

**GREAT SANKEY HIGH SCHOOL.**

**AQA GCSE History**

**America 1920-1973: Opportunity and Inequality**

**REVISION GUIDE.**

# AQA GCSE History

## America 1920-1973: Opportunity and Inequality

1920-29	1929-45	1945-73
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Causes of the boom</li><li>○ Henry Ford</li><li>○ Losers of the boom</li><li>○ Changes to entertainment</li><li>○ Changing role of women</li><li>○ Prohibition</li><li>○ Immigrants</li><li>○ Red Scare</li><li>○ Sacco and Vanzetti</li><li>○ The experience of African Americans</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Wall Street Crash</li><li>○ The Great Depression</li><li>○ Hoover's response to the Depression</li><li>○ 1932 election</li><li>○ The New Deal</li><li>○ Opposition to the New Deal</li><li>○ Popular culture in the 1930s</li><li>○ WWII</li><li>○ Women and African Americans in WWII</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ The American Dream</li><li>○ Rock and Roll/ Teenage culture</li><li>○ McCarthyism</li><li>○ The Civil Rights Movement – MLK</li><li>○ Black Power</li><li>○ The New Frontier</li><li>○ The Great Society</li><li>○ The Feminist Movement</li></ul>

### Who were the Americans?

This period of study focuses on the development of the USA between 1920 and 1973. It was a time of huge contrasts – some Americans took advantage of the great changes and opportunities presented to them, while others struggled in their fight against hardship, poverty and discrimination.

America had a long history of immigration. For over 300 years, people from all over the world have settled there. As a result, America was a vast 'melting pot' of different races, cultures and religions.

# Why was there an economic boom in the 1920s?

**The First World War:** When war broke out in 1914, the USA stayed out of it as part of a policy known as **isolationism**. Staying out of the war for the first two years allowed America to prosper financially. American banks loaned money to Britain and its allies that was used to buy food, supplies and weapons. This created many jobs in America and lots of business people rich.

When America eventually entered the war the war had a far smaller impact on them. By the end, they had become producer of the highest percentage of the world's basic goods.

**The consumer society:** In 1916, only 15% of American homes had electricity. But nearly 70% had it by 1927. This meant workers began to spend their money on ultra-modern electricity powered gadgets such as vacuum cleaners, radios, toasters and refrigerators. Huge demand for these products created jobs in the factories that made them.

## Republican government policies:

The United States was led by three Republican Presidents during the 1920s, namely Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover.

The policy of these Republican Presidents was that government should leave the economy alone – they adopted a **laissez-faire** (free market) policy. This meant that big businesses were free to expand without being held back by the government.

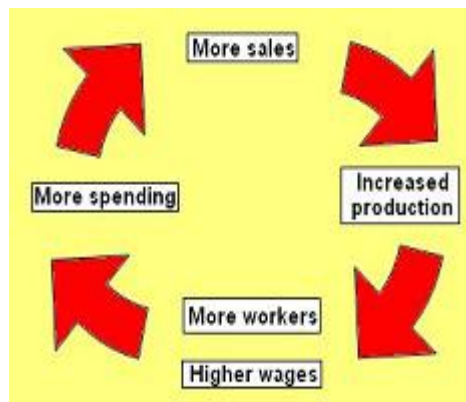
In 1922 Harding, he introduced the **Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act** which imposed a tax on goods from foreign countries. This made foreign goods more expensive than domestic goods, and so this encouraged Americans to buy American goods only. The name for this policy was **protectionism**.

Hoover believed in **laissez-faire**, but also in **rugged individualism**. This meant that people should not depend on the government for help - they should solve their own problems by working harder.

## Why was there an economic boom in the 1920s?

### Growing industries and mass production:

The growth of the motor industry was a massive boost for the US economy. Car production used 20% of America's steel, 65% of its leather and over 75% of its rubber and glass. More jobs were created. Industries started to use the assembly line to produce items quickly. This became known as mass production. Due to this goods became cheaper.



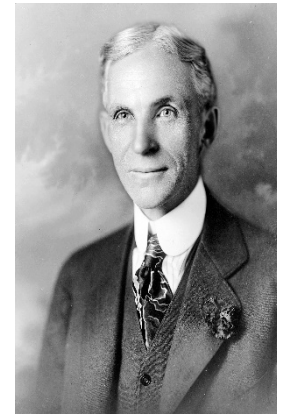
### New ways to buy and sell:

Effective advertising campaigns were used to sell products. Billboards, newspapers and magazines urged people to buy the latest gadget. People took advantage of the 'buy now, pay later' schemes. This was also called hire-purchase plan. Six out of ten cars were bought this way.

# Henry Ford:

The motor industry led to a boom in other related industries

- Henry Ford developed the assembly line and conveyor belt to speed up motor production.
- Ford's River Rouge plant in Detroit, Michigan became the largest factory in the world.
- Ford produced a standard model, the Model T Ford. A new Model T Ford cost less than \$300 in the mid-1920s.
- By 1929, more than 26 million cars were registered in the USA.
- During the 1920s, about \$1 billion a year was spent on the construction of a national network of highways.
- The automobile industry also caused other industries such as steel, rubber, leather and paint to grow rapidly.



This car changed the motor industry forever. I caught the imagination of the public who were desperate for new gadgets. By 1926, there were nearly 20 million cars on America's roads, and one in two was a Ford.



Ford made just one type of car – the Model T or 'Tin Lizzie'. It was mass-produced. Cost were kept low because it had one engine size and one colour.

Due to the motor industry, jobs were created in not only factories that made them but also industries that supplied the materials. There were also huge jobs in building roads, highways and oil refineries. As well as, petrol station, hotels and garages.

As production got faster, the price of the car fell. Costing nearly \$800 in 1911, by 1928 it was only \$295. As a result, 15 million people bought Model T Fords between 1911 and 1929.

## Losers of the boom:

### Farmers

Farmers were producing too many crops and couldn't sell them. So, prices fell and farmers had to borrow money from the banks to be able to survive. More and more of them got into debt until they eventually had to sell their farms and leave. Many left to go wandering around America looking for any kind of work – these wanderers were called hobos.

By 1928 half of all USA farmers were living in poverty. **Since prices were so low, 600,000 farmers lost their farms in 1924 alone.**

### Traditional Industries

The traditional industries failed to respond to the new mass-production methods of the 1920s, unlike the Ford company that was making a good profit and could pay impressive wages. Also, following a reduction in the powers of Labour Unions (Trade Unions), the workers were not able to be able to claim better wages and working conditions in the old industries.

**Coal** - Coal prices fell and thousands had to be made redundant because the industry was producing too much coal and not enough people and countries wanted to buy it.

**Ship building** - Another major industry that had to make thousands redundant due to a reduction in the demand for new ships.

**Cotton** - New synthetic fibres were being developed, such as rayon. This became a very popular substitute to cotton. It was possible to produce rayon in factories where fewer workers were needed.

### African-Americans

Black people suffered economically, especially in the southern states, where segregation was in effect. The ancestors of the black people in the south had been slaves. The majority worked on small farms owned by white landlords. The black people were labourers or sharecroppers and they lived in immense poverty.

The segregation that was happening in the southern states (Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi) made the situation of black people even worse. White and black people lived separately – they had different education, transport and housing facilities. They were not allowed to use the same toilets and water wells. Anyone who tried to improve the rights of African Americans were challenged and threatened by the Ku Klux Klan. As a result, thousands of black people moved to northern cities like New York, Detroit and Chicago to look for work, but when they got there they had to live in ghettos.

### Native Americans

Much of their land had been seized by mining companies and their traditional way of life had disappeared when they had been forced to move to reservations. The soil on these reservations was often so poor that it was nearly impossible to grow crops.

### Immigrants

Many immigrants had not been educated and were willing to work in any kind of job for very low wages. Because of this, they endured more and more prejudice.

### Inequalities of wealth

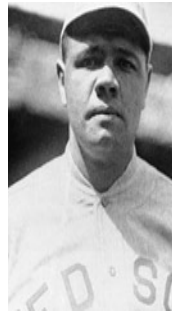
The richest 5% earned 33% of all the money in America. Tax records from the US government showed that 21 individuals with an annual income of over \$1 million in 1921, 75 in 1924 and 207 in 1926. There were an estimated 15,000 US millionaires by 1927. In contrast, 6 million families had an income of less than \$1000 a year.



# Changes to the entertainment industry:

**Sport:** In this period, organised sports developed, especially baseball, boxing, tennis and golf. Stadiums such as the Yankee Stadium (1923) were erected, and Madison Square Garden was rebuilt in 1925 to hold sporting events, e.g. boxing, ice hockey and basketball.

Events could be broadcast live across the USA on the radio. The programmes provided live commentary and descriptions of various sporting events as they happened. Around 60 million radio listeners heard the coverage of the 1927 World Heavyweight Boxing title fight. The effect of this was to generate huge enthusiasm about sport and increase the popularity of the radio too. Sports became a profitable business, attracting more and more people. Coca-Cola was the first company to sponsor the Olympic Games in 1928. **Babe Ruth**, was undoubtedly the sports star of the 1920s. His nickname was The Bambino or The Sultan of Swat. Babe Ruth was by far the best baseball player of his time. He was sold by the Boston Red Sox to the New York Yankees in 1919 and earned over \$2,000,000 during his career.



**Cinema:** The cinema was the most exciting development of the time. It influenced people in many ways; both in terms of fashion and the way in which people behaved. During the early 1920s, every movie was silent. Cinemas used to employ musicians to play the piano or electric organ during the films. The major movie companies in Hollywood during this period were Paramount, Warner Brothers and MGM. By marketing their movies extensively – cowboy movies, detective stories, comedies and romantic movies – they succeeded in generating a huge interest in the movie stars. The stars also contributed to the increase in the popularity of the cinema. The Italian, Rudolph Valentino, was a very popular actor and his role in the *The Sheik* (1921) made him a sex symbol. He was a star and appeared in many of the early films, earning \$1 million. Charlie Chaplin was a very influential figure and was one of the founders of the United Artists film company with **Mary Pickford** and **Douglas Fairbanks** in 1919. He was also a famous actor, starring in films such as *The Tramp* (1915) and *The Kid* (1921). But it may be that women like Clara Bow, *The It Girl*, were the Hollywood stars that had the most influence on society at the time. She played the part of a flapper in a number of films, and influenced many young girls to behave in the same way. She was the most popular actress in 1928 and 1929.

**Talkies:** In 1927 an average of 60 million Americans went to the cinema on a weekly basis. This increased to 110 million by 1929. The increase was partly due to the development of audio films in 1927, with **Al Jolson** starring in *The Jazz Singer* (1927) marking the beginning of the era of the 'talkies'. The increase was also down to Hollywood's success in producing 500 films per year. The 1920s was also the era of the cartoon, with *Felix the Cat* (1925) and *Mickey Mouse* (1928) gaining popularity among people of all ages. The **Hays Code** was drawn up in 1930. In accordance with this code, scenes of nudity and dancing of a sexual nature were prohibited, a kiss could last for no more than seven metres of film, adultery was not to be portrayed in a good light, clergymen were not to be ridiculed and films should condemn killing. Some people, especially religious people, were very concerned about a lack of morals and the influence of the films on young people.



**Jazz:** Jazz originated from the southern states of the USA, from the blues and ragtime music of the black people. Young people had had enough of their parents' old dances, e.g. the waltz. Jazz was much more rhythmic and sexy, and it was easy to dance to. This led to young people smoking, drinking and, according to some, behaving indecently. College students, especially, were willing to challenge their parents' values and lifestyle. Several black musicians became very famous, including **Louis Armstrong** and **Bessie Smith**, The Empress of the Blues. But racism was still a major problem. Before the cinema became popular during the 1920s, the radio was the main medium of entertainment in America. By the end of the 1920s, 50 million people had a radio set. Not everyone could read, so the radio became a very important means of communicating news and information to the people. Also, as the popularity of jazz increased, more people bought radios, records and gramophones so that they could listen to jazz any time they wanted to. People could also listen to their favourite team taking part in sports matches, especially if it was not possible for them to travel to the game or if they couldn't afford the cost.

# The Changing role of women:

## The impact of the First World War

- Before the war, girls were expected to behave modestly and wear long dresses. When they went out, they had to be accompanied by an older woman or a married woman.
- It was totally unacceptable for a woman to smoke in public. Women were employed in jobs that were traditionally associated with women eg servants, seamstresses, secretaries, nursing.
- During the war, women started to be employed in different types of jobs eg factory work, replacing the men who had gone to fight in the war in Europe.
- Organisations such as the **National American Woman Suffrage Association** (NAWSA) had been fighting for decades to get the vote for women. As women had contributed so much to the war effort, it was difficult to refuse their demands for political equality. As a result, the **Nineteenth Amendment** to the constitution became law in 1920, giving women the right to vote.
- There was a change as far as work was concerned too, with an increase of 25 per cent in the number of women working during the 1920s. By 1929, 10.6 million women were working.
- By now, independent women of the middle classes and above had more money to spend. Because of this, advertising companies started targeting women in their campaigns to encourage them to buy their new products.
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## Changing attitudes towards social etiquette

- Women started to smoke in public. It became acceptable for women to drive cars and take part in energetic sports.
- The young women of the 1920s were referred to as **flappers**. Hollywood films of the period characterised them, and as a result, their behaviour and dress sense was imitated by millions around the world.
- In 1919 women's skirts were about six inches above ground level, but by 1927 the hems of skirts were up to knee-level. Young women rebelled against the old-fashioned clothes of their mothers' era.
- The corset went out of fashion, and it became all the rage for women to cut their hair in a bob and wear a lot of make-up and jewellery.
- One famous flapper of the time was **Joan Crawford**. She started her career as a dancer on Broadway before moving to Hollywood to make a name for herself. She starred in films such as Paris (1926) and The Unknown (1927) in which she became famous for her flapper style. Many young girls admired and copied her style. In 1929, she married **Douglas Fairbanks Jr**, son of **Douglas Fairbanks**, which proved her important status in society.
- The Jazz Clubs played a crucial role in allowing the flappers to express themselves. This is where they could smoke and dance. They also drank illegal alcohol in the **speakeasies**. Instead of dancing the waltz that was popular in the period before the war, people started to enjoy more daring dances such as the **Shimmy** and the **Bunny Hug**.
- **Petting Parties** began where the flappers would kiss men in public.
- The flappers had their own slang too. "I have to go see a man about a dog" was slang for going to buy whisky, and a 'handcuff' or 'manacle' was an engagement or wedding ring.
- A number of the flappers' terms are still used today, eg 'big cheese' for an important person, 'bump off' for killing someone and 'hooch' for alcohol.
- But not every girl enjoyed the flappers' way of life. Poor women could not afford the new fashions and they didn't have the time to go out and enjoy social events. Black women could not benefit from the changing lifestyle either.
- Women in the 'Bible Belt' (southern states) did not adopt the new way of life. Also, many older women were outraged and some formed the **Anti-Flirt Club**.



# Prohibition:

In 1920, the 18th Amendment was passed making the manufacture and sale of alcohol illegal. But many people in this time of 'Prohibition continued to drink and gangsters made enormous amounts of money from supplying illegal liquor.

The noble experiment of Prohibition was introduced by the 18th Amendment, which became effective in January 1920.

Here are four reasons why Prohibition was introduced:

1. **National mood** - when America entered the war in 1917 the national mood also turned against drinking alcohol. The Anti-Saloon League argued that drinking alcohol was damaging American society.
2. **Practical** - a ban on alcohol would boost supplies of important grains such as barley.
3. **Religious** - the consumption of alcohol went against God's will.
4. **Moral** - many agreed that it was wrong for some Americans to enjoy alcohol while the country's young men were at war.



In 1929, however, the Wickersham Commission reported that Prohibition was not working. In February 1933, Congress passed the 21st Amendment, which repealed Prohibition. Prohibition had failed.

1. There weren't enough **Prohibition agents** to enforce the law - only 1,500 in 1920.
2. The size of **America's boundaries** made it hard for these agents to control smuggling by bootleggers.
3. The **low salary** paid to the agents made it easy to bribe them.
4. Many Americans never gave their **support** to Prohibition and were willing to drink in speakeasies - bars that claimed to sell soft drinks, but served alcohol behind the scenes.
5. **Gangsters** such as Al Capone made money from organised crime.
6. Protection rackets, **organised crime** and gangland murders were more common during Prohibition than when alcohol could be bought legally.



**How did Prohibition lead to crime?** Prohibition created an enormous **public demand** for illegal alcohol. Gang leaders such as Al Capone and Bugs Moran battled for control of Chicago's **illegal drinking dens** known as speakeasies. Capone claimed that he was only a businessman, but between 1927 and 1930 more than 500 **gangland murders** took place. The most infamous incident was the **St Valentine's Day massacre** in 1929 when Capone's men killed seven members of his rival Moran's gang while Capone lay innocently on a beach in Florida. Capone was imprisoned for **income-tax evasion** and died from syphilis in 1947. It has been estimated that during Prohibition, **\$2,000 million worth of business** was transferred from the brewing industry and bars to bootleggers and gangsters.

The reasons for ending Prohibition were mainly financial and practical: The National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, also known as **the Wickersham Commission**, set up by President Hoover, said Prohibition was unenforceable; unregulated production of alcohol was leading to too many deaths; pressure groups, such as the Women's Organisation for National Prohibition Reform, campaigned vigorously for it to end - women had gained the vote in 1920 so politicians paid more attention to them; Prohibition had not led to a decrease in crime, it actually led to increased prostitution and gambling, organised by gangsters, and more corruption in government; the cost of enforcement was very high (\$13.4 million); government income from taxes on alcohol had decreased by \$11 billion; rising unemployment in the late 1920s meant jobs were needed and the alcohol industry could provide them.



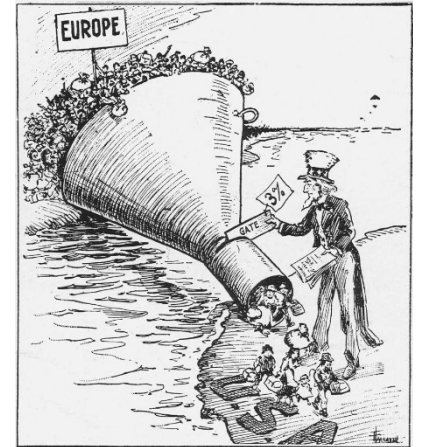


# Immigrants:

The USA Constitution states that everyone is equal, but many groups in America in the 1920s were not treated fairly. There was a great deal of prejudice against those who were not considered 'real' Americans.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the USA had an Open Door policy which encouraged immigration. By 1920, more than 40 million people had arrived. A combination of push and pull factors made people emigrate to the USA. The push factors made people want to leave their own countries, and the pull factors attracted them to the USA. The main reasons were: escaping from poverty in their own country and the **hope of equality of opportunity**.

Most of the immigrants travelled to the USA by sea, and more than 70 per cent arrived on Ellis Island near New York. During the busiest periods, as many as 5,000 people arrived every day. They underwent a series of medical tests and anyone suffering from a disease was kept on Ellis Island for days or even weeks, or else returned to their own country. Immigrants were also questioned about their work and financial situation, and were given literacy tests to ensure they could work and not be a burden on society. The immigrants hoped for a better life in America, but for many the motto on the Great Seal of the USA, "From the many: one" did not happen.



The **US Congress** passed three laws to restrict **immigration** and each law in turn was more severe than the previous one.

1. **Literacy Test, 1917:** Immigrants had to pass a series of reading and writing tests.
2. **The Emergency Quota Act, 1921:** This law restricted the number of immigrants to 357,000 per year, and also set down a **quota**. Only 3 per cent of the total population of any overseas group already in the USA in 1910 could come into America after 1921.
3. **The National Origins Act, 1924:** This law reduced the maximum number of immigrants to 150,000 per year and cut the quota to 2 per cent, based on the population of the USA in 1890.

The restrictions on the lives of immigrants created an environment in which employers felt they could exploit minorities. For example, they had to work longer hours for lower pay.

It led to immigrant communities in the USA becoming more isolated from other Americans.

It led politicians to feel they could declare intolerance publicly. One Democratic Party candidate in 1920 campaigned in elections under the slogan "Ship or shoot".

Traditionally, immigrants had tended to come from northern and western Europe, (for example from Britain, Ireland and Germany). However, between 1900 and 1914, the 13 million who arrived were mainly from eastern Europe, Italy, Greece and Russia.

By 1920, many Americans began to disapprove of the government's **Open Door** policy because they feared the economic, political and social impact of **immigration**:

- They were taking the jobs that Americans thought should be theirs.
- They drove down wages because there were so many of them competing for jobs
- Their overcrowded slums were linked to crime, violence and prostitution.



# The Red Scare:

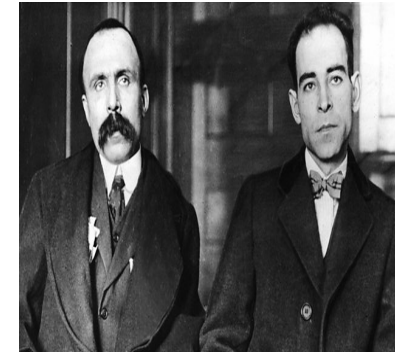
In the 1920s, there was an increase in xenophobia and racial persecution in the USA. **The Red Scare**

Many Americans were frightened by the Communist Revolution in Russia in October 1917. Some believed that a communist coup was going to happen in the USA, especially as the American Socialist Party and the American Communist Party were established during this period. Immigrants were under suspicion of being involved in plotting a revolution. This is known as the **Red Scare**.

## **The Red Scare was heightened by:**

Industrial unrest in 1919, which included a general strike in Seattle and all of the Boston police force refusing to work - communists were blamed for these strikes; race riots in 23 cities in 1919, which people also linked to communism; the discovery of 36 mail bombs in April 1919; a bomb destroying the front of the house of the Attorney General, Mitchell Palmer; a bomb exploding on Wall Street, September 1920, killing 38 people.

**The Red Scare led to:** Mobs and police attacking left-wing parades and the seizure of left-wing books and pamphlets; all strikes being seen as “red” and workers not joining trade unions in case they were branded communists; increased hostility towards all immigrants, leading to the immigration laws of 1917, 1921 and 1924; the Palmer Raids and injustices, such as internment and unfair trials.



## **The Palmer Raids**

Mitchell Palmer claimed there were around 150,000 communists living in the country (0.1 per cent of the population). He started rumours that they had infiltrated Congress. He said they were working on behalf of the US government to spread communism.

He used the Red Scare as an excuse to organise attacks against left-wing organisations.

There were serious consequences of the raids.

- 6,000 people, who were mostly not communist supporters, were arrested and held in a prison without a trial.
- 556 of them were also deported on flimsy evidence under the 1918 Alien Act.
- People used the raids as an excuse to attack any group they disliked or distrusted.
- Trade unions were weakened by Palmer's rumours and raids because they were branded un-American.

**The Sacco and Vanzetti case:** Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti were Italian immigrants. The two men were anarchists and had avoided serving in World War One. They spoke little English. In April 1920, in South Braintree, the paymaster of a shoe factory and his armed guard were attacked by two men and shot. The criminals got away with \$15,000 in a stolen car. The guard and the paymaster later died, but not before the latter described the attackers as slim foreigners with oily skin.

In May 1920, Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested and accused of armed robbery and murder. They had anti-government pamphlets and guns in the car when they were arrested and they could not prove where they had been on the day of the murders. They were tried at the height of the Red Scare. From the beginning, public opinion was against them because of their political ideas and because they were immigrants. During the court case in May 1921, Judge Webster Thayer was also prejudiced against them. The defence team had 107 witnesses alleging that they had seen Sacco and Vanzetti somewhere else during the crime, but the prosecution's 61 witnesses, who said they had seen the men commit the crime, were believed. They were convicted of the crime.

Although a man named Celestino Madeiros later admitted that he had committed the crime, Sacco and Vanzetti lost their lengthy appeals. In August 1927, they were both executed by electrocution in Charlestown prison. The trials and appeals showed the American justice system was, in fact, far from just.

# The Experience of African Americans:

The US Constitution states that everyone is equal, but many groups in America in the 1920s were not treated fairly. There was a great deal of prejudice against those who were not considered 'real' Americans.

Although slavery had ended in 1865, black Americans in the southern states suffered more discrimination than those in the north. This was because of the Jim Crow laws in the south. The Jim Crow laws legalised segregation and helped to keep black Americans in inferior positions in society, politics and the economy.

**Jim Crow laws** - The laws meant that white people and black Americans had to live separately. The areas affected by segregation included churches, hospitals, theatres, schools, toilets, cemeteries, parks and other public places. Schools for black Americans were deliberately kept inferior, so that they would remain uneducated and not advance in society. Voting was made difficult for black Americans. To be allowed to vote people had to: **Pay a poll tax:** Due to low wages, many black Americans were too poor to pay the tax, and were therefore unable to vote. **Pass a literacy test:** People had to prove that they could read difficult extracts from texts, but literacy levels were low amongst black Americans so few could vote. Black Americans were forced to work in low paid, unskilled jobs.

They expressed their frustrations at discrimination through their music and literature. Their culture flourished in the 1920s, especially in inner city areas, like Harlem in New York. Music, such as jazz, soul and blues, became popular. When jazz was banned in many cities, performers moved to the speakeasies. Thus, young white people were influenced by black American culture.

In the 1920s, the growth of huge industrial cities in the north led to one million black Americans from the south migrating to these areas to look for work. Most of them moved to cities such as New York, Chicago and Detroit. Life was hard for black Americans in the north even though the Jim Crow laws did not exist there. They faced discrimination and exploitation. They were given the most menial tasks, due to a combination of racism and poor education. 60 per cent of black American women in Milwaukee worked as domestic servants. Their wages did not match those of white people doing the same job. They lived in squalid ghettos.



**The KKK:** The **Ku Klux Klan** was a racist group which began in the southern states at the end of the **American Civil War** in 1865. It was revived in 1915 and grew quickly. In 1921, it had over 100,000 members but by the mid-1920s the movement was at its strongest with 5 million members. Only White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (**WASPs**) could join. They believed in the supremacy of white Protestants who were "native" to the USA (i.e. the original **immigrants** to America). The KKK initially discriminated against black Americans, but in the 1920s it also attacked and terrorised Roman Catholics, Jews, new immigrants, communists and socialists.

It also extended the geographical area it operated in to cover the entire nation, not just the south, and it expanded its political influence into key positions, including the Governorship of Alabama. Race riots in 1919 in 23 cities, such as Chicago, alarmed white people and membership grew. It exploited racist attitudes held in small towns in both the north and the south. It played on people's fears that mass immigration might lead to unemployment, communism, corruption, alcohol abuse and un-American ideas.

The KKK would hold night-time meetings, burning crosses and marching in white clothing with hoods over their heads; violently attack minority communities; murder and lynch which were mob killings of black Americans without trial, known as "Rope Law". In the state of Georgia in 1924-25, 135 people were lynched. In total, over 400 black Americans were lynched by the KKK in the 1920s. Members of the KKK were seldom punished because: many of the KKK held positions of authority, such as judges, so Klan members were not found guilty in the courts; the local police often stood by and did nothing to help victims, sometimes they even took part in the killings; it was difficult for the government to change the long-held attitudes of white people in the south; politicians did not take action because they were scared of losing **WASP** votes.

# 1929 The Wall Street Crash

## Long Term Causes of the Crash

### Overproduction and under consumption in agriculture:

As farming techniques improved, farmers started producing more food. However, the demand for grain fell in America because of Prohibition and changes in tastes in food. There was also less demand from Europeans for food from America because they were growing their own crops and there was a tariff war.

Overproduction led to falling prices.

Thousands of farmers fell into crippling debt, could not pay their mortgages and so became unemployed after having to sell their farms or being evicted. In 1924, 600,000 farmers lost their farms.

Sharecroppers in the south, who were mostly black Americans, were often evicted when the white-owned farms had financial problems.

### Overproduction and under consumption of consumer goods:

By the end of the 1920s, there were too many consumer goods unsold in the USA.

Mass production methods led to supply outstripping demand. People who could afford items, such as cars and household gadgets, had already purchased them. Also, people in agriculture and the traditional industries, who were on low wages, could not afford consumer goods.

This meant workers were laid off, which reduced demand for goods even further.

### Protectionism:

America tried to sell its surplus goods in Europe. However, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act 1922 had led to European countries imposing tariffs on American goods.

This meant American goods were too expensive to buy in Europe and, as a result, there was not much trade between America and Europe.

### Debt increasing:

A lot of Americans bought goods on hire purchase. As a result, they owed money to shops and credit companies. Many of these businesses went into financial difficulties when people failed to pay their debts.

House prices increased a great deal in the early 1920s. However, after 1926, house prices fell leaving some Americans owning houses that were worth less money than what they had paid for them.

### Laissez-faire:

The laissez-faire policy of the Presidents meant there were not enough safeguards in the economy, especially on the banks and the stock market.

Banks were not regulated. There were very few large banks in America, but there was a huge number of small ones which were unstable and did not have the financial resources to cope with the rush for money when the Wall Street Crash happened.

Many banks had already closed even before the crash, leaving thousands of customers with no money at all.

Throughout most of the 1920s, people continued to buy shares on credit because they were making profits from them. Between 1927 and 1929 there was a buying frenzy, pushing the value of shares up to unrealistic prices. Banks also became involved in speculation on the stock market. They used savers' money to invest in shares, and lent money to stockbrokers and speculators.

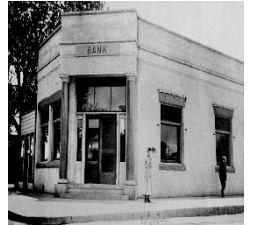
## Short Term Causes:

The economy was very unstable before 1929, but it was events in that year which finally brought the "Roaring Twenties" to an end. When Herbert Hoover became President in 1929, people thought he would increase tariffs because he had promised to do this in the election campaign. This boosted trading in shares on the stock market, which pushed prices up further. When the Senate blocked Hoover's plans on tariffs people began selling their shares. This meant prices started to drop sharply. Experienced investors knew the American economy was slowing down and that shares were over-valued. In September 1929, their lack of confidence in the price of shares meant they began selling them in large numbers. This caused prices to drop further. By October, many more people started feeling nervous and panicked. They rushed to sell their shares. On 24 October, Black Thursday, 12.8 million shares were sold. Prices plummeted and the stock market began to crumble. On 29 October 1929, Black Tuesday, the collapse of the economy was complete. 16 million shares were sold at a fraction of their price. Thousands of people saw their fortune invested in shares, or any money they had in the bank, disappear. Those who had bought "on the margin" were in great trouble. **The stock market in New York had now collapsed.**

# How did the Great Depression affect people's lives?

The 'Roaring Twenties' came to a sudden end. The unstable economy during the 1920s and the Wall Street Crash in 1929 led to an unprecedented depression in the USA.

Banks collapsed. 659 banks closed in 1929. This increased to 2,294 in 1931. They collapsed because people withdrew their savings for fear of losing money. Their closures, in turn, led to the remainder of savers losing their cash as well. Those banks which remained refused loans to struggling firms, leading to bankruptcies.



The public lost confidence in the economy and hope in the future. They blamed big businesses and banks for the problems. Suicides went up 50 per cent. Businesses struggled to sell their products overseas so they were forced to cut production, then wages and eventually they had to sack workers.



People could no longer buy consumer goods, such as cars and clothes. As a result, workers were made redundant. Unemployment rose to 25 per cent of the national workforce (14 million people). In some regions, it was much higher. In Denora in Pennsylvania in March 1932, only 277 people out of nearly 14,000 had jobs. There was no work at all in the coal mines of Illinois. Unemployment and distress were highest among immigrants and black Americans.



Overall, there was great misery. People struggled to buy basic goods, such as food and clothing. The number of deaths directly linked to starvation increased during the Depression, and many other illnesses and deaths were related to a lack of nutrition. Homelessness was common as repossessions of homes increased. About 2 million bankrupt farmers and unemployed people became hobos. Shanty towns, called Hoovervilles, made out of waste materials like cardboard, sprang up at the edges of most towns to house displaced people. Some people slept on park benches. Others deliberately got themselves arrested as it meant food and a bed for the night.



The plight of farmers, which was already distressing in the 1920s, deepened. A renewal of the USA's tariff war with other countries, because of the Hawley-Smoot Act, decreased their sales even further and evictions for non-payment of mortgage increased. Prices were so low, farmers left the crops to rot in the fields and farm animals were killed instead of being taken to market. Natural disasters compounded the problems. From 1930 onwards, farmers in the Mid-West were hit by a series of droughts, which eventually created the Dust Bowl of 20 million hectares of land. Farmers in the Tennessee Valley had their crops and topsoil washed away by floods.



# How did Hoover respond to the Great Depression?

## **Hoover took some action to help:**

1. He introduced the **Hawley-Smoot Act 1930**, which increased tariffs by 50 per cent on imported manufactured items, aimed to help industry sell more home-produced goods.
2. The **Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC)** was established in 1932 which provided loans totalling \$1,500 million to rescue businesses, banks and insurance companies.
3. Initially he cut taxes by \$130 million to stimulate investment, but in 1932 they were increased on businesses to help balance the budget.
4. He made \$300 million available to states to help the unemployed, but only \$30 million was given out.

Hoover's actions did not halt the Great Depression. It continued to deepen. The Hawley-Smoot Act meant foreign countries retaliated by taxing American goods coming into their areas, so trade fell even further. The loans did not save enough companies. The additional taxes on business did not help balance the budget, plus they made the survival of firms more difficult. Industrial production continued to drop. It decreased by 45 per cent between 1929 and 1932. House-building fell by 92 per cent between 1929 and 1932.

Businesses continued to go bankrupt, especially banks. From 1929 to 1932, 5,000 banks, which tended to be too small and unregulated, went out of business. In New York, 10,000 of the 29,000 manufacturing firms closed. However, not all businessmen lost out in the depression. Overall, the very rich remained prosperous. Multi-millionaires, such as J D Rockefeller, kept their wealth in items like gold and property so they did not suffer as much as small businesses, workers and farmers when the banks failed.

**For many workers, the Great Depression was a period of misery and destitution.** Unemployment increased: It rose from 1.6 million in 1929 to 14 million in 1933 (i.e. from 3 per cent to 25 per cent of the workforce). People were desperate for work. For example, in 1930 there were 6,000 men on the streets of New York trying to survive by selling apples.

**Wages fell:** As competition for jobs increased, even those in work suffered. Employers reduced wages and increased hours. Some government employees, for example teachers, were not paid when city councils, for example in Chicago, went bankrupt.

**Reliance on charity and relief schemes escalated:** America did not have unemployment benefits. Hoover eventually had to lend billions of federal monies to them in 1932 to fund public works schemes. Charities and wealthy individual stepped in to organise soup kitchens and cheap meals centres. Even Al Capone gave money for a soup kitchen in Chicago. In several cities, the unemployed organised themselves into groups to support each other.

**Demonstrations, by both the unemployed and employed, at the lack of action by the government turned into violence.** In 1930, a rally of unemployed people became a riot as police charged the crowd. There were strikes and bitter clashes in many American cities because of starvation level wages.

The biggest protest march was by **the Bonus Army in 1932.** The First World War veterans demanded early payment of their \$1,000 war bonuses, which were not due until 1945. With their wives and children, 15,000 of them set up a camp on Anacostia Flats, Washington. Hoover accused them of being communists and ordered their removal. They were dispersed by armed troops, cavalry, tanks and tear gas on the command of General MacArthur. Two babies died and many children were injured.

# Why did Roosevelt win the 1932 election?

## Hoover

Initially, he thought the crash would be short-lived. He believed laissez-faire, rugged individualism, voluntarism and balancing the budget would soon return the economy to prosperity.

**Laissez-faire** meant the government would limit its intervention in the economy. Hoover said too much interference would mean economic normality would not return.

**Rugged individualism** meant people were expected to overcome problems and succeed by their own efforts. They were not to depend on help from the government. Hoover thought aid would encourage idleness and damage morals. He was a self-made millionaire and expected others to be self-reliant. **Voluntarism** meant help for the homeless and hungry should be from charities, businesses, churches and local government, and not the federal government.

Balancing the budget meant ensuring the government spent no more than it earned in taxes.

He also thought the depression was caused by problems in the worldwide economy, which were beyond America's control. Thus, initially Hoover did little to help. When the depression continued to deepen in 1930, he did take some action. However, it was not until 1932, when poverty had mounted, that any substantial measures were introduced. He had completely underestimated the length and the severity of the depression. Hoover seemed heartless because of his ineffective policies.

The Great Depression deepened during his presidency. Unemployment increased from 1.6 million to 14 million. Wages in many industries fell far below the poverty level. There was massive destitution. Millions of people had to exist in "Hoovervilles" under "Hoover blankets" (newspapers) or as hobos. Crops rotted in the ground while people starved. He refused to introduce direct aid to the poor until 1932. When public works were introduced, it was "too little, too late".

His help to farmers was totally inadequate, especially in the Dust Bowl regions. Sharecroppers' difficulties were largely ignored. In Hoover's election campaign, his speeches increased his unpopularity. Voters disliked his emphasis on self-reliance and the need for neighbours to help each other, not the government. People did not believe his promise that, "Prosperity is just around the corner".

He offered no new policies. One Iowa farmer's banner summed up public opinion, "In Hoover we trusted and now we are busted". He had none of the warmth and charm of his presidential opponent, Franklin D Roosevelt. He was cool and remote. One commentator said, "If you put a rose in Hoover's hand it would wilt". Millions of Americans were horrified by the methods used to remove the Bonus Army from Washington and were shocked by the deaths and injuries which occurred.

## Roosevelt

Roosevelt appealed to the electorate in a number of ways.

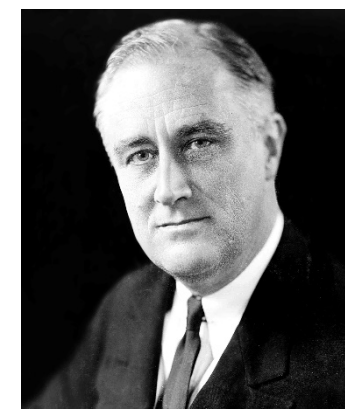
He had already helped the poor as Governor of New York State by setting up the first state-run relief scheme. This made him popular with the workers, if not businessmen. Also, his ideas in the election campaign seemed radically different from Hoover's "rugged individualism" and were therefore popular with the voters.

Roosevelt's election promises

During his election campaign, Roosevelt made a number of pledges: He promised a "**New Deal**" for everyone. He said the government would have a more active role in the economy, and would stop the rich exploiting the poor. He promised more public works and relief schemes. He declared he would experiment with new ideas to revive agriculture and industry.

In reality, many of his ideas were quite traditional and sometimes they were vague and contradictory, but the electorate was desperate for change and liked the promises of a "New Deal" and "Action and Action Now".

In contrast to Hoover, he ran a positive and energetic campaign. He travelled around America to bring his message to ordinary people, in spite of his disability from polio. He was much more approachable and charismatic than Hoover, and a more confident public speaker. Between 1933 and 1944, Roosevelt addressed the nation with 30 radio broadcasts. In these speeches he addressed a wide range of subjects, from banking to European politics. These broadcasts became known as "fireside chats". They were well received by the American people.



# Roosevelt and the 'New Deal':

Roosevelt had three basic aims which directed his actions:

- **Relief:** Help the victims of the Depression. Millions of ordinary Americans faced unemployment, hunger, and poverty. Roosevelt was determined to help them.
- **Recovery:** Encourage economic recovery. The Depression was a disaster for America. Roosevelt knew that he had to take action to encourage recovery, to get the nation back to work.
- **Reform:** Reform the economic system. The whole economic system would have to be altered so that there would never again be a Depression as bad as the 1930s.



To achieve these objectives, Roosevelt decided that direct action and intervention by the federal government would be necessary. The days of laissez-faire, of the government doing as little as possible, were over.

## **Change No.1**

FDR introduced the **Emergency Banking Act**, which closed banks for a four-day bank holiday. Every bank was inspected and only honest, well-run banks could re-open. When the banks re-opened people put money back in their accounts. Well-run banks could now lend money to well-run businesses – this would create jobs as businesses expanded.

## **Change No.2**

FDR introduced the **Economy Act**, this cut the pay of everyone working for the government and the armed forces by 15%. This saved nearly \$1 billion.

## **Change No.3**

FDR introduced the **Beer Act**, this made it legal to produce and sell alcohol again. Legalising alcohol put the gangsters out of business and the government could also raise money by taxing alcohol.

## **The 'Alphabet' agencies:**

**Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA).** This helped the poor in a number of basic ways, such as giving clothing grants and setting up soup kitchens for the poor. \$500 million was given to the homeless and starving.

**Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA).** This tried to help farmers by controlling farm production and stabilising prices. It was an attempt to end the over-production and falling agricultural prices that had crippled American farmers. Farmers were paid to destroy food.

**National Recovery Administration (NRA).** This tried to help industry and factory workers by increasing wages and improving hours and conditions. In total, 2.5 million firms, employing 22 million workers joined the scheme.

**Public Works Administration (PWA).** This created jobs by paying unemployed people to build schools, bridges and dams. This was replaced by the Works Progress Administration in 1935.

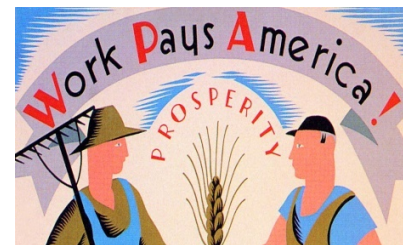
**Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).** Similar to the PWA, this department provided jobs to large numbers of young men in conservation schemes in the countryside. The CCC created jobs for 2.5 million men.

**Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).** This scheme brought hydro-electric power to seven states in the Tennessee Valley, one of the worst affected areas of the country. Dams and power-plants were built, creating many jobs.



# Successes and failures of the New Deal:

Successes:	Failures:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The New Deal created jobs. For example, 2.5 million 18-25 year-olds got to work in the CCC.</li> <li>○ 1932 saw 4000 bank failures. When FDR started to work as president in 1933 the number of bank failures dropped to well below 250.</li> <li>○ During what is often called 'the Second New Deal' (1935 - 38) Roosevelt introduced The Social Security Act (SSA) this was a system of social welfare. A national system of pensions and welfare payments.</li> <li>○ Throughout the 1930s America's Gross National Product (GNP) steadily rises. This is the total value of all goods and services produced within a country, plus income earned by citizens.</li> <li>○ Many women found work in the Alphabet Agencies or were helped by the SSA (Social Security Act).</li> <li>○ FDR introduced measures to help raise the price of crops and make loans available to farmers and help save them from eviction.</li> <li>○ 200,000 African-Americans did gain jobs in the CCC, and one African-American woman, Mary McLeod Bethune, was appointed to an important post in the government.</li> <li>○ FDR increased the amount of land owned by Native Americans. Loans were provided so that they could buy land, start businesses and buy farming equipment.</li> <li>○ The Indian Reserve Act (1934) gave Native Americans the right to manage their own affairs, such as setting up their own law courts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In 1930 3 million days were lost to strikes. 1932, this rose to 15 million. By 1934, 20 million days were lost to strikes. These figures can often show how satisfied workers are, less strikes = happier workers.</li> <li>○ The New Deal did not solve unemployment and there was always at least one in ten people unemployed in the USA throughout the 1930s.</li> <li>○ The Alphabet Agencies gave workers a basic wage. However, the Supreme Court ruled that many of the NRA's wage codes were illegal. FDR introduced the Wagner Act which gave workers the right to join a trade union.</li> <li>○ Women faced discrimination in all sorts of ways. Some of the NRA codes set wages for women lower than those of men. The average yearly wage for a woman in 1937 was \$525 compared to just of \$1000 for a man.</li> <li>○ Most help for farmers went to large-scale farmers. Small farmers or farm workers did not see much benefit. There was still severe poverty and poor farmland in parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado (known as the dustbowl) meant that many farmers had to look for work elsewhere.</li> <li>○ Many Alphabet Agencies continued to discriminate against African-Americans. CCC campsites were segregated and African-Americans were not allowed to live in the newly built town or Norris in the Tennessee Valley. Roosevelt refused to take steps to end discrimination.</li> <li>○ After his re-election in 1936 FRD grew worried about the increasing cost of his job creation schemes like the TVA. He cut down the amount of spending but this resulted in unemployment jumping to 3 million.</li> <li>○ In 1936, thousands of workers went on strike in the car and steel industries. They were campaigning for better wages and conditions.</li> <li>○ By 1938, some people were commenting that America was sliding backwards towards Depression again. Unemployment had rose to 10.5 million and car and steel production had feel. FDR himself acknowledged that the New Deal came to an end by Jan 1939.</li> </ul>



# Opposition to the New Deal:

## **Those who thought the New Deal went too far and was interfering:**

**Republicans** - Remember they believed in **Rugged Individualism – people should help themselves**). Thought FDR was behaving like a dictator – like Stalin and that the NRA and TVA were like the communist economic planning of the USSR. Believed that Social Security Act would make people lazy and dependant on government help. Objected to the cost. Thought money was being wasted – e.g. WPA was paying people to do unnecessary jobs.

**Business** - Didn't like government getting involved in business. Didn't like FDR's support for Trade Unions and the campaign to raise wages Didn't want to pay social security contributions. Criticised NRA for allowing workers to join trade unions and forced employers to pay a minimum wage, improve living conditions and pay better wages.

**1934** A group of business Leaders formed the **Liberty League** to oppose the New Deal.

**Rich** - Didn't like having to pay high taxes. Bitter because FDR's policies had taken away some of their power.

## **Those who believed it didn't go far enough:**

**Huey 'Kingfish' Long** - Governor of Louisiana, Proposed a '**Share our Wealth**' scheme – all personal fortunes over \$5million should be confiscated and the money shared out. Every American family should be given between \$4000 and \$5000. He promised every family \$5000 to buy a radio, a car and a house as well as cheap food for the poor, houses for war veterans and free education. Long claimed that FDR had failed to share out the nation's wealth fairly and he announced his own plans to do this under the slogan, 'Share Our Wealth'. Long said that FDR should confiscate the 'swollen fortunes' of the wealthy and use this to give every American household a car, a house and two to three thousand dollars a year. He promised to make 'every man a king' and attracted the support of millions of the poor. Membership of the 'Share Our Wealth' clubs reached 7.5 million people.

**Doctor Francis Townsend** - Proposed that everyone over the age of 60 should get a pension of \$200 provided they gave up their jobs so that young people could have them. Townsend gained much support from old people who, in 1934, had benefited little from the New Deal. He set up an organisation called 'Old Age Revolving Pension Plan', also known as the Townsend Clubs, which attracted 5 million members by 1935. The scheme was to give \$200 a month to every citizen over 60 who had retired. The plan was to encourage more people to retire and thus create more jobs for the unemployed.

**Father Coughlin, the 'radio priest'** - Broadcast his ideas on the radio to 40million Americans on Sunday Evening. Viciously attacked FDR accusing him of failing to tackle the problems of the poor. Set up the National Union for Social Justice which attracted millions of members from across the country. At first, in 1933, Coughlin supported FDR, but within 2 years he was an opponent, setting up the National Union for Social Justice. This organisation promised work and fair wages for all. He also proposed to nationalise all banks and introduce a national minimum wage. Coughlin criticised the New Deal for not doing enough and labelled FDR as 'anti-God' because he was not really helping the needy. His main influence came from his weekly broadcasts which attracted over 40 million listeners, especially from urban and lower middle-class America. However, many more people tuned in to FDR's 'fireside chats.'

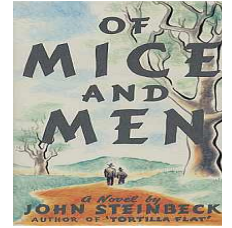
## **Those who thought it went against the constitution:**

**The Supreme Court** - 11 out of 16 of the Alphabet Laws were decreed unconstitutional in cases heard by the Supreme Court. The argument of the Supreme Court was that Roosevelt had tried to impose the power of the federal government on state governments – and this was unconstitutional.

# Popular Culture in the 1930s:

## Key Points:

- Despite the Great Depression 's devastating impact on many Americans, the 1930s witnessed the emergence of many influential cultural trends. Literature, arts, music, and cinema of the period became vehicles for establishing and promoting what would be presented as truly American traditions and values.
- Many New Deal programs were established to support artists, writers, musicians, and theatre professionals. Projects funded through these programs were often seen as serving an important mission of bringing culture and arts to the masses.
- The 1930s came to be known as the “golden age” of Hollywood. Many popular low-budget and epic expensive movies that reached the status of classic were produced during the period.
- The Motion Picture (or Hollywood) Production Code of 1930 forbade certain subjects from being addressed or portrayed in film.
- The 1930s were also a very important and productive decade for American literature.



### Literature:

The Great Depression produced some of the greatest works in American literature. Writers focused on blunt and direct representation of American life and offered social criticism, coming often from the perspective of leftist political views. John Steinbeck (1902–1968) became the quintessential author of the era. He often wrote about poor, working-class people and their struggle to lead a decent and honest life. *The Grapes of Wrath*, considered his masterpiece. Other popular novels include *Tortilla Flat*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Cannery Row*, and *East of Eden*. Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1962.

### Comics:

The 1930s also witnessed the development of popular literary genres. Pulp fiction magazines began to feature distinctive, gritty, adventure heroes that combined elements of hard-boiled detective fiction and the fantastic adventures of the earlier pulp novels. Two particularly noteworthy characters introduced were Doc Savage and The Shadow, who would later influence the creation of characters such as Superman and Batman. Near the end of the decade, two of the world's most iconic superheroes and recognizable fictional characters, Superman and Batman, were introduced in comic books.

### Movies:

A trip to the cinema was one of the most popular leisure activities of the 1930s. The 60 million people who went each week often wanted to escape the trouble of the Depression. Comedies starring Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy, Walt Disney cartoons and horror films such as *Dracula* were very popular.

Adaptations of classic and best-selling literary works were popular. Among them are such classics of American cinema as *King Kong* (1933), *Anna Karenina* (1935), *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1938), *Gone With the Wind* (1939), and *Grapes of Wrath* (1940).

### Radio and music:

By 1930, new forms and styles developed and swing emerged as a dominant form in American music. Swing music developed with corresponding swing dance. The pioneer of jazz music, Louis Armstrong, continued to inspire both mass audiences and fellow musicians. Gramophones and vinyl became a popular way to listen to recorded music.

The 1930s was the era of the immense popularity of radio. Those Americans who did not own a radio could still access one in their communities through friends or neighbours. Popular content spanned from comedy, with Bob Hope being one of the biggest comedic radio personalities of the time, and music, theatre, and soap operas, to news and political content.

**The Arts:** Many of the works created under WPA belonged to Social Realism—an international art movement that depicted the everyday life of ordinary people, most notably, the working class and the poor. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) provided work for unemployed artists of all kinds. Actors were hired to put on free shows, artists to paint displays for schools etc. However, some people believed the WPA was a waste of taxpayers' money.

# World War Two

America had not joined the League of Nations, an international peace-keeping organisation, at the end of WWI. Instead it focused on building up its economy and trade links. **Isolationism** carried on well into the 1930s.

1935 – the Neutrality Act banned the loan of weapons to countries at war.



1939 – WWII breaks out.

America declares support for Britain and France. FDR persuades congress to change the neutrality laws to allow the USA to help Britain and France. The USA sold high quality weapons to Britain and France.

Nov – Britain and France began to buy US weapons, warship and planes, known as the 'Cash and Carry Plan'. This created valuable production jobs.



March 1941 – FDR agreed the Lend Lease deal. Instead of selling weapons to Britain America would lend \$7000 million worth of weapons.



## LEND-LEASE ACT, AID TO OUR ALLIES



1937 – A law stopped the sales of weapons to any countries involved in a conflict.

FDR made a famous 'Quarantine' speech where he said peace-loving nations should stand up to aggressive nations. He said that he would break off relations with nations that were threatening over nations.



1940 – Germany defeated France. Britain stood alone against Hitler. When the British government ran short of money, FDR gave Britain 50 warships.



After a strained relationship between Japan and America throughout the 1930s over Japan's invasion of China and America's refusal to sell Japan oil and steel (which they needed as they used millions of tons each year) the relationship grew worse. Japanese military leaders planned a secret attack on US ships at a naval base.



Dec 7 1941 – Japanese bombers attacked Pearl Harbour. 177 US planes were destroyed, 2000 men were killed. The next day America and Britain declared war on Japan. Three days later Germany and Italy declared war on America.

## Women and African American during WWII:



## Women

Before war broke out women worked in traditional roles such as nursing or teaching.

Women began to work in factories, railways and shipyards.

Between 1940 and 45, the number of women in work rose from 12 million to nearly 19 million.

In 1939, just 36 women worked in shipbuilding. In 1942, that number had grown to 200,000. Also around 350,000 women joined the women's sections of the armed forces.



Women occupied a third of all America's jobs and the transformation of industry was unprecedented.

## African - Americans

Early in the war a march was organised to protest the treatment of African – American workers.

The Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) was set up – this soon found widespread discrimination.

One aircraft maker only employed ten African -Americans out of a workplace of 30,000.

As the war went on racial barriers broke down. African – Americans trained as pilots and the armed forces trained black officers.



Around 1 million African – Americans fought in the war. Black sailors were only allowed to work in the kitchen and the air force wouldn't train black pilots.

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### **Weapon making and unemployment:**

In January 1942, the War Production Board (WPB) was created to convert industries from peacetime work to war work.

- Within weeks car companies began to build tanks and fighter planes, factories that made silk ribbons not produced parachutes.
  - The WPB made sure every factory received all the materials it needed to produce the most war goods in the fastest time.
  - In 1943, US factories produced 86,000 planes, 96,000 in 1944.
  - In 1939, there were around 9.5million unemployed, around 17% of the potential workforce.
  - This figure started to drop as soon as America began to re-arm.
  - By 1941, around 4 million had found jobs building fighter planes, battleships and tanks.
  - When war broke out, unemployed men joined the armed forces and by 1944 unemployment had dropped to just 670,000.
  - Additional economic benefits: Farmers prospered because they supplied food to the military and traditional industries of coal, iron, steel and oil were boosted by war demand.
-

# Postwar Prosperity

When WWII ended life in America gradually returned to normal. Peacetime goods were produced with the same efficiency as war time goods. Soon people could afford luxury goods such as: ovens, televisions and cars. A huge advertising industry and 'buy now, pay later' schemes persuaded people to spend their money. Massive shopping malls were built on the outskirts of towns.

- By the end of the 1950s, nine out of every ten US households had a TV, eight had a car and a telephone and seven had a washing machine.
- By 1952, America was supplying the world with 65% of the worlds manufactured goods.
- Its growing population was consuming one third of the world's good and services.
- The baby boom saw a 40% increase the population.



## Truman's 'Fair Deal' 1945-1952

Truman felt it was important to help American's most in need and bring about a 'fairer society'. His plans were called the 'Fair Deal'. The two main issues were poverty and rights for African-Americans. Truman raised the minimum wage from 40 cents to 70 cents and cleared large slums to make way for affordable housing. These policies were not supported by Republicans and many Southern politicians. The GI Bill was passed to help veterans. It established hospitals, made cheap home loans available and offered grants to pay ex-soldiers to attend college or trade schools. From 1944-49, nearly 9 million veterans received \$4 billion from the government.



In 1952 **Eisenhower** became President. He continued with the New Deal and the Fair Deal. He encouraged economic growth and looked after the middle classes. By the end of the 1950s the USA was producing half the world's manufactured goods. As many as 19 million Americans moved from the cities to live in the suburbs. It was possible for them to do this because they could buy cars, the standard of roads was better and the interest on mortgages was low. By 1960, 25 per cent of the American people lived in suburbs. These people had a television, a record player, swimming pools and cars. People bought on credit – this increased 800 per cent between 1945 and 1957. Between 1945-60 the number of people who had a car rose from 25 million to 62 million. Cars like the Cadillac were popular.

- He was a Republican who brought lots of business people to the government to keep the economy booming. They succeeded and the standard of living for millions improved and wages kept rising.

## Was this a time of the American Dream?

Despite America being the richest country in the world by the 1950s, there were still areas where the majority of people were desperately poor with substandard living. 25% were still living in poverty – there was no NHS, jobseekers allowance or sickness pay. The elderly failed to benefit from the boom. In 1960, 68% of people over 65 had an income of less than \$1000 at a time when the average factory workers earnings were over \$4000.

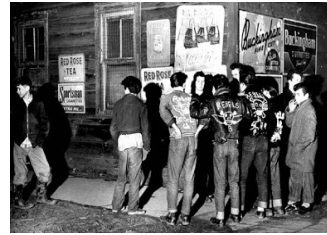


# Popular Culture in the 1950s:

During the 1950s the term 'teenager' becomes common. Before the war children were expected to work to support their families upon leaving school. Graduating from high school or college was uncommon. In fact, before the 1950s fewer than two out of three students completed compulsory education. After the war this changed, with a booming economy parents could now support their children. They no longer had to get a job, parents began to insist their children finished education and go to college afterwards. As a result, teenagers had more leisure time and spending power than previous generations.



In 1957, it was estimated that on average the teenager spend between \$10 and \$15 a week compared to \$1 - \$2 in the early 1940s. Teenagers' annual spending power climbed from \$10 billion in 1950 to \$25 billion in 1959.



Teenage boys became 'thrill seekers' who raced cars, drank heavily and formed gangs. Teenagers got a reputation for being rebellious, secretive and aggressive.



Figures like James Dean and Marlon Brando became emblems of teenage rebellion. In 1953 the film *The Wild One*, Brando's character leads a motorcycle gang.



American businesses soon realised that they could sell products to teenagers, and they targeted their advertising to cash in on teenagers' growing purchasing power.

## Rock and Roll:

A new style of music spread across America in the 1950s – Rock and Roll. It had a strong rhythm and was easy to dance to which appealed to teenagers. The lyric often contained sexual references and was unpopular among older Americans. This made it even more popular with teenagers. It became linked with teenage crime and gang culture. A 1956 TV performance by Elvis Presley was watched by a staggering 82% of Americans.



## Television:

One of the most popular products in the 1950s was the TV. At the start of the decade, there were about 3 million TV owners; by the end of it, there were 55 million, watching shows from 530 stations. The average price of TV sets dropped from about \$500 in 1949 to \$200 in 1953. TV also helped make professional and college sports big businesses, and sometimes provided excellent comedy and dramatic shows to vast audiences that might not otherwise have had access to them.



## Movies:

In the period following WWII when most of the films were idealised with conventional portrayals of men and women, young people wanted new and exciting symbols of rebellion. Hollywood responded to audience demands - the late 1940s and 1950s saw the rise of the anti-hero - with stars like newcomers James Dean. Due to television (a small black and white screen) becoming affordable and a permanent fixture in most people's homes, the movies fought back with gimmicks - colour films, bigger screens, and 3-D.



# McCarthyism – The Second Red Scare:



## The Impact of the Cold War

The fear of communism developed in the USA in the years after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia. Although the USA and the Soviet Union were allies during the Second World War, American distrust of communism continued. In the years after 1945, a Cold War developed between the USA and the Soviet Union. This led to an increase in fear and hatred of communism by most Americans. Communists, or those thought to have communist sympathies, faced great intolerance and the eventual loss of their political and other rights. 'Better dead than Red' became a popular slogan.

A member of the US government, Alger Hiss, was accused of spying for the Soviet Union. Two Americans – Ethel and Julius Rosenberg – were also accused of spying and were executed in June 1953. These scandals became news headlines, and the fear that there were communists at work across America grew.

### HUAC (the House of Representatives Un-American Activities Committee)

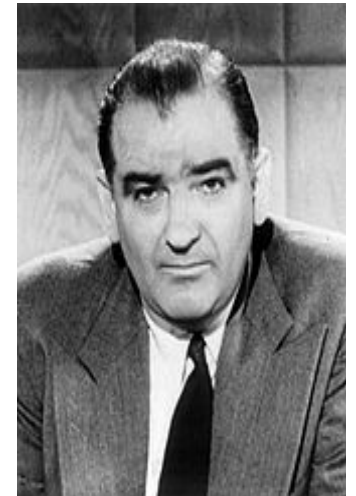
A committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, investigated allegations of communist activity in the U.S. during the early years of the Cold War (1945-91). Established in 1938, the committee used its power as weapon and called citizens to testify in high-profile hearings before Congress. This intimidating atmosphere often produced dramatic but questionable revelations about Communists infiltrating American institutions. HUAC's controversial tactics contributed to the fear, distrust and repression of the Red Scare.

### The Loyalty Programme

The program gave loyalty review boards the power to fire government employees when "reasonable grounds" existed for belief that they were disloyal. Evidence of disloyalty included not only treasonous activities, but "sympathetic association" with a long list of organisations deemed by the Attorney General to be "Communist, fascist, or totalitarian."

In 1950, an ambitious and dishonest Republican senator, **Joseph McCarthy**, claimed he had a list of 205 members of the Communist Party of the United States who worked for the State Department. This man, who was the nation's most ardent anti-communist, became the symbol of the 'Red-hating crusader' and gave his name to era - **McCarthyism**. Over the next few years McCarthyism became associated with a communist witch hunt, in which over 2,000 men and women were summoned to appear before the Senate's House Un-American Activities Committee. By the time he was exposed as a fraud and liar, he had created an atmosphere of fear and ruined the lives of many.

Many hard-working citizens had lost their jobs because they were labelled as "Communists". While many fired college professors returned to their jobs in universities, public school teachers could not. Those who retained their jobs realised that their career has been destroyed. Many, failed to convince everyone that they were in fact innocent. McCarthyism also had a huge effect on the psychological aspect of life. Innocent people had to go through the trauma of being prosecuted by their own country. Relationships were destroyed because one could never know who to trust or would turn you in. The children of the accused were victims as well. Their peers at school were often told by their parents to stay away from them.





# The Civil Rights Movement:

## Events that triggered the movement

Martin Luther King a Georgian Baptist Minister believed passionately in non-violent protest, including sit-ins and boycotts. MLK was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 in recognition of his non-violent approach to eliminating racism.

### 1954 May 17 – Brown Vs Board of Education

The Supreme Court rules on the landmark case **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kans.**, unanimously agreeing that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional. The ruling paves the way for large-scale desegregation. The decision overturns the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson ruling that sanctioned "separate but equal" segregation of the races, ruling that "separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." It is a victory for NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall, who will later return to the Supreme Court as the nation's first black justice.

### 1955 Aug – The Murder of Emmett Till

Fourteen-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till is visiting family in Mississippi when he is kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River for allegedly whistling at a white woman. Two white men, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury. They later boast about committing the murder in a Look magazine interview. The case becomes a popular cause of the civil rights movement.

### 1955 Dec 1- Bus Boycott

(Montgomery, Ala.) NAACP member Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat at the front of the "coloured section" of a bus to a white passenger, defying a southern custom of the time. In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott, which will last for more than a year, until the buses are desegregated Dec. 21, 1956. As newly elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is instrumental in leading the boycott.

### 1957 - Sept

(Little Rock, Ark.) Formerly all-white Central High School learns that integration is easier said than done. Nine black students are blocked from entering the school on the orders of Governor Orval Faubus. President Eisenhower sends federal troops and the National Guard to intervene on behalf of the students, who become known as the "Little Rock Nine."

### 1961 - May 4

Over the spring and summer, student volunteers begin taking bus trips through the South to test out new laws that prohibit segregation in interstate travel facilities, which includes bus and railway stations. Several of the groups of "freedom riders," as they are called, are attacked by angry mobs along the way.

### 1964 - July 2

President Johnson signs the **Civil Rights Act of 1964**. The most sweeping civil rights legislation since Reconstruction, the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination of all kinds based on race, colour, religion, or national origin. The law also provides the federal government with the powers to enforce desegregation. **Voting Rights Act (1965) – this ensured all Americans had the right to vote.**

## Key peaceful protests:

### 1960 - Feb. 1

(Greensboro, N.C.) Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter. Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South. Six months later the original four protesters are served lunch at the same Woolworth's counter. Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theatres, libraries, and other public facilities.

**1963 May** - During civil rights protests in Birmingham, Ala., Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor uses fire hoses and police dogs on black demonstrators. These images of brutality, which are televised and published widely, are instrumental in gaining sympathy for the civil rights movement around the world.

**Aug. 28** - (Washington, D.C.) About 200,000 people join the March on Washington. Congregating at the Lincoln Memorial, participants listen as Martin Luther King delivers his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.



# The Black Power Movement:

By 1965, the non-violent direct-action protest had achieved a great deal. But many African Americans remained angry and frustrated.

They still faced poverty, low wages, poor education and inadequate housing.



Many angry African – Americans took to looting and arson.

Between 1965 and 1968, there were riots in most of America's major cities. Investigations showed that the key cause of these riots was frustration over living conditions and a feeling that the police didn't protect their rights.



At the victory ceremony for the men's 200-metre run, Americans Tommie Smith and John Carlos (gold and bronze medallists, respectively) stood barefoot, each with head bowed and a single black-gloved fist raised during the national anthem. The athletes described the gesture as a tribute to their African American heritage and a protest of the living conditions of minorities in the United States.

## As a result, new movements developed:

Some civil rights campaigners rejected the approach of MLK. They felt change was not happening quickly enough. A number of organisations promoting 'Black Power' grew in the 1960s.

### The Nation of Islam (also known as the Black Muslims)

The Nation of Islam was founded in the 1930s, it argued for separatism (keeping races apart). It said that white society was racist and corrupt and rejected Christianity as a white man's religion. The best known member was **Malcom X**.

### The Black Panther Party

Formed in California in 1966, the Black Panthers had around 5000 members by 1968. This extreme militant group totally rejected King's non-violent approach. It argued that African-American's had to protect themselves from white racists, using violence if necessary.

**Malcom X – believed that violence was necessary to bring about change. He became less extreme towards the end of his life and he left the Nation of Islam.**



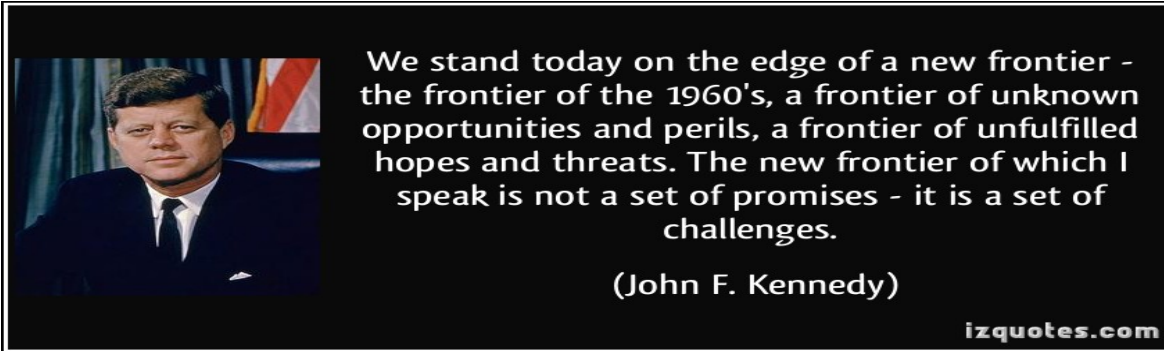
Black Power declined very quickly in the late 1960s because its organisation was very poor and it had little money to support itself. It also declined because the government preferred King's the peaceful methods to the violence and hatred of Black Power. However, it can be said that Black Power did manage to achieve something for black people as a whole. Black Power leaders did try to help the people in the inner-city ghettos, and they did increase black pride and a sense of black nationalism.

### 1968 Civil Rights Act (Known as the Fair Housing Act)

It became law, banning the discrimination in housing and making it a federal crime to 'by force or by threat of force, injure, intimidate, or interfere with anyone.... By reason of their race, colour, religion or national origin.'

# Kennedy's New Frontier:

In 1960 John F Kennedy became the first catholic President. His domestic policy was called The New Frontier. His aim was to eliminate poverty, inequality and deprivation for all Americans including Black Americans.



We stand today on the edge of a new frontier - the frontier of the 1960's, a frontier of unknown opportunities and perils, a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats. The new frontier of which I speak is not a set of promises - it is a set of challenges.

(John F. Kennedy)

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JFK had intended to introduce changes to society and the economy. He had proposed an ambitious system of health insurance called Medicare, medical help for the elderly and a Civil Rights Bill; however, none of these were passed. He also intended to introduce an education law to give more money to schools. He increased benefits, raised the minimum wage and established training schemes for the unemployed. JFK had charisma, but he did not have a good relationship with Congress, and his ideas were often rejected.

## Successes of the New Frontier

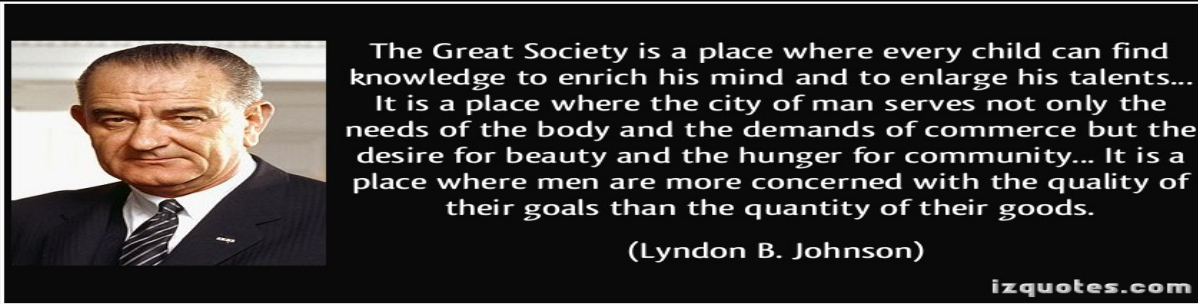
- **Civil Rights** – He gave more important jobs to African-Americans than any other president. He created the CEEO – Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity to ensure that all people employed with the federal government had equal employment opportunities. He stood up to Southern politicians who failed to defend civil rights.
- **The economy** – JFK cut taxes to give people more money to spend. He made \$900 million available to businesses to create new jobs and gave grants to companies to buy new high-tech equipment and train their workers to use it. He also increased government spending on the armed forces, creating jobs.
- **Healthcare and decreasing poverty** – JFK increased the minimum hourly wage from \$1 to \$1.25 and made \$4.9 billion available for loans to improve housing, clear slums and build roads. His Social Security Act improved benefits for the elderly and unemployed.
- **Education** – JFK established the Peace Corps, an organisation that sends volunteers abroad to assist people in poorer countries. They worked as teachers, doctors, nurses and technical advisors. JFK was also keen to introduce an education law to give more money to schools.

## Failures of the New Frontier

- **Civil Rights** – The CEEO only helped those already in the government and did nothing to find jobs for the millions of unemployed African-Americans. He also attempted to get MLK to call off his march on Washington as he believed it might make some politicians in Congress resist civil rights even more.
- **The economy** – In some cases the new equipment meant fewer workers were needed. By 1963, 4.5 million people were unemployed – only 1 million fewer than 1960. Also, unemployment was twice as high for African – Americans.
- **Healthcare and decreasing poverty** – The minimum wage was only helpful to those in work, and the loans to improve housing were only useful if the person could afford the loan repayments. Also, US Congress defeated JFK's proposals for Medicare.
- **Education** – JFK's efforts to provide funding for schools was denied. Congress was dominated by Southern politicians and they refused support his plans after they had clashed with him over Civil Rights.

# Johnson's Great Society:

Lyndon B Johnson was the new President following the assassination of JFK. LBJ continued to develop JFK's ideas. Johnson wanted to create a Great Society. He won the 1964 election by stating that he wanted to end poverty. He carried on the work promised by JFK. Johnson was a much more experienced politician than Kennedy and could pass more laws.



Johnson faced opposition during the latter stages of his Presidency. He was criticised for America's involvement in the Vietnam War – some thought it was costing the USA too much money and students protested against the draft system (conscription). In 1968 Johnson decided not to run for re-election and Nixon became the next President of the USA.

## **Successes of the Great Society**

- **Civil Rights** – 1964 Civil Rights Act was passed - The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ended segregation in public places and banned employment, discrimination on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, is considered one of the crowning legislative achievements of the civil rights movement. First proposed by President John F. Kennedy, it survived strong opposition from southern members of Congress and was then signed into law LBJ
- **The economy** – JFK cut taxes to give people more money to spend. He made \$900 million available to businesses to create new jobs and gave grants to companies to buy new high-tech equipment and train their workers to use it. He also increased government spending on the armed forces, creating jobs.
- **Healthcare and decreasing poverty** – The Medical Care Act (1965) provided Medicare (for the old) and Medicaid (for the poor). This was to help all Americans have access to medical care. He increased the minimum wage from \$1.25 to \$1.40. Johnson signed the economic Opportunity Act in 1964. The law created the Office of Economic Opportunity aimed at attacking the roots of American poverty.
- **Education** – Operation Headstart gave money to schools in cities to provide a better education for the poor. Also, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act provided major funding for schools.

## **Failures of the Great Society**

- **Civil Rights** – In 1964 and 1965, African-Americans in Harlem, New York and Watts, Los Angeles rioted after African-American men were shot by police officers. The riots disheartened Johnson. Johnson would be confronted by more urban unrest in 1968, when massive riots broke out in response to Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.
- **The economy** – Programs were costly to run and increased national debt. Social Security and Medicare took the largest part of the budget.
- **Healthcare and decreasing poverty** – By 1968, unemployment was on the increase and there was widespread rioting in the poorer areas of some cities. One of the main legacies of the "war on poverty" was an increased cynicism about what the government can achieve.

**The Feminist Movement:** More and more women had started to work during WWII – around 6 million worked in factories. Being able to earn their own money gave them a new sense of independence. By 1960, women made up around half of the workforce.



In 1960, JFK set up the Status Commission to report on women in the workplace. In 1963, it reported that:

- Women earned around 60% less than men for the same job.
- 95% of managers were men – the majority of work for women was part-time and with limited responsibility.
- Only 4% of lawyers and 7% of doctors were women.
- In some jobs (such as cabin crew) women could be legally dismissed if they were married.

The feminist movement of the 1960s and '70s originally focused on dismantling workplace inequality, such as denial of access to better jobs and salary inequity, via anti-discrimination laws. In 1964, Representative Howard Smith of Virginia proposed to add a prohibition on gender discrimination into the Civil Rights Act that was under consideration. He was greeted by laughter from the other Congressmen, but with leadership from Representative Martha Griffiths of Michigan, the law passed with the amendment intact.

In 1963 Betty Friedan published **The Feminine Mystique**. This was a very important book in terms of women's rights and the feminist movement. Friedan said that women should have equal rights with men in every way and that women should be able to pursue a good career.

In 1966 Friedan and others established the **National Organisation for Women** - they demanded equal rights for women in US law and a woman's right to make her own decisions with regards to reproduction (at the time abortion was illegal in all US states). Women held protests and strikes in order to gain these rights. Within a few years NOW had 400,000 members. However, it was many middle-class, middle-aged women. Younger, more extreme women became known as the Women's Liberation Movement.

**1965:**

All married couples should be allowed to use contraceptives.

**1969:**

California is the first state to adopt a 'no fault' divorce law, allowing couples to divorce by mutual consent.

**1972:**

Educational Amendment Act - bans sexual discrimination in education, enabling girls to study the same subjects as boys.

**1972:**

A change to the constitution (the Equal Rights Amendment) ERA was passed by congress. It said that equality of rights under the law could not be denied on basis of sex. However, the Stop ERA campaign led by Phyllis Schlafly managed to oppose it and stop it based on the assumption that it would lead to higher abortion rates and women in combat.

**1973:**

Lawyers argued successfully that 21 year-old Jane Roe (her real name was Norma McCorvey) had the right to an abortion. She already had two children, both of which had been adopted. The Supreme Court ruled that women had the right to safe and legal abortion, over-riding anti-abortion laws of many states.