

# BBC Bitesize

**Narrator:** The Roaring Twenties are a time of major social and cultural change in the USA. The economy is growing, luxury goods are more available than ever before, and entertainment industries like music, film, sports and radio bring new excitement to everyday life.

For millions of white middle and upper-class Americans, the 1920s is a decade of spending, fun and glamour. Average wages are increasing, while working hours are decreasing.

The status of women in society is changing and the right to vote is finally guaranteed to women in 1920. Although it will be many more decades before voting rights are fully accessible for all women in all states.

The flapper girl symbolises greater independence for women, especially young, urban, white women who are most able to take advantage of new social freedoms, made possible in large part by the booming economy.

The entertainment industry is one of many that experiences tremendous growth. Hollywood, California, becomes the epicentre of movie-making. And radio stations bring professional sports and music directly into people's homes.

Companies make the most of the wide reach of new mediums, like movies and radio, to advertise their goods, selling more products to more people.

The mass production of consumer goods, combined with buy-now-pay-later schemes, allow more people to purchase luxury items.

But wealth and prosperity is not enjoyed by everyone. The Republican-led federal government takes a laissez-faire, or hands-off, approach to the economy. This means businesses are not closely regulated, which makes the rich richer, but does little to protect workers or the poor.

In particular, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and recent immigrants face economic barriers. For example, their race or national origin alone make it very difficult for them to secure business loans.

In the southern states, where agriculture remains the main industry, falling crop prices hurt the regional economy. Traditional southern industries are declining. Poor, working-class people are the worst affected. Many are African American workers.

Black migrants from the rural south move to northern cities like Chicago and New York, and now have access to better paying industrial jobs.

These migrants also bring their musical talents and traditions with them and for the first time mainstream white society becomes aware of Jazz music... And it becomes incredibly popular.

New York develops into a cultural hub for African-American artists, musicians, singers and authors in what becomes known as the Harlem Renaissance.

While the Roaring Twenties is an exciting and prosperous time for many Americans, racism and sexism persist, limiting opportunities for many, but fuelling the continued fight for equality.