

Year 2:

Unit 7

Booms and Busts - The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression (1920 - 1940): Introduction

Unit Purpose: Why This Unit?

The 1920s marked a new era of national prosperity, jazz music, and innovation. Following the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, women could finally vote and began pushing the boundaries of “acceptable” behavior. Economic prosperity, thanks to a post-war industrial boom and a thriving stock market, led to the rise of a mass consumer society. A new modern society was emerging, although not all Americans were on board, with many Americans increasing their devotion to their religious faith. Prohibition passed with the Eighteenth Amendment in an attempt to restore “morality” to American Society. Although prohibition did decrease national alcohol consumption, prohibition also led to the rise of speakeasies and crime in urban centers while providing an outlet for the new “vices” of the era. At the same time, many African Americans fled the Jim Crow South in search of new opportunities in Northern cities, sparking the rise of jazz music and the cultural transformations of the Harlem Renaissance. By the end of the decade, jazz music could be heard in every dance hall and had come to embody the “roaring” spirit of the decade, leading author F. Scott Fitzgerald to dub the era “the Jazz Age.”

In 1929, the stock market crashed, ending this prosperity and ushering in the worst financial disaster the nation had ever seen: the Great Depression. In 1932, President Franklin Roosevelt assumed office with the burden of solving the nation’s economic woes. Although his New Deal programs helped alleviate poverty, the economy did not fully recover until the outbreak of World War II.

The 1920s and 1930s were two decades of transformative innovation and regression in American history, ushering in an era of modernity that would continue to reshape American society for decades to come. The era brought about significant progress, as women and African Americans gained unprecedented new roles in American society and Northern cities became increasingly diverse. At the same time, prohibition and the rise of fundamentalism would ultimately bring about a rise in conservative backlash to modernity that would continue to reemerge in response to societal progress. And despite its inability to end the Great Depression, the New Deal completely transformed the role of government in American society,

establishing the beginnings of a welfare state in the United States and forcing Americans to rethink society's relationship with and the role of the federal government. Many of the government programs and infrastructure and art projects of the New Deal continue to shape American society in the present day.

Unit 7 Learning Goals

Essential Question

If you are successful in this unit, your scholars will be able to answer the Unit 7 Essential Question: *How did economic booms and busts reshape American society between 1920 and 1940?*

Big Ideas

The Big Ideas, outlined below, help answer the Unit 7 Essential Question and reflect the key ideas scholars must master by the end of this unit. As you teach Unit 7, connect every lesson back to the Big Idea(s) that the lesson helps illustrate. The Unit 7 Big Ideas were adapted from the UCLA National History Standards United States Era 7 and United States Era 8.

- **Big Idea 1: During the 1920s, American society “roared” thanks to a thriving economy and the emergence of new social movements, ushering in a new “modern” era while challenging — and for some Americans, threatening — traditional American norms and values.**
 - From the end of World War I through the eve of the Great Depression, the United States economy boomed, creating a national sense of prosperity that was unevenly distributed across American society.
 - The role of women in American society changed following the passage of the Nineteenth amendment, leading to the emergence of “modern,” liberated women — flappers — who challenged their traditional role in society.
 - Many Americans saw progress as a threat to morality and traditions; proponents of prohibition, for example, saw the culture of speakeasies and jazz as corrupting. In response, many Americans returned to religion as a means of restoring and promoting moral, Christian values, leading to a rise in fundamentalism in the United States.
 - African Americans from the South were drawn by the blossoming opportunities in the North and began moving to Northern and Midwestern cities to flee the Jim Crow South in a mass movement known as the Great Migration. Despite the many jobs and lack of de jure segregation in the North, de facto segregation and discrimination limited the opportunities many African Americans could experience in the North.
 - Despite the lack of equal opportunity, the Great Migration brought African Americans — and their cultural traditions — from the South across the nation, leading to the spread of these traditions, most notably, jazz music. Jazz came to transform American society, becoming a symbol of the era and entertaining Americans across racial boundaries. The Great Migration also sparked the Harlem Renaissance, the cultural and artistic movement that redefined how African Americans perceived themselves within and their contributions to American culture and society.

- **Big Idea 2: The unregulated, reckless economic behavior of the 1920s coupled with overproduction on farms sparked the Great Depression, bringing widespread poverty to Americans across the nation.**
 - The reckless economic behavior of the 1920s — namely speculation, overproduction, and credit — along with the growing economic inequality ultimately led to the economic crash of 1929.
 - The Great Depression devastated American society, as Americans in both farms and cities suffered to stay afloat. In response, President Hoover did little, believing that in times of economic distress, the economy should let itself recover.

- **Big Idea 3: Upon taking office, Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated the New Deal program in order to provide relief and work to the American public, transforming and expanding the role of the federal government and establishing the beginning of a welfare state.**
 - President Franklin D. Roosevelt, elected in 1932, challenged Hoover’s laissez-faire stance and took immediate action, implemented a series of programs and agencies called the New Deal. While the New Deal did not end the Great Depression, it did provide significant relief to many Americans and long term support and protection, with programs like Social Security.
 - The New Deal redefined the role of the government in American society, empowering the government to take an active role in times of crisis, establishing the foundation of a welfare state, and creating agencies and programs that provide the bedrock for many government programs and initiatives today.

Key Terms

The following people, places, and events are foundational to understanding the Big Ideas of this unit. As these words are introduced in each lesson, add them to your word wall and hold scholars accountable for using them in discussion and writing throughout the unit.

- Business cycle
- Flappers
- Prohibition
- Fundamentalism
- Great Migration
- Jazz
- The Harlem Renaissance
- The New Negro
- The Stock Market
- Interest
- President Herbert Hoover
- Bank run
- The Crash of 1929
- Recession and Depression
- The Great Depression
- The Dust Bowl
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt

- The New Deal
- Social Security
- Alphabet Soup Agencies

Geography

In Year 2 Unit 7, scholars will continue to review the geography content they have learned since the beginning of their study of U.S. history. Continue to reference maps in class to build scholar fluency with geography and to develop scholars' geographic reasoning skills.

- **States of the Northeast:** Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and Maryland
- **States of the Southeast:** West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Florida
- **States of the Midwest:** Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota, and North Dakota
- **States of the Southwest:** Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Arizona
- **States of the West:** Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, Utah, Nevada, California, Alaska, and Hawaii

Intellectual Preparation

Class Materials Once you have internalized the Big Ideas of the unit, to be successful, you must study all scholar documents and materials before you teach the first lesson:

- All documents in the [Unit 7 Sourcebook](#)
- All scholar and teacher materials in the [Unit 7 Workbook](#)

Additional Resources The resources below provide additional historical background for the content covered in Unit 7:

- Browse “1920s America” and “The Great Depression” on Khan Academy as well as and “The Legacy of F.D.R.” on the [Time](#) magazine website.
- Read the essays “Jim Crow and the Great Migration,” “The Roaring Twenties,” “The Great Depression,” “The New Deal,” and “Economic Policy Through the Lens of History” on the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History* website.
- Read F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story “Bernice Bobs Her Hair,” available on the Washington State University website.
- Watch the following Crash Course History videos on YouTube: [The Roaring '20s](#), [The Great Depression](#), and [The New Deal](#).

*To access these readings and more free American History content and resources, create an account on the Gilder Lehrman Institute website.

Unit 7 Lesson Sequence

Essential Question: How did economic booms and busts reshape American society between 1920 and 1940?

The first six lessons introduce scholars to the 1920s and the economic, cultural, and societal “booms” that transformed and modernized American society. In Lesson 1, scholars explore the Roaring Twenties and the emergence of and backlash to modernity across the United States, studying flappers, prohibition, fundamentalism, and economic instability. Lessons 2 through 4 introduce scholars to the Great Migration and the mass movement of African Americans from Jim Crow in the South to the booming economies of the North. Throughout these DBQ lessons, scholars will consider the extent to which the North actually provided new opportunities to African Americans during this era. In Lesson 5, scholars will explore one of the most salient and lasting impacts of the Great Migration: the spread of jazz music throughout the nation and its pervasive impact on American society. Scholars will further explore the transformational impact of the Great Migration through their examination of the Harlem Renaissance, a cultural movement that redefined art and culture in the United States. By the end of these lessons, scholars will understand how American society transformed as a result of the economic “booms” of the 1920s and will be prepared to study how these booms came to a sudden halt during the Great Depression.

Lesson 1: The Roaring Twenties (Jigsaw)

- **Central Question:** How “roaring” were the 1920s?

Lessons 2–4: The Great Migration (DBQ Writing)

- **Central Question:** To what extent did Northern cities provide opportunities for African Americans during the Great Migration?

Lesson 5: The Jazz Age (Video Analysis)

- **Central Question:** Why were the 1920s called the “Jazz Age”?

Lesson 6: The Harlem Renaissance (Jigsaw)

- **Central Question:** How did the Harlem Renaissance transform American arts and culture?

In Lessons 7 and 8, scholars will understand the causes and consequences of the Great Depression. In Lesson 7, scholars will simulate a bank run to understand how and why the banks failed immediately after the stock market crash. Scholars will also consider how the economic excesses and instability of the 1920s helped lead to the crash. Lesson 8 introduces scholars to the harsh realities of the Great Depression for Americans across the country, introducing scholars to how the Great Depression and its hardships stopped the forward modern movement of the 1920s and forced Americans to focus on their survival instead. By the end of these lessons, scholars will understand how the economic “busts” of the Great Depression transformed American society and halted the progress of modernity and will be prepared to consider how the New Deal attempted to revive the nation.

Lesson 7: The Crash of 1929 (Simulation)

- **Central Question:** Why did the banks fail in 1929?

Lesson 8: The Great Depression (Jigsaw)

- **Central Question:** How did the Great Depression affect the quality of life for Americans across the country?

Lessons 9 through 12 introduce scholars to the New Deal and its lasting impact on American society. In Lessons 9 through 11, scholars consider the extent to which the New Deal and its many programs were a success at relieving the era’s hardships and bringing the nation out of depression. In Lesson 12, scholars will explore the lasting legacy of the New Deal, both on programs and infrastructure that still exist today, as well as on the role of government, more broadly. By the end of these lessons, scholars will understand how the New Deal transformed and modernized American society and government both during the Great Depression and through the present day and will be able to explain how the economic booms of the 1920s, the economic busts of the Great Depression, and the government efforts to end the busts reshaped American society.

Lessons 9–11: The New Deal (DBQ Writing)

- **Central Question:** To what extent was the New Deal a success?

Lesson 12: The Legacy of the New Deal (Gallery Walk)

- **Central Question:** How did the New Deal affect American society over time?