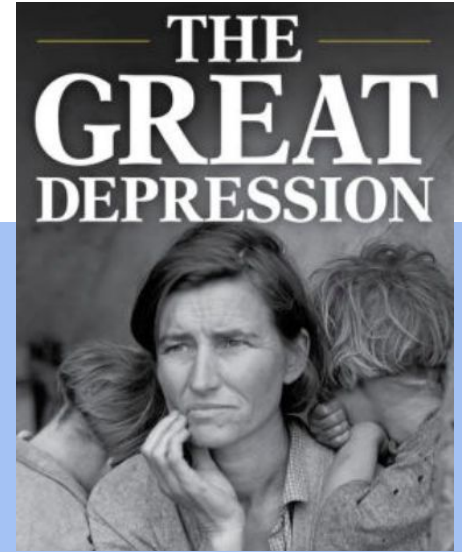


# THE 1920S & 1930S IN FILM



# TODAY'S FOCUS:

WHILE YOU'RE WATCHING EACH MOVIE CLIP,  
CONSIDER HOW THE MOVIES REFLECT  
(CONNECT TO) THE THEMES OF THE 1920S &



# THE 1920S: A DECADE OF PROMISE



# ECONOMIC GROWTH

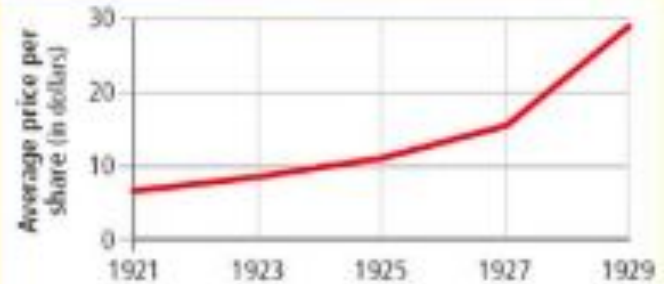


# ECONOMIC GROWTH



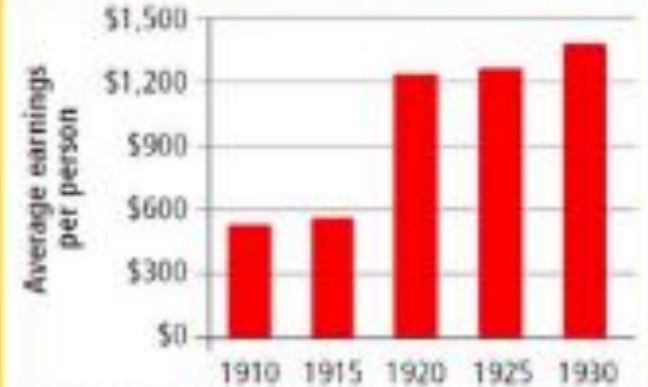
- National income (the amount that people earned) grew 20% between 1919-1929
- The value of stocks rose from \$27 billion in 1925 to \$87 billion by October 1929
- Wages also increased more than 40%.

Average Price of Selected Stocks, 1921–1929



SOURCE: Standard and Poor's

Earnings of Nonagricultural Employees, 1910–1930



SOURCE: Historical Statistics of the United States

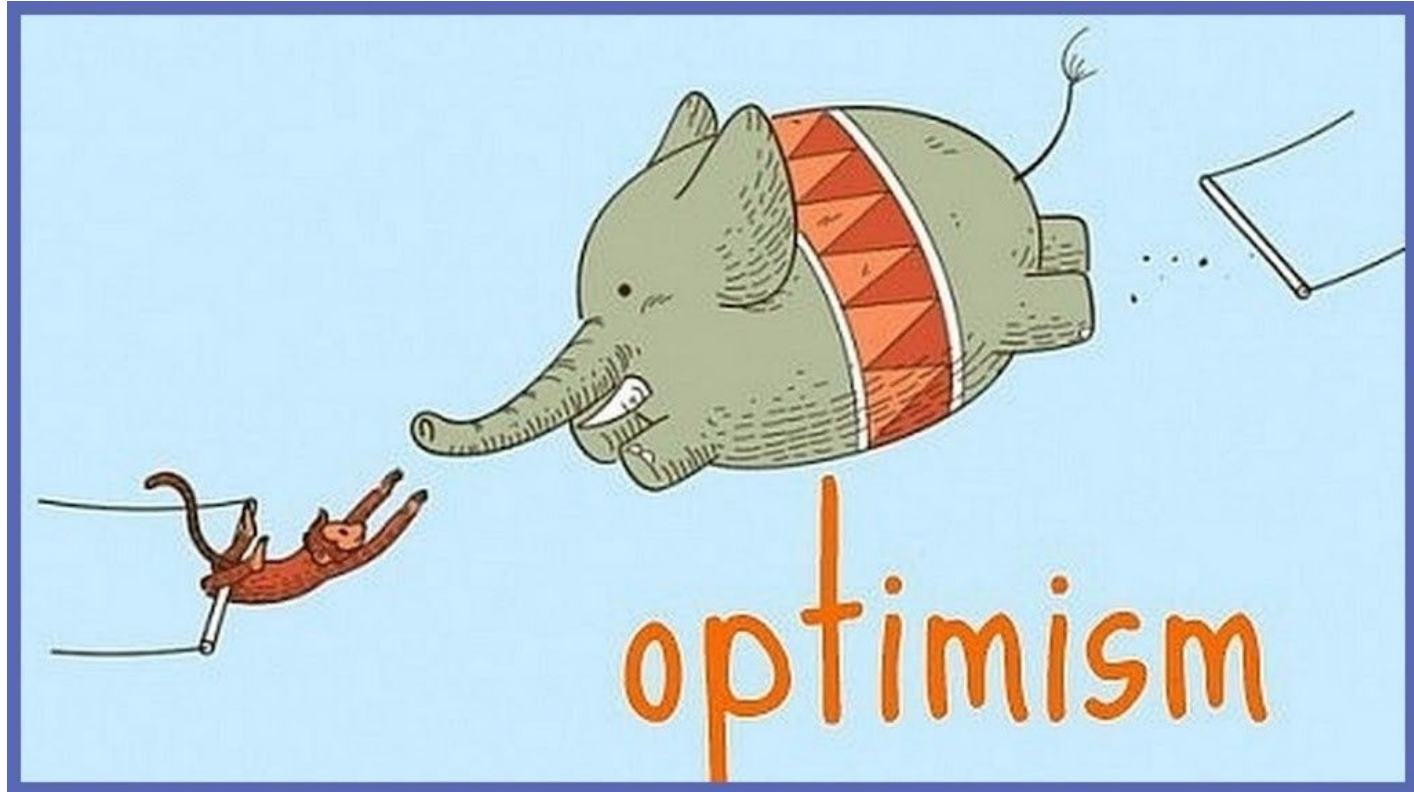
# ECONOMIC GROWTH



- With economic growth came higher wages and a desire to spend \$.
  - People wanted the “good life” after the hardships of World War I.
  - Inventions like the car, vacuum, radio, washing machine, electric sewing machine, etc. became “must haves.”
- Millions of new businesses were created to build things, which created new job opportunities, which led to an even bigger increase in wages.



THE 1920S: ECONOMIC GROWTH → AN AGE OF OPTIMISM



# THE 1920S: AN AGE OF OPTIMISM

- In the 1920s, the lines between rich/poor & people who lived in the country/city blurred.
  - More people moved from the country to the city.
  - Inventions like the radio & car helped to break down geographical barriers
    - people could travel more easily and people everywhere could listen to concerts, sporting events, etc. - didn't matter if you lived in a rural area
  - Thanks to credit, cash was no longer needed to buy products
    - poor people could now buy products that previously only the rich could have afforded

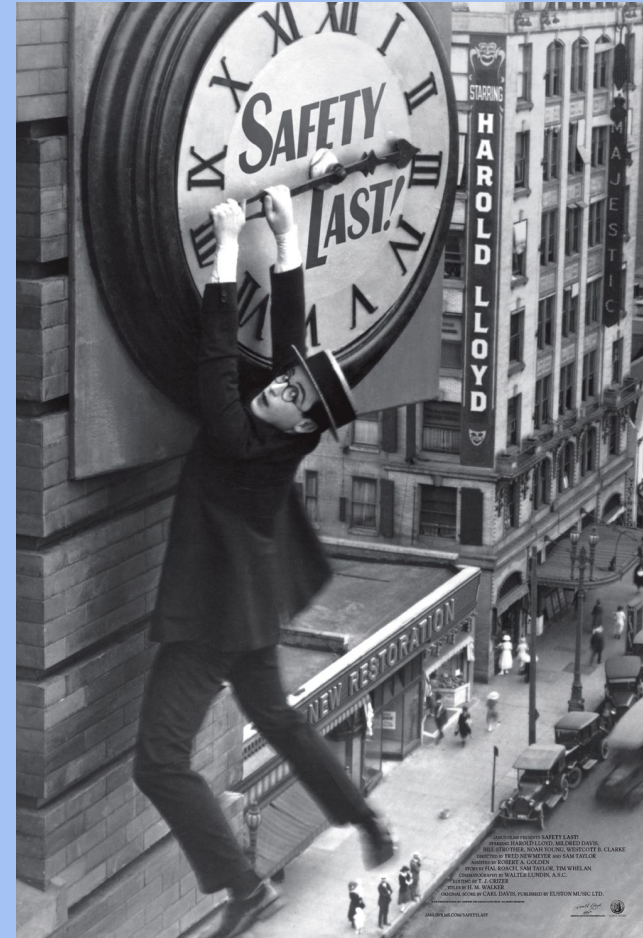


Buy today  
PAY LATER



# SAFETY LAST (1923)

- PLOT: Country boy (Harold Lloyd) heads to the big city to seek success (and make enough \$ to marry his sweetheart) and finds that life in the big city is more difficult than he imagined.
- While working as a clerk in a department store, he talks the manager into offering \$1000 to anyone who can bring more customers to the store. He then arranges for a friend to climb the face of the store building as a publicity stunt. Unfortunately, the friend is a wanted man, and when police show up, Lloyd must make the climb, himself.





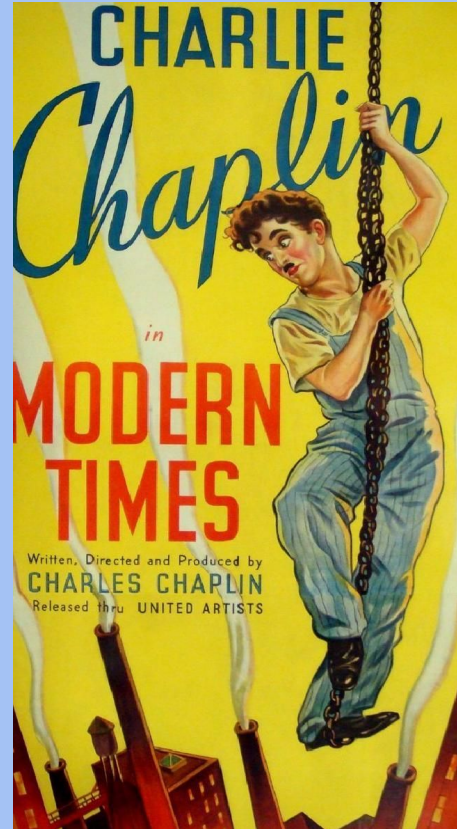
# CHANGES IN WORK: THE ASSEMBLY LINE

- In the '20s Americans made more money & had the option to buy things on credit, so there was more DEMAND for products.
- To meet that increased demand, the assembly line helped speed up the process of making products.



# MODERN TIMES (1936)

- Charlie Chaplin's last “silent” film
- Chaplin got the idea for the film from a young reporter who told him about the production line system in Detroit, which was making its workers nervous and unhappy.
- PLOT: The story follows the life of a factory worker on the assembly line. His job has him screwing nuts faster and faster as part of the assembly line. He is also subjected to new, untested inventions that are meant to increase efficiency. The job pushes him over the edge.
- The film was a commentary on the challenges of modern life, the machine age and progress.









# A DECADE OF PLAY



# THE 1920s: A DECADE OF PLAY

Thanks to increased wages, returning soldiers' sense that life was short and should be enjoyed, and rapidly changing social norms, many Americans made it their goal to live life to the fullest in the '20s...



# THE 1920s: A DECADE OF PLAY

Popular pastimes in the 1920s:

- Dancing & dance marathons
- Flagpole sitting (!)
- Drinking
- Watching movies
- Sports (Babe Ruth, etc.)
- Listening to jazz music
- Mini golf



Back then it was part of the rage to  
set endurance records.



# THE "NEW" WOMAN (FLAPPERS)





# CHANGING STYLES (LOOK) FOR WOMEN

Pre-1920s styles



1920s styles (the flapper)





# CHANGING ATTITUDES/ BEHAVIOR OF WOMEN



“The flapper attitude was characterized by truthfulness, fast living, & sexual behavior. Flappers seemed to cling to youth as if it were to leave them at any moment. They took risks and were reckless. They wanted to be different so they smoked, something only men had done previously. Flappers drank alcohol. Some even carried hip-flasks full so as to have it on hand. Cars were fast and risky - perfect for the flapper attitude. Flappers not only insisted on riding in them; they drove them. Unfortunately for their parents, flappers didn't just use cars to ride in. The back seat became a popular location for the new popular sexual activity, petting. Flappers flaunted their sexuality. It was a radical change from their parents' and grandparents' generations.”

(Source: Jennifer Rosenberg, “Flappers in the Roaring Twenties,” About.com, <http://history1900s.about.com/od/1920s/a/flappers.htm>)

# IT (1927)

*"It is that peculiar quality which some persons possess, which attracts others of the opposite sex. The possessor of "IT" must be absolutely unselfconscious, and must have the magnetic "sex appeal" which is irresistible."*

## ● PLOT:

- Shop girl Betty Lou Spence (Clara Bow) has a crush on her handsome employer, Cyrus Waltham, Jr., the new manager of and heir to the "world's largest store."
- They belong to different social classes and he is already romantically linked to a blonde socialite. A bit of plotting on Bow's part and a lot of meaningful glances have their intended effect and they find themselves on a date at Coney Island and later talking marriage. Not surprisingly, there are misunderstandings that put the whole relationship at risk.
- The question is, can a woman who loves Coney Island hot dogs and a man who dines at the Ritz ever meet halfway?





# PROHIBITION & RISE IN CRIME



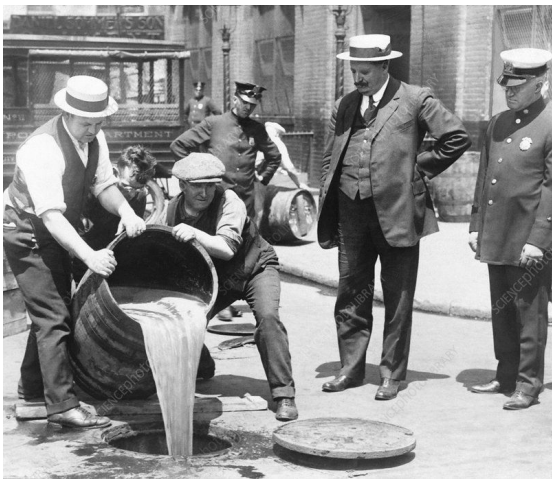
# PROHIBITION



In June 1919, the 18th Amendment went into effect, which prohibited the manufacture, sale & transport of intoxicating liquors.







The Prohibition Bureau employed 1,500 federal agents and local police to enforce the law.

→ Most law enforcement agents were overworked, poorly paid & therefore easily bribed.



By 1925, in New York City alone there were estimated to be anywhere from 30,000 to 100,000 speakeasies!



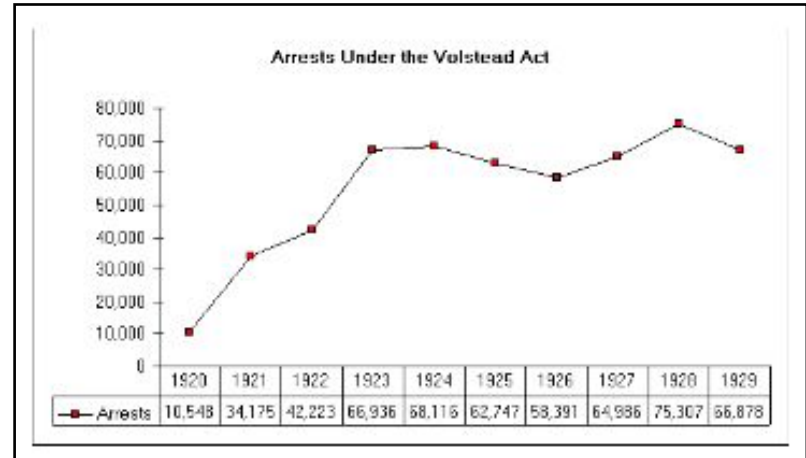
Many Americans, determined to drink, experimented with making their own home brews, bought bootleg (illegally made) alcohol, found ways to trick Prohibition agents & hung out at speakeasies (illegal bars.)



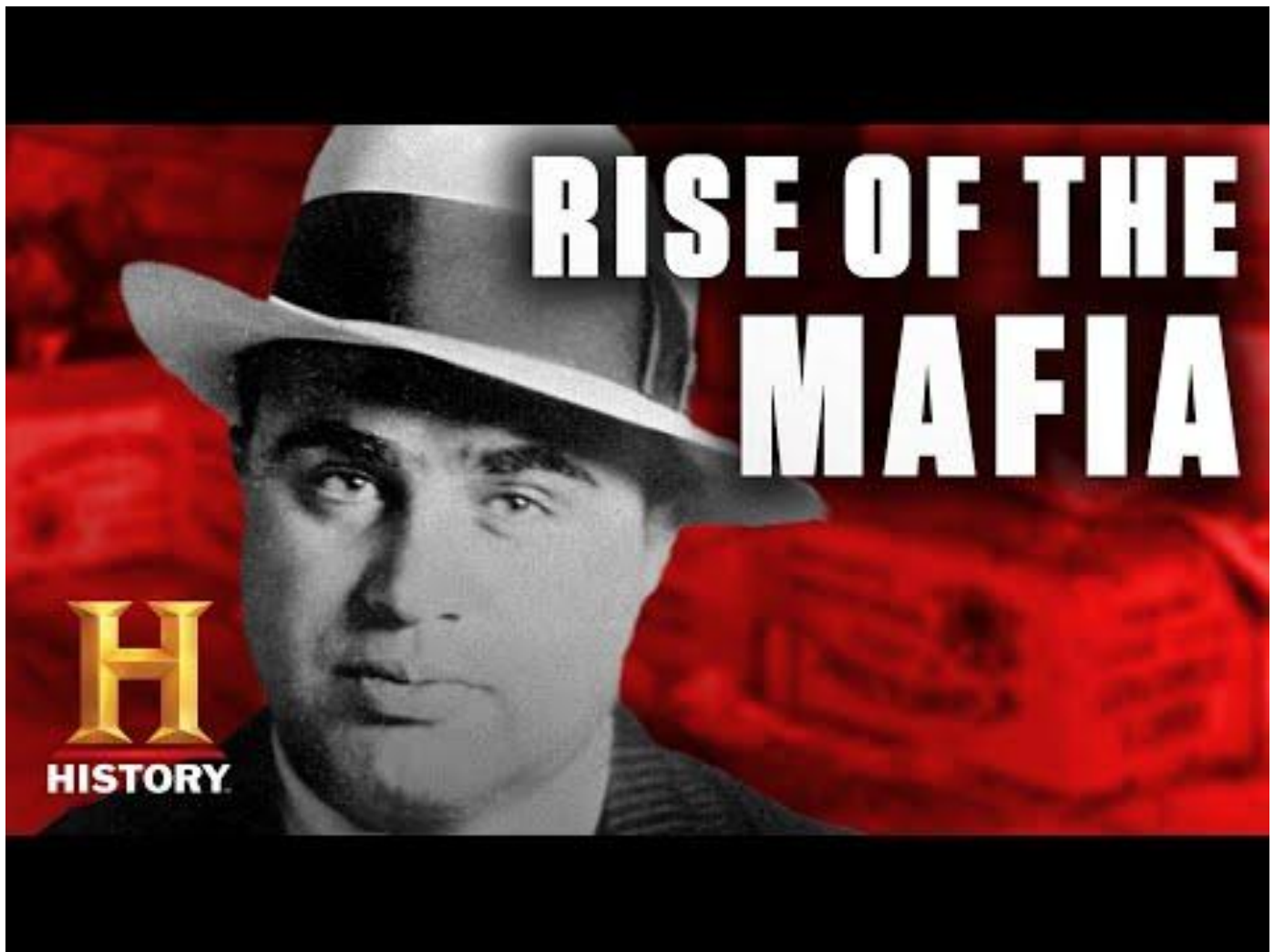


## In the 1920s...

- Police funding: increased \$11.4 million
- Arrests for Prohibition violations: increased 102+%
- Arrests for drunkenness & disorderly conduct: increased 41%
- Arrests for drunken driving: increased 81%
- Homicides, assault & battery: increased 13%
- Number of federal convicts: increased 561%
- Federal prison population: increased 361%
- Total federal expenditures on prisons: increased 1000+%



PROHIBITION  
CONTRIBUTED  
TO THE RISE OF  
ORGANIZED  
CRIME



# PROHIBITION AND THE RISE OF ORGANIZED CRIME

- The illegal sale/production of alcohol was connected to organized crime in many cities.
  - Criminals bribed mayors, police, judges, and other public officials to look the other way.
- Al Capone (Chicago) was the most famous mob figure - his power and wealth was tied to the sale of illegal alcohol.
  - His organization grossed an estimated \$60 million in 1927 (which is more 750 million in today's money)! Most of the profits came from distributing beer.
- During Prohibition, \$200 million worth of business was transferred from the brewing industry & bars into the pockets of bootleggers and gangsters.





# SCARFACE: THE SHAME OF THE NATION (1932)

- The film was based on the 1930 novel Scarface. The novel was inspired by the exploits of Chicago's Depression Era gangster Alfonso Capone (nicknamed "Scarface.")
- PLOT: Tony Camonte is a violent and ambitious gangster determined to rise in the Chicago underworld. After Tony kills his boss, Big Louie, on behalf of South Side mobster Johnny Lovo, he's promoted to #2 under Lovo. Tony later steals Lovo's girlfriend, takes out North Side boss O'Hara and pushes Lovo out.
- Al Capone himself, according to the director, threw the director a special party in Chicago, honoring him for making *Scarface*. (Not only did Capone see *Scarface* five or six times, but he had his own print of it.)









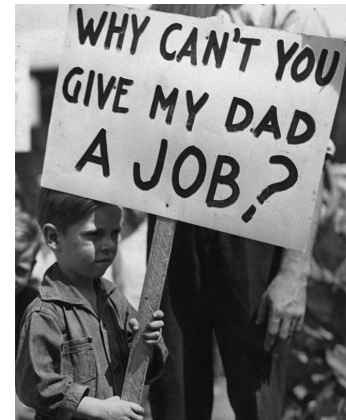
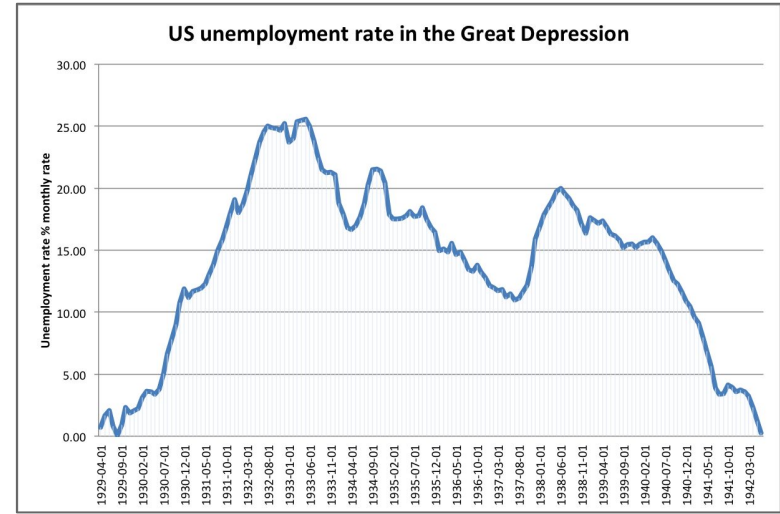


# THE GREAT DEPRESSION



# THE GREAT DEPRESSION

- On Oct. 29, 1929, the stock market crashed.
  - Investors lost nearly \$30 billion that day and in the days that immediately followed.
- Eventually, the crash wound up affecting people who never owned stock.
- As income & profits fell, factories closed and thousands of workers lost their jobs or had their pay cut.
  - For example, Henry Ford shut down his Detroit car factories putting over 75,000 people out of work.
  - HOW DID THAT THEN IMPACT THE REST OF DETROIT? (THINK!)
- By 1932, 25% of the U.S. workforce was unemployed.



# THE GREAT DEPRESSION - DIFFERENT RESPONSES

## ESCAPISM:



escapism (n):  
an inclination to or habit  
of retreating from  
unpleasant or unacceptable  
reality, as through  
diversion or fantasy

## REALISM:



Realism (n): the attitude or practice of  
accepting a situation as it is & being  
prepared to deal with it accordingly. OR the  
quality or fact of representing a person,  
thing, or situation accurately or in a way  
that is true to life.

# ESCAPISM: BRIGHT EYES (1934)



Shirley Temple was a beloved child actress who was discovered at the age of 3 and who starred in a series of films in the 1930s and early 1940s.

*Bright Eyes* was the first feature film to highlight Temple's talents as a singer, dancer & actress.

**PLOT:** An orphan (Shirley Temple) is taken in by a snobbish family at the insistence of their rich, grumpy uncle, even as her devoted pilot godfather fights for custody.

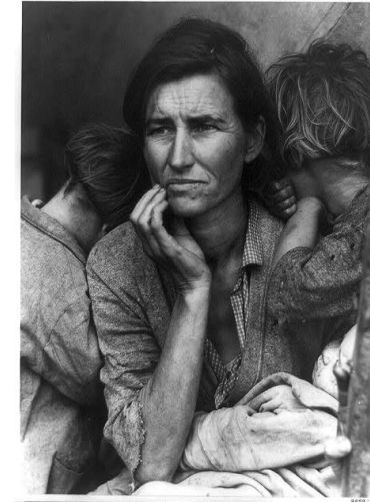
*To put Temple's films in context, her biographer, Anne Edwards, said, "This was mid-Depression, and schemes [existed to care for] the needy... But they all required endless paperwork and demeaning, hours-long [lines], at the end of which an exhausted social worker dealt with each person as a faceless number. Shirley offered a natural solution: to open one's heart."*





# IMPACT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION ON FAMILIES

- When people lost their jobs they could not afford to pay rent/mortgages -> rates of eviction & foreclosure soared
  - More than 200,000 people were evicted in NYC in 1930.
- Many Americans blamed themselves for their troubles:
  - People felt ashamed that they could no longer support themselves.
  - Men forced to stand in a breadline would bend their head low so that no one would recognize them.
- Many men deserted their families
  - By 1940, 1.5 million women were living apart from their husbands
- Number of children in orphanages increased 50% in the first 2 years of the Depression and more than 200,000 homeless children wandered the country

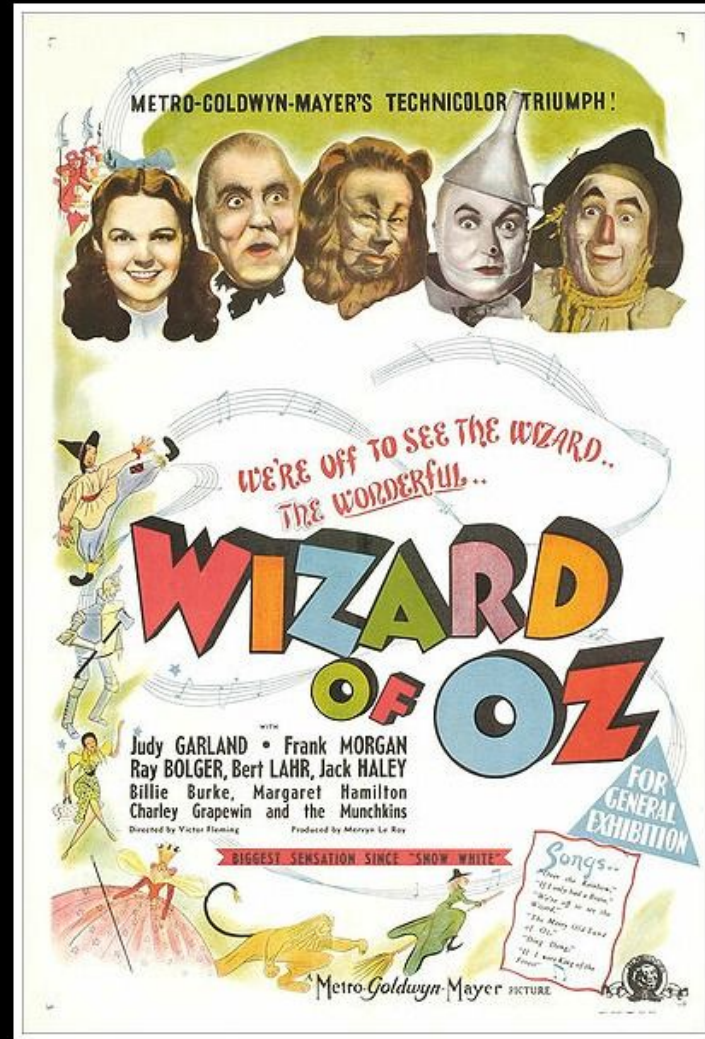




# REALISM:

## WIZARD OF OZ (1939)

- The movie was based on a 1900 book. Known for its use of Technicolor, fantasy storytelling, musical score and memorable characters. It was nominated for 6 Academy Awards, including Best Picture, but lost to *Gone with the Wind*.
- PLOT: Dorothy Gale (Judy Garland) is swept away from a farm in Kansas to a magical land of Oz in a tornado. She sets off on a mission with her new friends to see the Wizard who can help her return home to Kansas and help her friends as well.

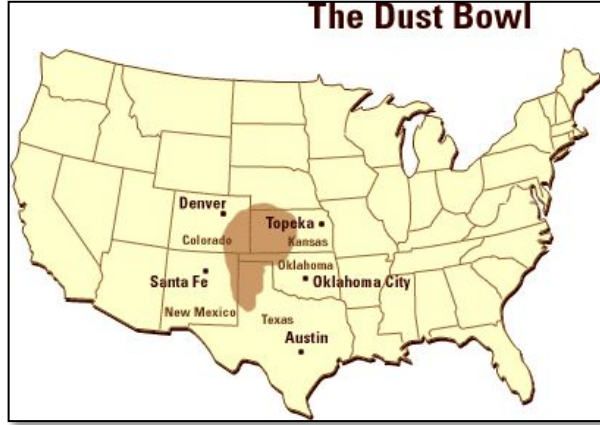








# THE DUST BOWL



- Farmers were already struggling financially when drought hit and turned the center of the country into what was called the “*Dust Bowl*.”
- Terrible weather & low prices for farm products led 60% of people in the Dust Bowl to lose their farms.



**May 1933** --  
A three-day dust storm blows an estimated 350 million tons of soil off of the terrain of the West and Southwest and deposits it as far east as New York and Boston. Some East Coast cities were forced to ignite street lamps during the day to see through the blowing dust.



**F** HD



MOVIECLIPS.COM





Consider how each of the characters might have connected with different feelings Americans had in the 1930s:

- Dorothy
- Scarecrow
- Cowardly Lion
- Tin Man