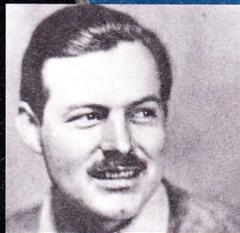


There's More Online!

- ✓ **BIOGRAPHY** F. Scott & Zelda Fitzgerald
- ✓ **BIOGRAPHY** Willa Cather
- ✓ **SLIDE SHOW** Artists and Entertainers
- ✓ **VIDEO** Cultural Innovations
- ✓ **INTERACTIVE SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



## LESSON 4

# Cultural Innovations

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS** • How was social and economic life different in the early twentieth century from that of the late nineteenth century? • How has the cultural identity of the United States changed over time?

Reading **HELPDESK**

### Academic Vocabulary

- **diverse**
- **unify**

### Content Vocabulary

- **bohemian**
- **mass media**

### TAKING NOTES:

#### Key Ideas and Details

**Organizing** As you read about the 1920s, complete a graphic organizer like the one below by filling in the main characteristics of art, literature, and popular culture of the era.

Cultural Movement	Main Characteristics
Art	
Literature	
Popular Culture	

## IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The 1920s was an era of great artistic innovation and enormous change in popular culture. Artists and writers experimented with new techniques. Broadcast radio introduced the latest trends in music and entertainment. Motion pictures became a major leisure-time activity, and Americans began to fall in love with sports such as baseball and boxing.

## Art and Literature

**GUIDING QUESTION** How did many artists and writers of the time describe the 1920s?

During the 1920s, American artists and writers challenged traditional ideas as they searched for meaning in the modern world. Many artists, writers, and intellectuals flocked to Manhattan's Greenwich Village and Chicago's South Side. The artistic and unconventional, or **bohemian**, lifestyle of these places allowed artists, musicians, and writers greater freedom of expression.

### Modern American Art

European art movements greatly influenced the modernists of American art. Perhaps most striking was the **diverse** range of artistic styles, each attempting to express the individual, modern experience. American painter John Marin drew on the urban dynamics of New York City for inspiration:

#### PRIMARY SOURCE

“[T]he whole city is alive; buildings, people, all are alive; and the more they move me the more I feel them to be alive.

It is this ‘moving of me’ that I try to express, so that I may recall the spell I have been under and behold the expression of the different emotions that have been called into being.”

—from *Camera Work*, No. 42–43, April–July, 1913

Painter Charles Sheeler applied the influences of photography and the geometric forms of Cubism to urban and rural American landscapes. Edward Hopper revived the visual accuracy of realism.

His paintings conveyed a modern sense of disenchantment and isolation in haunting scenes. Georgia O’Keeffe’s landscapes and flowers were admired in many museums throughout her long life and are still admired today.

## Poets and Writers

Writers of the 1920s varied greatly in their styles and subject matter. Illinois poet and writer Carl Sandburg used common speech to glorify the Midwest. So did the novels of Pulitzer Prize winner Willa Cather, such as *The Song of the Lark*. Sinclair Lewis poked fun at small-town life in *Main Street*. Edith Wharton criticized upper-class ignorance and pretensions in her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Age of Innocence*. In Greenwich Village, another Pulitzer Prize winner, Edna St. Vincent Millay, wrote about women’s inner lives.

Several poets influenced poetic style and subject matter. Some—such as Amy Lowell, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams—used clear, concise images to express moments in time. Others, such as T. S. Eliot, criticized what they saw as a loss of spirituality in modern life.

Among playwrights, Eugene O’Neill was probably the most innovative. His plays, filled with bold artistry and modern themes, portrayed realistic characters and situations, offering a modern vision of life that often touched on the tragic. *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* is a memorable example.

Some American writers, disillusioned by World War I and the emerging consumer society, moved to Paris, a center of artistic activity. American experimental writer Gertrude Stein dubbed them a “Lost Generation.” Her Paris apartment became a home away from home for many writers. Among them was Ernest Hemingway, who wrote moving novels about war and its aftermath, such as *A Farewell to Arms*. Another visitor was F. Scott Fitzgerald. He criticized society’s superficiality in *The Great Gatsby*, in which colorful characters—some modeled after his wife Zelda, who was a dancer, painter, and novelist—chased futile dreams:

### PRIMARY SOURCE

“They were careless people, Tom and Daisy—they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made.”

—from *The Great Gatsby*, 1925

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Describing** Why did many artists, poets, playwrights, and novelists move to Paris in the 1920s?

## Popular Culture

**GUIDING QUESTION** *Why did many Americans have more time for entertainment, and how did they spend their time?*

The economic prosperity and new technology of the 1920s provided many Americans with more spending money and leisure time. Millions of Americans eagerly watched sports and enjoyed music, theater, and other forms of popular entertainment.

### Movies and Radio Shows

During the era of silent films, theaters hired piano players to provide music during the feature, while subtitles explained the plot. Audiences gathered to see such stars as Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr.,

**bohemian** unconventional; not bound by the rules of society

**diverse** being different from one another

and Rudolph Valentino. In 1927 the golden age of Hollywood began with the first “talking” picture, *The Jazz Singer*.

Famous songwriter Irving Berlin worked in New York City’s Tin Pan Alley, where composers wrote popular music. Berlin’s famous songs include “Puttin’ on the Ritz” and “White Christmas.” Radio broadcasts offered everything from classical music to comedy. In the popular show *Amos ‘n’ Andy*, the troubles of two African American characters (portrayed by white actors) captured the nation’s attention.

The **mass media**—radio, movies, newspapers, and magazines aimed at a broad audience—did more than just entertain. They also fostered a sense of shared experience that helped **unify** the nation.

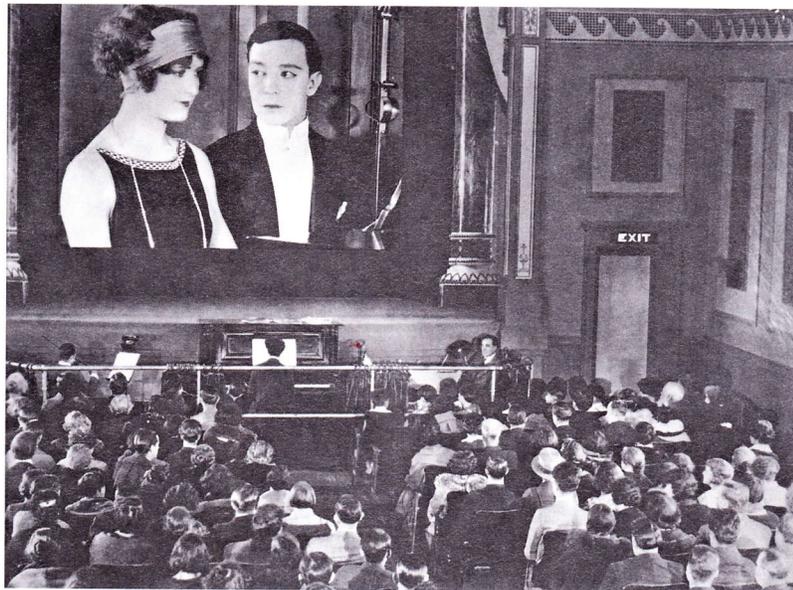
## Sports

Sports such as baseball and boxing reached new heights of popularity in the 1920s, thanks to motion pictures and radio. Baseball star Babe Ruth became a national hero, famous for hitting hundreds of home runs. Fans also idolized boxer Jack Dempsey, who was world heavyweight champion from 1919 until 1926, when he lost the title to Gene Tunney. When Dempsey attempted to win back the title in 1927, one store sold \$90,000 worth of radios in the two weeks before the event.

Newspaper coverage helped build enthusiasm for college football. One of the most famous players of the 1920s was Red Grange of the University of Illinois. He was known as the “Gallop­ing Ghost” because of his speed and ability to evade the opposing team. The triumphs of Bobby Jones, the best golfer of the decade, and tennis players Bill Tilden and Helen Wills also thrilled sports fans. When swimmer Gertrude Ederle shattered records by swimming the English Channel in a little over 14 hours in 1927, Americans were enchanted.

### READING PROGRESS CHECK

**Explaining** Why did new national pastimes emerge during the 1920s, and what were some of the most popular new ways for Americans to spend their leisure time?



Part of what made the 1920s feel new and modern was the rise of mass culture. Movies, which were very popular in the 1920s, brought Americans together in a shared experience.

### CRITICAL THINKING

**Compare and Contrast** How does seeing a movie today compare and contrast with what you observe in the photograph of early moviegoers?

**mass media** medium of communication (such as television and radio) intended to reach a wide audience

**unify** to bring together with similar goals or ideas

PHOTO: Culver Pictures, Inc./SuperStock

## LESSON 4 REVIEW



### Vocabulary Review

**1. Comparing** How is today’s mass media similar to that of the 1920s?

### Using Your Notes

**2. Drawing Conclusions** Review the notes that you completed during the lesson. Why do you think the art and literature of the 1920s had such a diverse range of styles?

### Answering the Guiding Questions

**3. Synthesizing** How did many artists and writers of the time describe the 1920s?

**4. Summarizing** Why did many Americans have more time for entertainment, and how did they spend their time?

### Writing Activity

**5. NARRATIVE** Imagine that you are a teenager of the 1920s and your parents have just purchased your family’s first radio. Write about something you are excited to be able to listen to.