

Analyze the media essay

[Media](#)



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The 1920's in America was a time of unprecedented growth and cultural expansion, up to that time, than ever before. America had come back from Europe victorious in the Great War and the great cities like Chicago and New York, along with the rest of the country, was now a creditor nation. This growth helped to spark the second industrial revolution in which consumerism helped to drive the needs and wants of its people. More and more inventions which the modern American takes for granted started to flood into the culture at this time. This increase in consumerism was spurred on by the gains which technology helped to make possible.

The 1920's was a very important year for the media in this country and which served as not only one of the most interesting but important decades for this medium of American culture. Television was invented in this decade but would not be introduced on a national level until the 1939 World Fair and that was only a demonstration. People got their news through the newsreels at the movies, radio, for the few people that had then but mostly through newspapers.

The latter was the most important and influential medium for Americans to receive their news. In New York City, there were seventeen daily newspapers with some turning out more than one edition a day. Eventually, the influence of the radio and television would come onto the national scene and usurp the influence that those mediums had on the 1920's but with most mediums which have such an important and resounding influence on the nation and its culture, it had to have a beginning and for radio and motion pictures which portrayed the news, the 1920's contributed a great deal to the formation and growth of these.

The 1920's was one of the most important years for popular culture in this country's history. Some would say that the terms "pop culture" and "important" being used in the same sentence would be an oxymoron and usually, I would not be in total disagreement with them. However, the 1920's ushered in a greater understanding of the country which was on the move and sought a higher standard of living than ever before. This newer sense of worldly capitalism came from technology and much of that was within the media.

The 1930's and the 1940's would eclipse the 1920's in its dependence upon the radio. However, its importance at this time cannot be overlooked. In moving the consumerism that would help to define the decade, the radio was able to reach the masses in a way that was unthinkable just a decade before. One example was a simple advertisement in New York City for apartments in one of its Burroughs. This single thirty second advertisement spot created a rush of phone calls to the realtor in charge of the properties that the main phone server was shut down. Over \$150, 000 of apartments were bought in a single day and to adjust for inflation that number would be just short of \$2 million.[1]

It has been proven that people respond more to what they hear and see than what they hear. This is why most people today read very little compared to what their parents or grandparents did in their youth. Seeing the news was simply more entertaining and enticing for the majority of people. The radio exploited that truth and as a result, became the central item in a person's house as well as in their life as a main source for their news. The first presidential election was broadcasted over Pittsburgh's KDKA in 1920.[2]

People, for the first time, could hear in almost real time, the debates and election results as they first came over the wire.

This helped to spur an interest in politics and world events which before, people could successfully avoid had they not felt interested in what was occurring outside of their immediate sphere of influence. " The radio helped to create a global society for Americans who would never, could never travel to the various places which radio brought to their living rooms." [3] This served as its major appeal.

The radio also served as free advertisements for the major sports of the day. It was first protested by the baseball owners who felt that radio was stealing their product and those who could listen on the radio, would be less compelled to come to the ballpark. This seems like common sense, but in reality, the exact opposite happened. Being reminded of the ballgame and in listening to the daily actions of their favorite team, spurred a heightened interest which could only be quelled by visiting the ballpark for oneself.

As a partial result, along with the heroics of Babe Ruth and other famous athletes, the sports enjoyed a golden era in sports. " Jack Dempsey vs. Gene Tunney in boxing, the Four Horsemen of Notre Dame in Football, horse racing and the further cementing of baseball as the nation's past time, all occurred in the 1920's because of the advances in technology; especially in the media." [4]

Another form of the media which came to take hold in the 1920's was the newsreels. The inventor of television is still under dispute but what is not under dispute is that even though the majority of advancements in television

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occurred in the 1920's, television was non-existent in American homes. The closest thing to come to television was the newsreels which occurred before, in between and after the movies at the local cinema. Each one was only a few minutes in length and before 1927, were all without sound. A newsreel in the 1920's would bring scenes of the New York Yankees winning another championship or Notre Dame running to another undefeated season.

It would also bring the events of the world and Presidents Harding and Coolidge. The death of President Wilson and the beginning of the slow death which would be the League of Nations would be shown to audiences. The Teapot Dome scandal helped to infuriate a nation over the corruption of their government as well as Charles Lindbergh flight from New York to Paris in 1927.[5] People could actually see Lindbergh leaving New York and arriving in Paris instead of just reading it.

This produced a highly electric feeling; a feeling which made Lindbergh the most famous non-athlete of the 1920's in America. In Chicago, the Loeb and Leopold case would have been broadcasted to a shocked Chicago as well as the rest of the nation. Two very smart and over-privileged boys sought to commit the perfect crime by killing a fourteen-year-old boy who was picked at random. That case and the 1925 Scopes Trial in Tennessee which put evolution on trial were two events in the judicial system which would command the attention of the American public in ways that the newspaper never could.

The most important form of the media was the newspaper during the 1920's. The newspaper served as an affordable form of news and which served as

the rough draft of history. Despite many newspapers being heavily influenced by one political party over another, historians look to newspapers and other primary written sources more than the various elements of popular culture when trying to interpret an era in our nation's history. Two of the most important newspapers of that time were the New York Times and Chicago Tribune.

In the eighty years since the 1920's, the subscription of the Chicago Tribune has actually decreased from 920, 000 to a little more than 620, 000 in 2006.

[6] This truth, despite the fact that there are roughly 180 million more Americans in the country and Chicago land, which currently totals more than 5. 5 million people, helps to explain the rapid decline in the power and influence which newspapers had from then until now.[7] Also, most of the major newspapers had more than one edition per day. The Chicago Tribune would have a morning edition and then a later afternoon edition that same day with a comparable circulation.

The price of the newspaper at that time was 2 cents in the city and up to 3 cents in the suburbs. Therefore, it was a cheap form of receiving the news and one which was readily available throughout the city and suburbs. The newspaper would be divided into sections: World and Sports with other sections inverted into those sections. The events of the world and important political actions would be seen on the front of the page with editorials towards the end of the World section. Box scores and " In the Wake of the News" would help its readers to follow the actions of their favorite team. Local sports were also very important as was seen when 109, 000 people

showed up at Soldiers Field in Chicago to watch the city's high school championship football game.

Another important aspect of the newspaper was the advertisements within its pages. The largest section would be reserved for the Saturday and Sunday papers. Despite its crude pictures compared to today's standards, seeing a model wearing the latest fashions were even more influential than the fashion magazines of its day. This helped to promote the consumerism that was so easily identifiable with the 1920's. People need to be reminded of what will make their lives better, regardless of how little that item is actually needed.

This was the job of the major clothing companies and department stores of the day and they looked to the newspapers as the number one form of advertisement for their business. One store owner stated: "The secret is not how to supply the goods but how to supply the customers by making them want what we have to sell." This is one of the most daunting problems which face advertisers: How to create demand for the products which a producer has to sell and which usually is not essential for the customer to have.

By creating an illusion in the customer's mind which tells him or her that such an item is essential to their continued happiness; the store that can do that, will never have to worry about producing the customers and with the mass production of their products through the modern inventions of various machines, producing the goods was neither a problem as well. At that time, they were the most important form of advertisement for the major

companies in America and the store owners who took advantage of this influential medium, enjoyed high returns on their investments.

The media is important in this country, not just to tell us what our nation's movie stars up to but they serve as the first draft of history. Historians, when attempting to fully appreciate the era which they study, refer to scholarly sources but it is the primary source which is usually seen as the Holy Grail. The media in all of its various forms helps the historian as well as the interested in knowing what the society at that time felt was important and was of an interest to the country at that time. The use of the radio, newsreels and newspaper all served that purpose and help to give future generations a closer look at what motivated the country as a whole and how the media helped to motivate the shape the country as well.

The stuffy of the media, in all of its forms and in the years since Thomas Paine's Common Sense in 1776 sought to convince the rest of the colonists that the choice before them was as simple yet profound as liberty or death. In much of the same way, though not always as dramatic, the mass production of sounds, words, images and ideas, which are spread across the country and even the world; it has been the media, although not always unbiased, which has helped to bring America into the information age. As the radio and newsreels were to this generation, the Internet is to Americans of this era. Despite its major differences, they both have a lot alike and show that the more things change, the more they really do stay the same. The method of transporting information might have improved but it still affects the way people think, feel and even vote.

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