**THE TWENTIES AND THIRTIES**

The decade of the 1920s was characterized by business expansion, industrial growth, and prosperity for nearly all Americans except farmers. Improvements were made in the nation’s transportation system. Construction companies earned record high profits. But the Twenties was also a time of Prohibition, restrictions on immigration, and troubles for black Americans and other minority groups. Yet overall, an upbeat mood prevailed in the country. People were anxious to forget the years of suffering during World War I. This fast-paced decade, with its emphasis on good times and new ways of doing things, came to be known as the “Roaring Twenties.” Americans admired heroic deeds and enjoyed light-hearted amusements, literature, music, and the arts. Social changes altered the lifestyle of the typical American family. More women went to college, found better paying jobs, and enjoyed greater personal freedom than ever before.

Near the end of the 1920s, the United States was suddenly struck by a severe business panic. People, who had invested in the stock market, hoping to make big profits, found that they had paid too much for shares of stock in corporations with limited earning power. Stock prices plunged dramatically. Many people, especially those who had borrowed from banks in order to invest in the market, lost everything they had. Banks which had loaned large sums to investors were unable to recover their money, and had to close their doors. This “stock market crash” in 1929 marked the beginning of the worst depression in American history. The “Great Depression,” as it was called, lasted throughout the 1930s. During these years, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Congress enacted “New Deal” legislation aimed at improving the economy. Steps were taken to save failing banks, help the poor, strengthen industry, assist farmers and other workers, and create jobs for the unemployed.

**Notable Events of the Twenties and Thirties**

Based on the information in the paragraphs above, decide whether each of the following events occurred during the decade of the 20s or 30s.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Factories turned out more goods than ever before.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Rudolph Valentino, Mary Pickford, and Charlie Chaplin became America’s first

movie stars.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ People who could not make their mortgage payments had to give up their

homes.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ New houses were built across the country, and skyscrapers sprang up in big

cities.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Workers who were lucky enough to keep their jobs were forced to accept pay

cuts.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Glass-Steagall Act established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation in order to guarantee the safety of money deposited in banks.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Emergency Quota Act and the Immigration Act set “quotas,” or limits, on

the number of people from a particular country who could enter the United States each year.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Civilian Conservation Corps hired young men for such projects as flood

control, planting trees, and making improvements to our national parks.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The automobile industry, using standardized parts and the assembly line,

turned out millions of cars, trucks, buses, and tractors each year.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Thousands of banks which had invested people’s money and lost it were forced to

close their doors.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Federal Emergency Relief Administration gave money to millions of families

for food, clothing, and housing.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Despite serving their country in large numbers during World War I, blacks

continued to be denied equality in jobs, housing, and civil rights.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Fewer people could afford to buy automobiles, appliances, and other

manufactured goods.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Airlines first began carrying passengers and mail on a regular basis.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ White-robed and hooded members of the Ku Klux Klan conducted a campaign of

violence against blacks, Catholics, Jews, and foreigners.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Young women called “flappers” started wearing knee-length dresses and short

hair, used lipstick and rouge, and began smoking cigarettes.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Charles Lindbergh excited the nation when he became the first person to make a

solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ People had extra money to spend on new consumer goods.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ While business and industry prospered, American farmers suffered from surplus

crops, falling prices, and heavy debts.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Millions of workers lost their jobs.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Throughout the decade, Americans purchased alcohol from “bootleggers,” visited

illegal bars called “speakeasies,” and secretly made their own “moonshine.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Great stories were written by such American authors as Willa Cather, Theodore

Dreiser, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Social Security Act provided pensions from retired workers, money for the

unemployed, and aid for dependent and handicapped children.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ More workers were needed for the growing tire, glass, steel, and oil refining

industries.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Many factories cut back on production or went out of business.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Thousands of homeless people took up residence on the outskirts of cities in

tarpaper-shack communities called “Hoovervilles.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ More women went to college and were given higher paying jobs.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Tens of thousands of investors made quick profits buying and selling shares of

stock in corporations.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ More people were hired to work in gas stations and garages as the number of

motor vehicles increased.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ For the first time, most U.S. households had refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and

other labor-saving appliances.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ In his speech accepting the Democratic nomination for President, Franklin D.

Roosevelt declared: “I pledge you, I pledge myself, to a new deal for the American people.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ KDKA in Pittsburgh and WWK in Detroit became the first radio stations in the

United States.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ The Works Progress Administration improved highways, bridges, hospitals,

schools, and parks.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Louis Armstrong and Benny Goodman helped make jazz a popular form of music.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ People traveled around the country looking for jobs.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Babe Ruth in baseball and Jack Dempsey in boxing were two of the many sports

heroes of the period.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Out-of-town vacations became common.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Silent, black-and-white motion pictures attracted large audiences as Hollywood,

California, became the movie capital of the world.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Canned foods and ready-made clothes reduced the time a woman needed to care

for her family.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_The work of poets Robert Frost and Carl Sandburg, playwright Eugene O’Neill, and

architect Frank Lloyd Wright earned them national recognition.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ “F.D.R” made radio addresses called “fireside chats,” in which reassured the

nation that efforts were being made to improve economic conditions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sometimes children could be seen going door to door begging for food.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Below normal rainfall on the southern Great Plains – especially in Oklahoma,

Kansas, and Texas – turned the region into a “Dust Bowl.”

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Crossword puzzles and bathing beauty contests became popular.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ More than 10,000 jobless veterans marched on Washington, D.C., and demanded

that Congress make early payments of bonus money earned during World War I.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Men and boys could be seen on street corners selling apples and shining shoes.
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Americans enjoyed gum chewing and dance marathons.
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Some people did crazy things to attract attention, including a man called

“Shipwreck Kelly” who climbed a pole high above the Steel Pier in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and stayed there for 1,177 hours.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Newspapers boosted circulation by covering unusual murder trials, reporting the

latest “Hollywood gossip,” and giving extensive coverage to football, baseball, tennis, and golf.

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ In many cities and towns, the government set up “soup kitchens” where the

hungry could get something to eat.

**Extension Activity:**

Economic, Social, and Cultural Differences: The decades of the 1920s and 1930s had little in common. On a separate sheet of paper, in 100 words or more, describe how life was different in the United States during these two periods of time.