

The Great Gatsby and the 1920s

The Roaring Twenties
The Jazz Age

The Great Gatsby

- ❖ Set in 1922
- ❖ Written 1923 and 24
- ❖ Published 1925
- ❖ Not a hit at first, but now an emblem and icon of the time period

World War I

- ❖ 1914 – 1919
- ❖ US enters 1917 –
 - ❖ Idealism of motives and outcomes
 - ❖ “The world must be made safe for democracy”
- ❖ US (and others) leave war disillusioned
 - ❖ Has ramifications politically, economically, socially, culturally

The 1920s - Political

- ❖ Isolationism, Nativism & Racism
- ❖ Want a return to “normalcy”
- ❖ Fears of the “other”
 - ❖ Red Scare
 - ❖ Racism
 - ❖ Anti-immigrant sentiments
- ❖ Fed Gov corruption and scandal
 - ❖ Laissez faire attitude toward the people
- ❖ Prohibition - 1919

The 1920s - Economic

- ❖ Urbanization and industrialization going strong
- ❖ Postwar disillusionment manifests in (excessive?) consumerism and materialism
- ❖ Lack of regulation of federal government
- ❖ “Underground” economy flourishes

The 1920s - Social

- ❖ “Lost Generation”
- ❖ Loosening of public & personal morals
 - ❖ Willingness to go against law & previous societal and “traditional” norms
- ❖ Role and status of women
 - ❖ Industrialization liberates
 - ❖ Suffrage – 1920
 - ❖ Flappers – changing stereotype

The 1920s – Culture

- ❖ Jazz music
 - ❖ Mirrors breaking social/traditional norms
- ❖ Harlem Renaissance
- ❖ “Lost Generation” writers
 - ❖ Often ex-pats, travelers
 - ❖ Works had autobiographical sense (selfish?)
 - ❖ Irony, alienation, breaking norms but lamenting loss of tradition
- ❖ Elaborate art deco motifs – art, architecture
 - ❖ Geometric, layered, complex

The Author

- ❖ Born 1896 – Minnesota
- ❖ Becomes famous and wealthy (to a degree) in 1920 with *This Side of Paradise*
- ❖ Marries Zelda in 1920, has daughter in 1921
- ❖ 1924 Moves to France, writes/finishes *Gatsby*
- ❖ Died 1940 of heart attack