

### The 1920s & 1930s in Film

Directions: While you're watching each movie clip, think about how the movies **reflect** the themes of the 1920s & 1930s.

What does **reflect** mean?



### The 1920s: A Decade of Promise

#### I. Economic Growth

A. What proof do we have that the economy improved and grew in the 1920s?

1. National income (the amount of \$ people earn) grew 20% between 1919-1929.
2. The value of stocks rose from \$27 billion in 1925 to \$87 billion by Oct. 1929.
3. AND what happened to wages?

B. As people's income went up, they spent that money.

1. They'd suffered through WWI and were looking for the "good life."
2. What did they buy? (LIST 2-3 examples)

C. The economic growth of the 1920s created an **age of optimism**: Lines between rich & poor, country & city blurred

1. More people moved to the cities
2. The car made it possible to travel and the radio made it so people who didn't live in the city could still listen to entertainment like concerts & sporting events
3. Thanks to credit, cash was no longer needed (people could buy now and pay later)

#### II. FILM: "Safety Last" (1923)

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on the economic growth of the 1920s?

III. Changes in work: the assembly line

- A. In the '20s Americans made more money & had the option to buy things on credit, so there was more DEMAND for products.
- B. To meet that increased demand, the **assembly line** helped speed up the process of making products.
  - 1. WHAT IS AN ASSEMBLY LINE? (define/explain)

IV. **FILM: "Modern Times" (1936)**

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on the assembly line?

V. A decade of play

- A. 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...
  - 1. Give 2 examples of what people did to have fun in the 1920s:

VI. The "New" Woman (Flappers)

- A. What is a **flapper**? (describe their look, attitude)

B. How were flappers DIFFERENT from women before them?

VII. FILM: "It" (1927)

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on the changes women experienced in the 1920s?

VIII. Prohibition and Rising Crime

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

1. What does that mean? What could you NOT do according to the 18th Amendment?

2. What was the ONE thing you COULD still do?

B. In spite of the federal gov't's efforts to enforce the Prohibition laws, millions of Americans broke the law.

1. Support this statement with 2 examples of HOW people broke the law:

2. What statistical evidence do we have that people broke the law? Give ONE example:

- C. Prohibition contributed to a rise in **organized crime** (the mafia/mob.)
  - 1. The illegal sale/production of alcohol was tied to organized crime in many cities.
    - a) Criminals bribed mayors, police, judges, and other public officials to look the other way.
  - 2. **Al Capone** was the most famous mob figure - his power and wealth was tied to the sale of illegal alcohol.

**IX. FILM: “Scarface: The Shame of the Nation” (1932)**

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on Prohibition and crime in the 1920s?

**The 1930s: The Great Depression**

- I. On Oct. 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. Investors lost nearly \$30 billion that day and in the days that immediately followed.
- II. 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.
  - A. 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!)

B. By 1932, \_\_\_\_\_% of the U.S. workforce was unemployed.

III. People reacted differently to the Great Depression. Some wanted to escape and others were honest and real about it. Pop Culture reflected/mirrored that.

DEFINE (in your own words): Escapism	DEFINE (in your own words): Realism

IV. **ESCAPISM in FILM: “Bright Eyes” (1934)**

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on people’s desire to ESCAPE the hardships of life in the 1930s?

X. **REALISM in FILM: “The Wizard of Oz” (1939)**

What is the movie about? (PLOT)	How does this movie connect to the notes we took above on what it was really like to live in the 1930s? (REALISM)