



Honors' American History 1&2 (Reconstruction—Today)



Unit #3: "Ka-Boom to Bust" Blue Book Review

Question 3-A

World War I (1914-1918), one of the world's most devastating conflicts, was a struggle of epic proportion that began in Europe and eventually involved 32 countries. By its end, nearly 10 million troops had died and 20 million soldiers had been wounded. World War I also precipitated revolution, an outcome wholly unexpected by the European powers. The Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia in 1917 was only a taste of the rumblings and turmoil that would eventually engulf the world during the Cold War (1945-1991). Russia's Vladimir Lenin emerged from World War I as a person feared (or acclaimed) around the world. At the same time, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson made a name for himself thanks to his Fourteen Points. Wilson's fresh ideas, such as self-determination (or self-rule) and the League of Nations, stood in sharp contrast to Lenin's revolutionary appeals and advocacy of violence to achieve justice and equity. The end of the war embittered many people as empires crumbled, reparations were exacted from the losers, and the victors redrew the map of Europe. Using your knowledge of World War I, explicate the conflict – from start to finish, including the impact the conflict had on U.S. society both during and after the struggle – by explaining Tony Novosel's quote: *"It was 'The War To End All Wars'... a senseless slaughter that set the stage for the bloodiest century in human history. Yet, it was more than just a war between nations. It was a war between what was and what was to be. The 'old world' was dying, and the 'new world' had yet to be born. People of all classes and nations saw it as some great cleansing fire that would accelerate this battle and lead to a better world. But, when it was over, more than men had died in the mud of the battlefields. The naive dreams of progress, along with the innocence of the pre-war world, faith in God, and hope in the future all died in the trenches of Europe."*

Question 3-B

Undoubtedly, World War I made the United States a world power. While European nations tried to recover from the war, the U.S. had overseas territories, access to markets, and plentiful raw materials. Formerly in debt to European investors, the U.S. began to lend money abroad. At home, the economy expanded. Assembly-line production, mass consumption, easy credit, and advertising characterized the 1920s. As profits soared, the American passion for reform waned, and Big Business and the Federal Government resumed their long-term love affair. But not all Americans enjoyed the rewards of this prosperity. A mix of economic change, political conservatism, and cultural conflict made the 1920s a decade of contradictions. Why does the nickname "Roaring Twenties" provide an incomplete snapshot of this decade? What went on politically, economically, and socially behind the veil of prosperity? What long-lasting impact did this have on the U.S. during the decades of the 1930s and the 1960s?

Question 3-C

It is a common misconception that the Stock Market Crash of October 1929 was the sole cause of the Great Depression (1929-1942). The two events were closely related, but both were the result of deep problems in the American economy that had accumulated during the "prosperity decade" of the 1920s. As is typical of post-war periods, Americans in the "Roaring Twenties" turned inward, away from international issues and social concerns and toward greater individualism. The emphasis was on getting rich and enjoying new fads, new inventions, and new ideas. The traditional values of rural America were being challenged by the city-oriented Jazz Age, symbolized by what many considered the shocking behavior of young women who wore short skirts and makeup, smoked, and drank. The self-centered attitudes of the 1920s seemed to fit nicely with the needs of the economy. *"The key to economic prosperity,"* a General Motors executive declared in 1929, *"is the organized creation of dissatisfaction."* Explain how the mass consumption that kept the U.S. economy roaring through the 1920s was, in fact, killing it. What does it mean when a stock market "crashes"? How did the Great Depression, which acted like a giant "reset" button, change U.S. jobs, politics, lifestyles, economics, and the American people's relationship with the Federal Government?