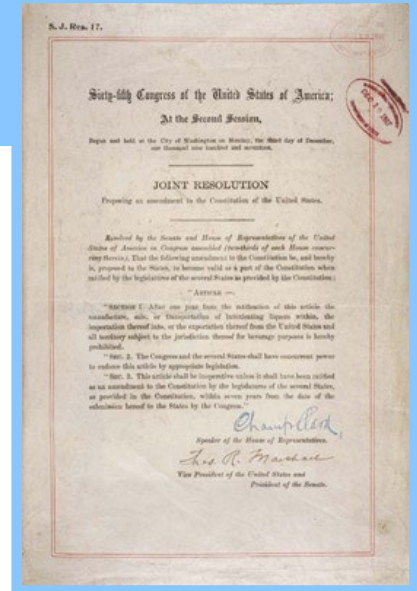
# Prohibition



Some groups in the U.S. believed that alcohol was a major cause of social problems and moral decline. From the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, groups lobbied for **temperance**, the limiting of alcohol, or **prohibition**, the banning of it.

In 1919, the **18<sup>th</sup> Amendment** was ratified, banning the “manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors.” Reasons in favor included:

- a belief that it caused poverty, violence, crime and disorder
- the fact immigrants controlled the industry
- the idea that it was un-American to drink.



Why did support for Prohibition rise during the war?



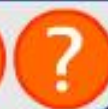


Despite the fact that Prohibition was signed into law, many Americans ignored the alcohol ban.

As alcohol could not be made or sold legally, many people simply did it illegally. Can you match each term concerned with Prohibition to the correct definition?

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





During the Roaring Twenties, **organized crime** became associated with the bootlegging of alcohol. This allowed criminal gangs to develop more power and influence than previously.

Press on the buttons to find out more about the different aspects of crime at this time.

Press **start** to begin.

**start**





People came to blame Prohibition for the decline of public morality, even calling it a threat to society. In the 1932 presidential election campaign, Franklin D. Roosevelt pledged to repeal Prohibition.

Roosevelt won the election and in March 1933 the **Beer Wine–Revenue Act** was passed, making the manufacture and sale of beer and wine legal again.



The **21<sup>st</sup> Amendment** was ratified in December 1933. It fully repealed the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the only time in U.S. history that a constitutional amendment has repealed another.

How did repealing Prohibition aid the New Deal?



Scientific advances and their impact on national life brought up issues over whether science and religion were compatible. **The State of Tennessee v. Scopes** was an important case about the teaching of evolution in schools. Press on each tab to find out more information about the case and its legacy.  
Press **start** to begin.

start





In the Roaring Twenties, economic prosperity improved the lives of many and had significant impacts on society.



The economy soared, ushering in a new era of consumerism, encapsulated in the automobile. New freedoms developed, along with an exciting popular culture. However, there was a dark side to prosperity. Farmers suffered and Prohibition failed. Xenophobia and nativism were widespread and minorities faced continued discrimination.

Did prosperity and freedom lead to social intolerance?



Test your knowledge of the Roaring Twenties with this quiz.  
Choose the correct answer to each question to see how much you can remember about the Roaring Twenties.

Press **start** to begin.

start





Test your understanding of the Roaring Twenties by recapping key terms and important people using this glossary. Press on the tabs and then each term to see a definition.  
Press **start** to begin.

**start**

