

A Difficult Transition

The service of African Americans during the war renewed hopes for equal rights for African Americans. However, the reality changed little.

“It is necessary now as never before that the black man press his claims as an American citizen. . . . The Government laid claim to him, both body and soul, and used him as freely as if he were the equal of any other man behind the guns. . . . The path he had to walk was just as rough, the load he had to carry was just as heavy, and the life he gave just as sweet, as that of any other man who laid his all upon the altar. He should contend, therefore, for every privilege, every comfort, every right which other men enjoy.”

—Dr. A. A. Graham, African American leader

▲ Members of the famous 369th Infantry Regiment are welcomed home in New York City, 1919.

Effects of the War

Objectives

- Describe the problems Americans faced immediately after the war.
- Analyze how these problems contributed to the Red Scare.
- Understand how the war changed America's role in world affairs.

Terms and People

influenza

inflation

Red Scare

Palmer Raids

Nicola Sacco

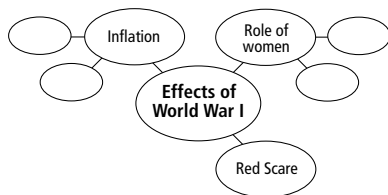
Bartolomeo Vanzetti

Warren G. Harding

creditor nation

NoteTaking

Reading Skill: Identify Main Ideas As you read, identify and record the main ideas of this section in a concept web like the one below.



Why It Matters The end of World War I produced an unstable international order. The loss of territory and the harsh reparations imposed by the Allies encouraged a strong desire for revenge in Germany. Meanwhile, Lenin's Soviet Russia threatened revolution throughout the industrial world. In the United States, the horrors of the war along with widespread fear of communists and radicals led Americans to question their political, if not their economic, role in the world. **Section Focus Question:** What political, economic, and social effects did World War I have on the United States?

America Adjusts to Peace

World War I produced significant economic, social, political, and cultural changes in America and throughout the world. This led to important, occasionally painful, adjustments.

Flu Epidemic Grips the Nation The movement from war to peace would have been difficult even in the best of times. But the end of 1918 and 1919 were not the best of times. In September 1918, an unusually deadly form of the **influenza**, or flu, virus appeared. Research in recent years shows that the 1918 influenza virus was originally a bird flu that mutated to spread to humans. Many historians now believe that the virus originated in the United States, then traveled around the world. Once the virus began, it spread like a wildfire and killed millions worldwide like a predator feasting on its prey. The great influenza pandemic, coming on the heels of the Great War, gave a sense of doom and dread to people around the globe.

The Influenza Pandemic Hits the United States

The influenza attack of 1918 was a pandemic, an epidemic that affects many people all over the world. Oddly, the virus hit men and women in their twenties and thirties the hardest, rather than children and the elderly. The flu pandemic killed 550,000 Americans, including 50,000 soldiers. Worldwide, it probably claimed between 50 and 100 million lives.

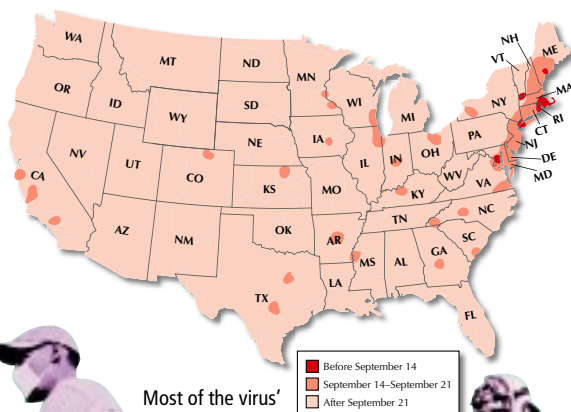
Describe how the influenza virus spread in the United States.



People who contracted the influenza virus (above) often complained of “body aches so intense they felt like bones breaking.” Many people avoided public places, and others, like these ballplayers (right), wore masks when they went outside.



The Spread of Influenza in the United States



Women and African Americans Confront New Realities Women and African Americans made significant advances during the war. However, the end of the war also spelled the end of wartime economic opportunities for both groups. A postwar recession, or economic slowdown, created a competitive job market. By 1920, there were fewer women in the workforce than there had been in 1910.

In northern industrial cities, African American workers vied with returning soldiers for jobs and housing. During the hot summer of 1919, race riots erupted in cities throughout the country. The worst, in Chicago, was triggered by the drowning of a young black man by whites, and went on for 13 days. In 1921, violence erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma, when armed African American men—many of them returning veterans—tried to protect a young black man from lynching. By the time the Tulsa race riots were over, at least 10 whites and 26 African Americans were dead. In one African American neighborhood, white rioters burned 35 city blocks to the ground.

Inflation Leads to Labor Unrest During the war, **inflation**, or rising prices, had been held in check. After the conflict, Americans rushed to buy consumer goods rather than war bonds. The scarcity of these goods, coupled with widespread demand, caused inflation. During the war, the price of corn, wheat, cotton,

cattle, and other agricultural goods had risen, encouraged by Hoover's policies. After the war, prices fell sharply, making it difficult for farmers to pay their mortgages or buy what they needed for the next growing season. This began a long period of tough times for farmers.

Industrial workers also felt the pain of inflation when their wages did not buy as much as they had during the war. In 1919, more than 4 million workers, or 20 percent of the workforce, went on strike at one time or another. Demanding rewards for their wartime patriotism, workers struck for higher wages and shorter workdays. In Boston, even the police force struck. The workers won some of the strikes, but they lost far more. When some strikes turned violent, the pro-management press blamed the presence of radicals among the strike leaders.



Checkpoint How did the economic situation after the war lead to labor unrest?

The Red Scare

The reaction against labor was partly spurred by a wave of fear of radicals and communists. The emergence of the Soviet Union as a communist nation, which began in 1917, fed these fears. Communist ideology called for an international workers' revolution as a prelude to the death of capitalism. To this end, Soviet leader Vladimir Lenin encouraged and supported revolutions outside of his country. In Central and Eastern Europe, a series of communist revolts did break out, making it seem like the worldwide revolution was starting.

Fear of Communism Starts the Red Scare This revolutionary activity abroad, coupled with strikes across the United States, prompted the first American **Red Scare**, a wave of widespread fear of suspected communists and radicals thought to be plotting revolution within the United States. Real revolutionary activity inside America gave substance to the scare. Authorities discovered bombs mailed to important industrialists and government officials, including Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer. Suspected anarchists, members of a radical political movement, exploded bombs in cities across America.

As the leading law-enforcement official, Palmer mounted a broad offensive against radicals in the United States in 1919 and 1920. In a series of raids in early 1920, known as the **Palmer Raids**, police arrested thousands of people, some who were radicals and some who were simply immigrants from southern or Eastern Europe. Most were never charged or tried for a crime. The government then deported hundreds of radicals.

To many, these actions seemed to attack the liberties that Americans held most dear. A group of people in New York City formed the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in 1920 to protect these liberties. The ACLU tried to do this by becoming involved in important court cases. To this end, the ACLU became involved in one of America's most controversial court cases: the trial of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti.

Sacco and Vanzetti Are Executed Nicola Sacco (SAH koh) and Bartolomeo Vanzetti (van ZEHT ee) were Italian immigrants and known anarchists. They were charged with shooting and killing two men during a holdup at a shoe factory in a town

Vocabulary Builder

emergence—(ee MER juhns) *n.*
rise or development

Guilty or Innocent?

Rosina Sacco visits her husband, Nicola Sacco, and Bartolomeo Vanzetti as the two men wait in the prisoners' dock during their famous trial. Debate whether both were truly guilty still continues.





The Wall Street Bombing

On September 16, 1920, just days after Sacco and Vanzetti's murder indictment, a horsecart filled with dynamite exploded in the financial heart of New York City. The explosion and flying debris killed about 40 people and caused the New York Stock Exchange to close early that day. Investigators suspected that anarchists had staged the bombing, but the culprits were never found.

near Boston. Eyewitnesses of the event said the robbers "looked Italian." Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested and charged with the crime. Even though the ACLU provided defense counsel, the two men were found guilty in a swift and decisive trial, despite the fact that there was little hard evidence against them. Some prominent legal scholars, intellectuals, and liberal politicians charged that the convictions were based more on Sacco and Vanzetti's ethnicity and political beliefs than on the facts of the crime. Nevertheless, on August 23, 1927, the two men were put to death in the electric chair.

At its worst, hysteria accompanied by violence characterized the Red Scare. Mobs attacked suspected radicals, abused immigrants, and committed crimes in the name of justice. But eventually, the great fear ended. Americans saw that democracy and capitalism were more powerful in the United States than Lenin's call for worldwide revolution. By the summer of 1920, the Red Scare hysteria, like the great influenza, had run its course.

✓ **Checkpoint** How did the rise of communism in the Soviet Union contribute to the Red Scare?

Americans Embrace Normalcy

Woodrow Wilson hoped that the presidential election of 1920 would prove that Americans supported both the League of Nations and his vision of the role the United States should play in the world. He suggested that electing Democratic presidential candidate James M. Cox of Ohio would show support for the League. The election of Republican candidate **Warren G. Harding** of Ohio would serve as a final rejection of the League.

Harding had a different view of the presidential race. He knew that national elections seldom turned on a single issue. Harding campaigned for a rejection of Wilsonian idealism. He was tired of progressive reforms and foreign crusades. Harding called for a return to "normalcy," by which he meant the "normality" of

what he believed had been a simpler time before Wilson took office in 1913. Harding won in a landslide, and Republicans won control of Congress, as well. Americans had decisively rejected Wilson's ideas.

A Quiet American Giant Despite Harding's election and all it implied, the United States did not plan to totally withdraw from world affairs. By 1920, the United States was an economic giant. It was the richest, most industrialized country in the world. Even before the war, America led all other nations in industrial output. Now, British and French demands for American goods created an immense trade imbalance. Europeans had to borrow money from American bankers and obtain lines of credit with American business firms to pay for the goods.

This situation fundamentally changed America's economic standing in the world. The United States was now the largest **creditor nation** in the world, meaning that other countries owed the United States more money than the United States owed them. World War I shifted the economic center of the world from London to New York City. The United States embraced its new role as a quiet giant. A world without America playing a major economic role had become simply impossible to conceive.

The World Adjusts to a New Order World War I had caused sweeping changes around the globe. German and Russian monarchies toppled, and new forms of government were created. The Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires ceased to exist. Britain and France emerged from the war victorious but economically and politically weakened. In contrast, the victorious United States came out of the war strong, confident, and prosperous.

An old order five hundred years in the making had collapsed in just a few years. It was as if the world's compass was out of whack and no one knew where to turn for directions. The United States was unsure of the requirements of its new status. Could America retreat into isolationism in political but not economic affairs? After rejecting the League of Nations, how could it exert its moral authority in the world? Americans would wrestle with these questions—and many others—in the decades ahead.

 **Checkpoint** Why did the United States become the leading economic power after World War I?



A Return to "Normalcy"

The election of 1920 was the first presidential election in which women were allowed to vote under the Nineteenth Amendment. American voters overwhelmingly elected Warren G. Harding, who promised a return to simpler days.

SECTION

4 Assessment

Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice
Web Code: nea-0608

Comprehension

1. Terms and People For each item below, write a sentence explaining its significance to events in the United States after World War I.

- influenza
- inflation
- Red Scare
- Palmer Raids
- Nicola Sacco
- Bartolomeo Vanzetti
- Warren G. Harding

2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

Summarize Use your concept web to answer the Section Focus Question: What political, economic, and social effects did World War I have on the United States?

Writing About History

3. Quick Write: Write a Thesis

Statement Write a thesis statement for a cause-and-effect essay on the effects of World War I on the United States. Your thesis statement should state a point you will argue.

Critical Thinking

4. Analyze Information How did the influenza pandemic make the transition from war to peace more difficult?

5. Determine Relevance How does the Sacco and Vanzetti case demonstrate the mindset of the Red Scare?

6. Draw Inferences How did Americans both reject and embrace the new global influence of the United States?