



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
1979 Volume II: Themes in Twentieth Century American Culture

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## **The 1920s: The Rise of Consumer Culture**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 79.02.06  
by Burt Saxon

This unit examines the economic, social, and cultural aspects of the 1920s. Three major questions will be considered: a) To what degree was this decade a prosperous one? Which Americans shared in the prosperity? b) What role did advertising and installment buying play in the development of the “consumer culture?” c) How was the popular culture of the 1920s related to economic changes? Did different aspects of the “Roaring Twenties” affect different groups of people? If so, why? The narrative stresses the need to teach historical interpretation as well as facts. The interpretative frameworks summarized include: Laissez-faire conservatism, triumphalist, consensus, conflict. The historiographical approach is then applied to the three central themes of the unit: prosperity, consumerism, and popular culture. Two weeks of lesson plans are followed by bibliographies and samples of advertisements from the 1920s.

(Designed for U.S. History II.)

### **Key Words**

*American Advertising Consumer Practices Consumerism Economics*

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