

To what extent did  
america "roar" for all  
americans in the  
1920's



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In the first three decades of the twentieth century America became the richest and most powerful country in the world. America had so much money it could lend money to Europe after World War One. The average wage for an American was five times more than the average workers wage in Europe. America's wealth, population and industry boomed.

The 1920's are often known as the roaring twenties in this essay I will find out if this is true. The boom in America had a lot to thank for mass production. Many products were being mass produced quickly and cheaply thanks to the production line which Henry ford started at the start of the 20's this created a massive boom in the economy because not only could cars be produced quickly and cheaply so that more people could afford them, other companies copied the production line idea as well. Henry Ford created the 'model T' car in 1909 (which was only produced slowly until the production line) it was nicknamed the 'Tin lizzie' because it was slow, ugly and difficult to drive but this didn't stop it from becoming Americas favourite and best selling car ever between 1909 and 1928.

The big attraction of the model t was its price. The price of the car kept dropping, the price dropped from \$1200 in 1909 to \$295. Ford was able to do this by cutting the cost of production. As the cars were mass-produced, ford needed fewer workers, which cut the amount of money going out to more workers this also meant that the workers got more money because their were fewer people to pay. The cars were also standardised which meant one colour and one engine size, which cut costs even more.

The car industry helped America boom in the 1920's because it used 20% of America's steel, 8% of her rubber, 75% of her plate glass and 65% of her oil and this led to many oil producers in Texas to become very rich. The car industry benefited a lot of people in the 20's because people could travel to other states so money was made through gas stations, shops and restaurants along side roads, which opened new job opportunities as there was 7 billion gallons of petrol used by cars on the road every year. Hotdog stands and motels also sprang up creating even more jobs. There was one car owned by one in every 4.

5 persons so money was also made by tourism from people travelling around America. The car business was only bad for a few people like the workers in the factories who would age prematurely due to the same boring work every day. Public travel operators and workers suffered because fewer people needed to use buses or trains to get around. The car business improved the opportunities for those who could afford a car. As demand for cheap cars increased the cost of production decreased as factories became more mechanised and they're for required a smaller work force. There were no blacks or Jews allowed working in the production lines and there were no trade unions to support the workers.

The workers id get paid well (\$5 a day) but they had to work long hours, the work was also physically exhausting and they owners of the companies made such a profit they could afford to give the workers more money. The Fordney-McCumber tariff in 1922 was when Americans added a lot of tax onto imported goods such as washing machines, vacuum cleaners cars etc.

so that people bought American produce. This meant that American produce  
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had no competition and sold well. This was good until Americans no longer needed new goods because those who could afford them had them and wouldn't need new for a while.

When American companies tried to sell their produce in other countries they couldn't because they had a lot of tax on them. American companies lost a lot of money because of this and many people lost their jobs because companies had to shut down factories or couldn't afford to employ them. So between 1922-1927 the companies roared because the Americans only bought there merchandise because the goods from other countries were taxed on so greatly that it was much more expensive to buy there products. But after 1927 American companies couldn't sell abroad because the other companies taxed the American products extensively because they had done it to there's, so in that part of the 1920's it didn't roar for the big companies. By the 1920's Hollywood had become the film making capital of the world. This was due to the ticket prices being so low only costing 10-20 cents per ticket.

As there was more money around in the twenties cinema became a very popular leisure activity for adults and children. In 1920 there was 40 million tickets sold each week and by 1930 it was more like 100 million per week. The rise in ticket sales was due to the first talkie ' the jazz singer' released in 1927. Before the ' talkies' there were big names such as Gloria Swanson, Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Buster Keaton and Rudolf Valentino. At 28 Charlie Chaplin signed the first \$1 million dollar film contract to do 8 films.

After the 8 films Charlie had become famous all over the world. During silent movies cinemas would hire piano players to play along with the movie to get across the mood in particular scenes. The movie world roared for all people involved in movies between 1920-1927 but when the first talkie was made people who were in silent movies and didn't have a good voice couldn't get jobs so it didn't roar for them, But it did for the talkie stars. Although ticket prices were cheap there were cinemas for the rich and poor. The cinemas for the lower classes were in worse parts of towns or cities and the cinemas for the more privileged were in better parts of the towns or cities.

Although poorer people could afford tickets to the up town cinemas they couldn't afford the bus fare which could cost up to a dollar so there became a greater divide between the rich and the poor with far greater opportunities opening for the rich. For those who owned land in Hollywood that previously had little value suddenly made their fortune as the rich of the entertainment industry moved in and built palatial homes. This gave rise to an increase in the number and wages of the building contractors in the area. More rich film stars, directors, agents etc required home staff that created more jobs.

Cinema and Hollywood made a change to almost everyone's life in the twenties, it was only the very poor that could not afford the ticket prices. The film industry created 1000's of jobs for all sorts of skills from cameramen to carpenters. The 1920's roared for people who own land, actors and the average person could get a job as thousands were available. It didn't roar for people in silent movies because people were far more interested in the new talkie movies, black actors also couldn't get jobs because of the black hatred. Farming for most people in the industry did not boom farming  
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income dropped from \$22 billion in 1919 to just \$13 billion in 1928 this was thanks to the loss of the European market. During World War One most of Europe was concentrating on the war so couldn't produce its own food so America sold grain, wheat and other food products to European countries.

Many more farms were being opened and worked during this period, as there was a lot of money that could be made. By the mid 1920s Europe no longer needed American supplies as they could make their own and feed themselves. As the European market crashed America didn't need all the grain it was producing because there was competition between farms because there were so many and too much produce so prices were dropped to try and sell the grain. Poorer people benefited from this as they could buy more food than before for lower prices. To make matters worse the population of America was decreasing so there were fewer mouths to feed. When the farming industry was booming farms were taking out loans to buy mass-produced machinery such as combine harvesters and to buy improved fertilisers.

When the European market recovered Europeans no longer needed American food, American farmers could not pay banks back and became in debt. During the bad times the only farms that did well were the ones that produced fresh food such as fresh food and vegetables, which were sold to rich families in cities. The crates of fresh produce rose by 14, 000 in 1920 to 52, 000 crates in 1928. As most farms were finding it hard to sell their produce and make money they had to fire workers off their farms.

Farm owners fired 3/4 of a million blacks who were working on their farms. This led to increased labour for farm owners. The introduction of synthetic fibres such as nylon and the change of fashions, In 1914, 19 yards of fabric were needed to create an average ladies outfit, but by 1928, the fashions had changed and the average amount decreased dramatically to just 7 yards. The farmers were also facing fierce competition from Canadian wheat farms; these are other reason why some of farming industry didn't roar in the 1920's. When Prohibition was introduced in 1920 it was practically impossible to sell grain, as it was not needed to make alcohol so the demand of for grain dropped. The farm industry did roar for most farmers when they were selling their produce to Europeans.

When the European market recovered most farm owners became in dept or didn't make any money. Farming was not good for blacks either because 3/4 of a million of them lost their jobs on farms in the twenties. The only farms that did boom were the ones that produced fresh food and vegetables in states like Florida. Although women made up half of the American population they led very different lives to men. They had restricted lives, they had to wear restrictive clothing, they were expected to stay at home and cook of clean, weren't allowed to smoke or kiss in public and had to have a chaperone with them if they went out with boyfriends. Things were changing in the twenties, women were given the vote in all states and by 1929 a handful of women were elected due to this.

One of them was Eleanor Roosevelt. Other than a handful not many women broke into politics because they didn't have much access, no women had any experience of politics and they were not encouraged to become

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politicians. In 1920 only 2 1/4 million women in America had jobs but by 1929 more like 10 million had jobs, 24% more than in 1920. Employers liked to give women jobs because they were cheaper labour, which meant they could employ more people, or keep it for themselves. Many women began to work in 1917 in war factories and gained experience with factory work for the first time.

Middle class and rich women took advantage of mass produced items such as cars, vacuum cleaners and washing machines which made every day chores easier and gave them time to get jobs, socialise or go and see some entertainment. In urban areas young women strayed away from the traditional way of life and begun wearing daring clothes, smoke and drank with men in public, went out with out chaperons and some had unmarred sex. These girls were known as flappers. Flappers would shock people by having short bobbed hair that was cut in men's barbers, wore short skirts and backless gowns and wore silk stockings rolled just above the knee.

Many people thought that they were carrying future generation to destruction. Life in the twenties would have been good for women if they had the money to go out and buy the latest in mechanical equipment that mass production had to offer to help with house work. Young women also got to experience new freedoms if they could afford to do it. If you were poor your life would have stayed the same because you couldn't afford modern luxuries to help with house work so you wouldn't have spare time for a job or going out. In the 1920's women got jobs ahead of men because they could be paid much less. The twenties were the golden years for spectator sports such as baseball, boxing, basketball and American football.

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Radio broadcasts, newspapers and magazines helped turn sports stars into national heroes. Many of Americas best ever athletes won fame and fortune in the 20s and set almost unbreakable records. Babe Ruth in baseball hit more home runs than anyone before him, and Bobby Jones, the greatest amateur golfer of the time won both the American and British amateur and open in the same year. Fans of the sports would have benefited from the entertainment. The American sport industry would have benefited because they would gain publicity and their standard of athletes would of increased and the athletes would have made lots of money.

The number of spectators of professional sport grew in the twenties, due to more money being around which made them one of America's favourite leisure activities. Entertainment sprung up in every town in strange forms. People would enter marathon dancing to see how long they could dance for without stopping. People would enter flagpole-sitting contests and see how long they could sit on a flagpole without coming down. Shipwreck Kelly' was the champion sitting for a record time of 23 days. Charles Lindbergh was America's big hero of the twenties; he was the first person to fly solo over the Atlantic on the 20th of May 1927.

Lindbergh flew because a New York businessman offered a \$25, 000 prize to whoever flew non-stop from New York to Paris. After Lindbergh's return he became a national hero receiving 75, 000 telegrams and a tickertape welcome. On a parade through New York businessmen through paper torn up paper and confetti out of windows of buildings as their hero walked passed.

Americans regarded Lindbergh a hero because he flew for 33 hours over the Atlantic with 2 sandwiches, 2 pints of water, no map, no parachute and an <https://assignbuster.com/to-what-extent-did-america-roar-for-all-americans-in-the-1920s/>

inflatable raft. Americans regarded him such a hero that they named many streets after their hero. But not everything was great for Lindbergh after his arrival; he couldn't have his clothes washed as they would be kept as souvenirs, he could not write out cheques as they would be kept for the signature and six years after the stunt his baby son was kidnapped and brutally murdered.

Sport and entertainment was good for most people in the twenties, a lot of people could afford tickets to sporting events and those people who couldn't would know someone with a radio so that they could listen to games. A few people made a lot of money from sport like the players, coaches and the owners of teams. The 1920s were the years when life for blacks either began to get better or got worse. Blacks trademark music of the twenties became America's favourite music of the 20s.

the popularity of jazz made some blacks into big stars e. g. Duke Ellington who became rich and famous because of jazz. The black neighbourhood of Harlem in New York became the centre of musical creativity. Paul Robeson fought back against prejudice to become one of Americas most celebrated entertainers.

Jazz roared for blacks because it gave them a way to express themselves through music, created new thinking towards blacks as they were such talented performers they gained some respect from whites, but only a few blacks made money through jazz. Books, poems and magazines like the messenger, crusader and challenge raised black pride. Black poets like Sterling and Langston Brown raised the profile for black writers in the twenties.

Marcus Garvey founded the universal Negro improvement association in New York, which helped blacks set up their own businesses such as grocery stores, laundrettes and restaurants in the twenties.

This helped raise black life expectancy from 45 to 48 from 1900 to 1930. But a whites life expectancy was increased from 54 to 59 in the same period.

Black life also had its dark sides, blacks lived in worse areas and homes then whites but paid higher rents. Blacks also had worse schooling and health services then whites. Blacks also suffered prejudice from other racial groups in their communities; gangs would beat them in parks, beaches and playgrounds in Irish and Polish areas. They would also receive hostile behaviour from poor whites.

This all resulted in the ghetto areas where one racial group is concentrated and others excluded. The worst and most famous racial group was the Ku Klux Klan (the KKK) who set out to destroy blacks in America. The KKK roared for the leaders because there were over a million members by the mid 1920's and it cost \$10 dollars to join so it made leaders very rich. They also had merchandise like knives, robes and hoods that they wore in meetings and so they were disguised for attacks. The blacks suffered at the hands of the KKK so it didnt roar for them.

Blacks did not receive proper education and most of the jobs available to them were menial and degrading. Poor housing and education led to fewer opportunities and unrest. Prohibition affected America in a big way it introduced gangsters, speakeasies and helped with the crash of the farming

industry. Gangsters were in every town or city after the prohibition laws were introduced, they would control smuggling and selling of alcohol.

Smugglers would bring alcohol into America illegally and were known as bootleggers. Alcohol was sold in speakeasies, which were given their name because people had to be quiet while in them. There were 15,000 drinking saloons and there were 32,000 speakeasies in one city after prohibition was introduced. The government had prohibition officers but they were badly paid so gangsters would bribe them to turn a blind eye. One of the most famous gangsters was Al Capone who practically controlled Chicago and made \$60,000,000 through selling illegal alcohol. Prohibition also had a devastating effect on the farming industry, which suffered when it couldn't sell grain, as it was not legal to brew alcohol anymore.

Prohibition was a good thing for those people who made money from selling alcohol illegally and for those families that didn't have much money and couldn't afford men spending their earnings on drinking. It also was good for the car industry, as gangsters needed cars as getaway vehicles. Prohibition was bad though for the farming industry because there was not a lot of demand for grain. It was also bad for the few that died from illegally brewed alcohol known as moonshine. Vast profits were made because of the large demand and rich people would pay a lot for illegally imported alcohol. Illegal alcohol made an entire empire in its self-making \$60,000,000 in one city.

Firstly the campaigners benefited by the prohibition but then there was a huge increase in crime because of the prohibition and then their husbands started to drink illegally so it was worse in the end. The prohibition agents

benefited from the prohibition as they got jobs and some of them got huge amount of money from bribes. The Wall Street crash in 1929 was the thing that stopped the roar in America. Many people in America bought and sold shares in the twenties as they thought it was a good and easy way of making money. Most people didn't know what they were doing and thought that the value of shares would keep rising. This was all fine while companies that sold their shares were doing well and everyone made a bit of money from playing the stock market.

Twenty five million Americans were buying and selling stocks. When a few Americans who knew what they were doing saw that the shares were going to begin to loose value and sold them the rest of the country panicked and frantically tried to sell their shares. This caused all shares to drop in value dramatically and become worth next to nothing. When Wall Street crashed in October 1929 many Americans lost their savings and owed huge amounts to banks that they couldn't pay back. As Americans were ' buying on the margin' (when they only pay deposit which was 10% of the total amount the shares were worth) they were owed money that nobody had.

This was partly thanks to the credit system, when people spent money that they didn't have thinking they would be able to pay it back later This made banks go bankrupt. Many businesses went bankrupt as their shares were worth nothing and no one had money to by their products. America may have not been so badly if were not for the bad banking system. A lot of banks in America were small local banks so all the money people had in their savings was kept in the bank and loaned to people on demand.

The effects of this were that when Wall Street crashed and people demanded their savings the banks didn't have them because people had lost the money they had been loaned when they were doing well in the stock market.

Another reason why America did badly when Wall Street crashed was credit.

A lot of people were spending money that they didn't have thinking they would pay it back later so when wall street crashed people who used credit to pay for shares couldn't pay their banks what they owed them. This eventually led to the great depression that affected the world when America wanted the money back that it lent to other countries when times were good.

The wall street crash was bad for every one in America at the time and it also effected the world soon after. Shares were good for a lot of people before the Wall Street crash as they made money by buying shares for low prices and selling them on for a lot more. Shares seemed to be good for everyone in the period between 1920-1928 but the prise of the companies on the stock market were to high the companies were not worth as much as what was imagined. Everyone thought it was a easy way to make money but when the market collapsed everyone suffered a lose in money most people became bankrupt.

America roared for a lot of people and became the most powerful country in the in the world but life was bad for many throughout the twenties. Your life would have changed if you could afford it in the twenties.