*Social Changes of the 1920s*

*Annotate this reading by underlining main ideas, circling key names and words, and writing notes in the margins. Also, feel free to do further research on vocabulary or topics you do not understand or have interest in.*

**Racial Conflict**

Anti-black violence was particularly pervasive in the immediate post-war period. All told, 1919 witnessed the lynching of over 70 African-Americans -- 10 of them war veterans -- and 14 other blacks were burned at the stake. In addition, more than two dozen cities and towns had race riots instigated by whites. Chicago had the worst rioting in the nation. It lasted five days, leaving 23 blacks and 15 whites dead, over 500 injured, and 1,000 homeless. For the most part, whites resorted to anti-black violence because they resented the fact that increasing numbers of blacks had moved into their neighborhoods and workplaces during the war. Migrating blacks from the South had filled some of the labor shortage in urban Northern cities (caused by the war). By making life difficult for blacks, whites hoped to quash any hopes of advancement that blacks might have had.

**Red Scare**

To many Americans, however, the strike wave of 1919 appeared to be caused by more than wages, unions, and working conditions. They were convinced that the strikes were evidence that **Bolsheviks** were trying to start a revolution in the U.S. and destroy its capitalist system. The leader of the Seattle general strike, for instance, had expressed support for the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, which alarmed people. These fears became overwhelming after a series of bombs exploded throughout the nation in 1919, known as the "Red Scare."

These anti-communist fears produced an aggressive response from the federal government. Led by Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, the Justice Department broke into homes, offices, and organizations without search warrants, arrested thousands of people, and deported aliens associated with radical groups. Many of those arrested were held without bail, denied food, and even beaten. The crackdown, popularly known as the "Palmer raids," initially received the approval of the American public. However, support for it dropped after critics complained that the government had severely violated the basic constitutional civil liberties of thousands of Americans. When Palmer's predictions of a violent attempt to overthrow the government on May 1, 1920 failed to materialize, most Americans began to realize that the threat of a communist revolution in the U.S. had been drastically overstated.

**The Scopes Trial**

Protestant **fundamentalists** called for adherence to strict moral codes and acceptance of a literal interpretation of the Bible. In Tennessee, for example, the state legislature banned the teaching of Charles Darwin's theory of evolution. When John Scopes, a biology teacher, was tried for teaching the theory in 1925, it caused a nationwide controversy. The **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)** supported Scopes because they felt that the law violated the constitutional principle of separation between church and state. However, the judge did not allow the constitutionality of the law to be argued, so Scopes was convicted, although the conviction was overturned on appeal.

**Intolerant America**

Many non-fundamentalist Americans also exhibited a bigoted and intolerant side. The term that best describes what they felt is **"xenophobia,"** which is a fear or hatred of outsiders and foreigners. Examples of this in the 1920s were the aggressive efforts to restrict immigration, the rise of the new Ku Klux Klan, the "whispering campaign of 1928," and the Sacco-Vanzetti Trial.

*Immigration Restriction*

For many reasons, **nativists** called on Congress to restrict the numbers of "new immigrants" from Southern and Eastern Europe who wanted to come to America. Some thought that these immigrants were "un-American" and brought with them foreign ideas and behaviors that weakened the American character. The immigration restriction movement was also supported by organized labor. They contended that immigrant workers would undercut the wage scale because they were willing to work for lower wages, and that they would make it more difficult to organize unions.

Responding to thesexenophobic concerns, Congress passed an **Emergency Quota Act** restricting immigration in 1921. The act set as an upper limit a maximum of 357,000 new immigrants a year. It also established quotas for nationalities on the basis of their numbers in the U.S. in 1910. A quota is a proportional share of a total. Therefore, every year the immigration from any country was limited to 3% of the number from that country in the U.S. in the 1910 census.

Three years later, after complaints that too many "new immigrants" were still being let into the U.S., Congress strengthened restrictions with the passage of the **National Origins Act**. The act limited the total number of immigrants allowed into the U.S. to 164,000 per year. It also reset the quota to 2% and changed the census year on which the quota was based to 1890. Since few Southern and Eastern Europeans were living in the U.S. in 1890, the act effectively ensured that few immigrants from these regions would be allowed to immigrate. This act also completely excluded all Chinese, Japanese, and other Asians

*Sacco and Vanzetti Trial*

One of the greatest controversies of the 1920s was the [Sacco-Vanzetti murder trial](javascript:;). In 1920, two people were murdered in the course of a payroll robbery. Two immigrant Italian anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, were arrested for the crime. They were tried, convicted, and sentenced to death. However, many people felt that the trial was unfair and that the defendants' political beliefs had influenced the verdict. Despite protest demonstrations, Sacco and Vanzetti were executed in 1927.

Social Changes of the 1920s

1. **Reading Questions**
2. What was the attitude whites took towards blacks who had moved North in search of vacated jobs during the war effort?

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| 1. What was the "Red Scare"? What was the government's response to this scare? How did the reactions of the public change over time? |

1. What was the Scopes Trial? How did it expose a division in the thinking of different groups of Americans?

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| 1. Why did people call on Congress to restrict "new immigration"? What was Congress's response? |

1. Why was there outrage over the outcome of the Sacco-Vanzetti Trial?
2. **Analyze the photographs and answer the following questions.**
3. What types of products are the advertisements selling?
4. What advertising strategies do the ads use to sell their product?
5. Which advertisement do you think is the most effective?
6. Which ad were you the most surprised by? Why?

Consumerism Essay

Research advertisements throughout U.S. history, beginning in the 1920s. Compare the ads of early consumerism with ads from today.

Write an essay describing:

1) What is consumerism and what role does it play in American society (mass culture)

2) How have advertisements changed since the 1920s? How are they similar?

3) What types of advertisements are most effective on you as an individual consumer?

4) How do you choose to buy a product based on an ad, marketing or packaging?

Your essay should be multiple paragraphs (5 sentences each) and fill the rest of this page!