

Flappers: girls gone wild essay sample



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Up until the early 1900s the pace of change in American lifestyles had been relatively slow with most people experiencing a similar lifestyle to what their past generations had also followed. The rate of change started to accelerate in the early 1900s as new influences had an effect that reached even the furthest parts of the country. This had the effect of creating a new country-wide culture in the early twentieth century. The movies, radio shows, sophisticated advertising, and popular magazines all had an influence on the lives of 1920's youth who saw themselves as different from the older generation. Young people began to model themselves on movie and sports stars who represented a glamorous new age, but they also took on many of the negative traits of their idols like smoking, bad language, immorality, and selfishness. This effected many young women throughout the country. They were known as flappers.

After World War I, the Roaring Twenties saw lots of change. Women had the right to vote and new senses of independence and feminism that, when coupled with a popular contempt for Prohibition, may have fueled the flapper fire. The flappers of the 1920s marked the beginning of a revolution of women. During this time, women ditched their conservative feminine looks and went for clothing, makeup and hairstyles that were a far cry from the norm and considered inappropriate at the time. The rebellion led to a revolution in women's fashion and women's roles.

Flappers were usually young, single, middle-class woman. They were considered the “ Younger Generation”. They wore more daring fashions rather than the old Victorian fashion many older women wore. Most of them had steady jobs as operators or sales women of too.

They wanted to break away from and defy previous societal norms. This new breed of flappers listened to the new jazz sound and danced provocatively at jazz clubs. They dated freely and treated sex as a much more casual activity than their predecessors. Women in this era drove cars, rode bicycles and defiantly drank alcohol openly during the Prohibition era. Some flappers indulged in cigarette use-some even dabbled in cocaine. Although they received a lot of bad press, they were also being seen as symbols of advantages for the woman's movement and feminism.

Flappers were not all known for their behavior; they made an impact in fashion as well. The way they dressed was inspired by French fashions especially Coco Chanel's. Flapper style made girls look young and boyish which also accompanied the name *garçonne* in French. Flappers wore shorter skirts and showed more skin. They often wore straight, loose fitted dresses with shorter and even sometimes no sleeves. The waistline even dropped to the hips. They wore silk or rayon stockings with garters. The skirts worn were rose to right above the knee to show more leg when dancing or walking in the breeze. Along with their outfits they wore heels that tended to be 2 to 3 inches high

Flappers did away with old corsets and pantaloons and introduced panties. They wore simple bust bodices to hold their chest still while dancing. They also wore more comfortable corsets which reached the hips to smooth the whole frame, giving women a more straight figure rather than curvy. This made women look more boyish. Another adjustment to make flappers look more boyish was Symington Side Lacer. It was a type of bra that pulled in

the back to make the chest appear more flat. Other women were jealous of the flappers and bought the Symington Side Lacer to get the same look.

Hair and Accessories were important to the flapper look. The flappers wore their hair short and usually died it jet black. Some famous hairstyles among them were the Bob, the Eton crop, and the Shingle bob. They used their fingers to style their hair which was called finger waving. Flappers also wore hats because they were required yet stylish. They wore Newsboy caps and Cloche hats. Other accessories such as pins, rings, and brooches came into the style too along with many layers of necklaces. This was considered art deco which not only became popular with flappers but with the buildings of the 1920s too.

When it came to make-up, flappers didn't go easy on it. They wore heavy eye make-up and lipstick. They wore kohl around their eyes which was more of a dramatic look for flappers. Along with that they also wore blush since it was no longer a messy application process. They adored their lipstick to get a bee stung lip look. The cosmetic industry flowered due to many women using make-up in large numbers.

The flapper look appealed to many female celebrities at the time. Some of these celebrities were Olive Borden, Alice White, Helen Kane, and Joan Crawford. Although they had the flapper look one of the most famous flapper celebrities was Clara Bow. She was the "It" girl in the roaring twenties due to her flapper look and sex symbol to the nation.

Flappers were more about having a good time than anything else. They would smoke and date freely. They would go to speakeasies or jazz clubs to

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go dancing and drinking as well. Some dances were considered shocking. These dances included the Charleston, the Shimmy, the Bunny Hug and the Black Bottom.

Flappers had their own slang as well. Their dialect reflected their drinking habits as well as their actions. “ I have to go see a man about a dog,” usually meant going to buy whiskey. Another term was “ handcuff” which meant an wedding or engagement ring. They even had slang that some people use today like “ That’s the bee’s knees!” or “ That’s a bunch of baloney.”

The older men and women found the flappers crude. Flappers were energetic but the older generation thought the energy was focused too much in the wrong direction. They focused on, as a woman of the older generation stated, “ a frivolous pursuit of fun rather than trying to better their sex and their race.” The great disappointment the older generation had for the youth created a large barrier and generation gap within society.

Though many were shocked by the flapper’s skimpy attire and wild behavior, a less extreme version of the flapper became respectable among the old and the young. Some women cut off their hair and stopped wearing their corsets, but didn’t go to the extreme of flapperhood. This was one of the causes of the end of the flappers.

On October 29, 1929 the Stock Market crashed and the world entered the Great Depression. Recklessness was forced to come to an end, although some flappers remained. This came to the conclusion of the Roaring 20s and what came with it.

In the 1920s, flappers broke away from the Victorian image of womanhood. They dropped the corset, chopped their hair, dropped layers of clothing to increase ease of movement, wore make-up, created the concept of dating, and became a sexual person. They created what many consider the “ new” or “ modern” woman.

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