

UNIT 5 Progress & Conflict
Early Twentieth Century 1910–1929

A STEIN SCHOOL
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



HISTORICAL OVERVIEW of the EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

with Jim Soto

COLLETT
WATSON

A NEW AGE OF "PROGRESS"!

The early Twentieth century was an era that sought a new alignment with the experience and values of modern industrial life. Also known as **Modernism**, it was a period in literary history which started in the early 1900s until the early 1940s. The factors that shaped modernism were the development of modern industrialism and the rapid growth of cities.



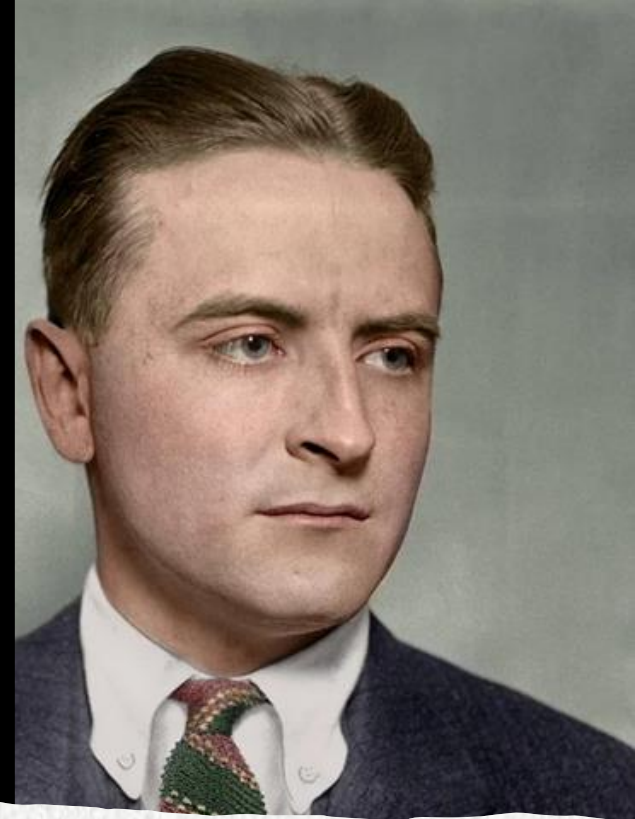
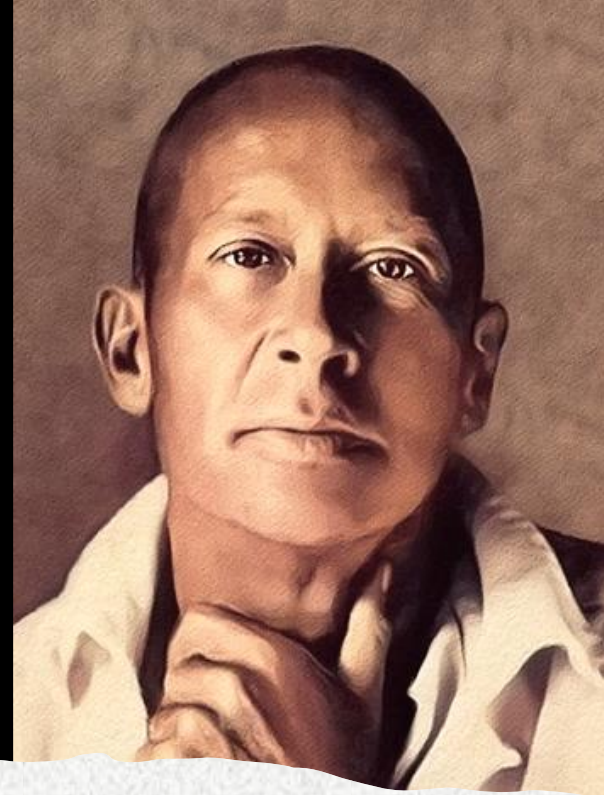
This era was hit hard with the stock market crash and the beginning of the **Great Depression**. As you read the selections in this unit, think about times when you have had to deal with conflict in order to achieve something important to you and what the consequences may have been.



WHAT HAPPENED TO MORALITY?

After the abuses of the **Gilded Age** were exposed at the end of the 19th century, reformers sought new controls. The work of journalist Lincoln Steffens and photographer Jacob Riis led to urban reforms, such as turning over control of local governments to boards of commissioners. Congress passed food, and drug inspection acts in response to articles written by “**muckraking**” journalist Upton Sinclair. An exposé of oil industry practices by Ida Tarbell led to stiffer controls over big business and capitalist greed.





There was a sense of moral dislocation felt by many people, following the ruin wrought by **World War I** (1914–1918). In the decade after the war, several American writers, including F. Scott Fitzgerald, E. E. Cummings, Archibald MacLeish and Ernest Hemingway, moved to Europe. American society, they believed, had become shallow and materialistic. Not until the arrival of Nazism and fascism, in the late 1930s, did they begin to think of the U.S. as their home.

**WORKERS
UNITE!**



M * A * N * I * F * E * S * T
UNITY

INDUSTRIAL FERMENT

Although the reforms of the Progressive Era benefited many ordinary citizens, conditions did not improve much for factory workers, tenant farmers, and miners—thus, the continued labor agitation.

Especially threatening to business was the rise of the International Workers of the World, which attempted to build a working-class movement, and the organizing of such leaders as Mother Mary Jones of the United Mine Workers and Eugene Debs of the Socialist Party.



WORLD WAR I

The causes of World War I can be summarized in a series of -isms: imperialism, nationalism, and militarism. The United States was neutral, mired in the depression of 1914. However, British orders for war equipment, totaling \$2 billion by 1917, and loans stimulated the economy and tied the U.S. to the war.



By the war's end, the carnage of trench warfare, mustard gas, and modern weapons had shocked the world, and many leaders called for an entity that would mediate future international disputes. Consequently, the Versailles Peace Treaty created the **League of Nations** but also imposed severe economic hardships on Germany that would eventually lead to World War II. Meanwhile, President Woodrow Wilson was unable to persuade Congress to join the League, crippling its effectiveness.

ROARING TWENTIES

After the horrors of World War I, Americans became more isolationist. Not only had the war led to the death of many young men on the brink of adulthood, but the conflict set Western culture adrift. Because the decade after the war was marked by youthful rebellion against the values of an earlier, more sedate era, the 1920s are known as the **Roaring Twenties**. In the U.S., many people seemed hell-bent in the pursuit of pleasure and novelty. With frantic intensity, Americans and Europeans challenged the social and moral restrictions of past generations.





During the decade, many of the hard-won Progressive Era reforms were weakened, as President Warren G. Harding's corrupt administration increasingly sided with industry. Business boomed, as the wages of skilled workers rose, and they purchased cars and appliances. For farmers and miners, however, economic conditions worsened.

Race riots became more common in northern cities, and thousands joined the Ku Klux Klan.

The passage of the **Eighteenth Amendment** initiated the **Prohibition Era**, in which the production and sale of liquor was illegal. The alcohol was kept flowing in establishments known as “speakeasies” and “blind pigs.” Organized crime took over the liquor business, blanketing the country in violence. Chief among the crime bosses was Al Capone. (Prohibition was revoked in 1933 with passage of the Twenty-First Amendment.)





Women had stepped in to do so-called men's work during the war and were not about to go back to their previous roles when the war ended. These modern young women were called "**flappers**" and did much to change gender roles. They cut their hair, wore short dresses, frequented speakeasies, and danced the **Charleston** and **Black Bottom**.



Meanwhile, in Harlem, New York, a vibrant African-American culture was developing under the leadership of political activists, writers, and musicians. It became known as the **Harlem Renaissance**, and **Jazz** was its unique contribution to American culture. It instilled in African-Americans across the country a new spirit of self-determination and pride, a new social consciousness, and a new commitment to political activism, all of which would provide a foundation for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

THE “GOOD TIMES” END

People thought the Roaring Twenties would go on and on. However, the good times were fueled by the purchase of material goods, many of which were bought on time, rather than purchased outright. It seemed everyone was also buying stock, often “on the margin” by paying only ten percent of the stock’s face value and planning to pay the rest later.

Values climbed higher and higher—until September 3, 1929. Prices slipped and then slipped again and again, until what would become known as Black Thursday, October 24, 1929. Payments for stocks purchased on the margin became due. To get money, the margin purchasers had to sell their stock, no matter how little it was worth. Many Americans were wiped out completely. And so began the Great Depression.

ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 332-338 in your book, complete the following activities:

- Examine the timeline on pages 334–335 of your textbook. For what three general topics does the timeline provide dates?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- The timeline has four time frames. Identify the time span of each time frame.

4. _____ 6. _____

5. _____ 7. _____

- Find the following dates on the timeline in your book. Complete the chart by telling what happened in those years. Then answer the questions after the chart.

Date	American Literature	American History	World History
1912–1913			
1917			
1919			
1923			
1928–1929			

8. What international event in 1917 touched off an excited reaction in the U.S.?

9. What events in 1911 and 1913 suggest social upheaval and reform?

10. What event in 1929 forms a conclusion to the era? What was the nature of this conclusion?

- Complete the outline. Write two sentences summarizing information given in each section on pages 336–337 of your textbook.

A. The Progressive Era

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

B. Industrial Ferment

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

C. The First World War

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

D. The Twenties

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____



Jim Soto © 2022