

**Kicking, Fighting, Butting, and Biting**

In a time of rapid social change, with a deadly war behind them, many Americans sought a return to more traditional values. They found comfort and strength in the words of preachers such as Billy Sunday. A former pro baseball player, Sunday never lost the dynamic energy of an athlete. Arms flailing, fists punching the air, he railed against the evils of greed, card playing, dancing, and, especially, drinking. He liked to tell audiences:

“I’m against sin. I’ll kick it as long as I’ve got a foot, and I’ll fight it as long as I’ve got a fist. I’ll butt it as long as I’ve got a head. I’ll bite it as long as I’ve got a tooth. And when I’m old and fistless and footless and toothless, I’ll gum it ‘till I go home to Glory.”

—Billy Sunday, sermon

▲ Crowd at a Billy Sunday revival meeting

## Social and Cultural Tensions

### Objectives

- Compare economic and cultural life in rural America to that in urban America.
- Discuss the changes in U.S. immigration policy in the 1920s.
- Analyze the goals and motives of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s.
- Discuss the successes and failures of the Eighteenth Amendment.

### Terms and People

modernism	Ku Klux Klan
fundamentalism	Prohibition
Scopes Trial	Eighteenth Amendment
Clarence Darrow	Volstead Act
quota system	bootlegger

### NoteTaking

**Reading Skill: Contrast** As you read, look for issues that divided Americans in the 1920s.

Differing Viewpoints	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Viewpoint 1</li> <li>• Viewpoint 2</li> </ul>
Evolution	

**Why It Matters** In the 1920s, while many city dwellers enjoyed a rising standard of living, most farmers suffered through hard times. Conflicting visions of what the nation should be heightened the urban-rural division. Some of these issues, such as immigration policy and teaching the theory of evolution, still divide Americans today. **Section Focus Question:** How did Americans differ on major social and cultural issues?

### Traditionalism and Modernism Clash

The 1920 census reported that, for the first time in American history, more people lived in urban areas than in rural regions. This simple fact had profound consequences. The nation had been divided before, but usually along north-south or east-west lines. In the 1920s, however, the split was between urban America and rural America. On virtually every important social and cultural issue, the two groups were divided.

Urban Americans enjoyed new consumer products and a wide array of leisure activities. They generally showed an openness toward social change and the new discoveries of science. The growing trend to emphasize science and secular values over traditional ideas about religion became known as **modernism**.

By contrast, rural Americans did not participate fully in the consumer bonanzas, and they missed out on many of the new forms of leisure. People in the country generally embraced a more traditional view of religion, science, and culture.

## High School Education, 1900–1930

Year	High School Graduates (percentage of 17-year-olds)
1900	6.3
1910	8.6
1920	16.3
1930	28.8

SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau



### Americans Go to School

Although school attendance grew steadily, fewer than half of American children graduated from high school by 1930. *How much did the high school graduation rate increase during the 1920s?*

**Education Becomes More Important** Rural and urban Americans differed in their attitudes toward formal education. In rural America, prolonged formal education had not seemed vital. Farmers expected their children to master the “Three R’s”—reading, writing, and arithmetic. But beyond that, education collided with the many farm tasks that needed to be done. Muscle, endurance, and knowledge of crops and animals seemed more important to farmers than “book learning.”

Formal education took on more importance in urban America. Mental ability, not muscular fitness, was seen as the essential ingredient for success. Mastery of mathematics and language could spell the difference between a low-paying, unskilled job and a higher-paying position as an office worker. By 1930, more American teens were graduating from high school, and more Americans than ever before went to college.

**Religious Fundamentalism Grows** In the 1920s, many devout Americans believed that Christianity was under siege throughout the world. They pointed to Soviet communist attacks on the Orthodox Church in Russia and to the Mexican revolutionary assaults on the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico.

At home, a growing number of Christians were upset by what they saw as secular trends in religion and culture. They reaffirmed their belief in the fundamental, or basic, truths of their religion. This approach, often called **fundamentalism**, emphasized Protestant teachings and the belief that every word in the Bible was literal truth. Fundamentalists believed that the answer to every important moral and scientific question was in their holy book. Their ideas took root all over the country but were especially strong in rural America.

**Americans Clash Over Evolution** Fundamentalism and modernism clashed head-on in the **Scopes Trial** of 1925. At issue was the theory of evolution, developed by English scientist Charles Darwin. Darwin believed that complex forms of life, such as human beings, had developed gradually from simpler forms of life. This theory clashed with the description of creation in the Bible.

In 1925, Tennessee passed a law making it illegal to teach Darwin’s theory in the state’s public schools. The American Civil Liberties Union convinced John Scopes, a high school biology teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, to challenge the law. When Scopes taught evolution in his classroom, he was promptly arrested.

The Scopes Trial drew nationwide attention. Journalists flocked to Dayton to cover the emotionally charged event, which many dubbed the “Monkey Trial” because of the mistaken belief that Darwin claimed that human beings descended from monkeys. **Clarence Darrow**, the most celebrated defense attorney in America, traveled from his home in Chicago to defend Scopes. Three-time presidential candidate William Jennings Bryan, a long-time defender of rural values, served as an expert for the prosecution.

The highlight of the trial came when Darrow called Bryan to the stand as an expert on the Bible. Bryan affirmed that the Bible stated the literal truth. He testified that he believed that God created Adam and Eve and that Joshua made the sun stand still. Darrow tried to use science to cast doubt on such beliefs, but Bryan firmly stated, “I accept the Bible absolutely.”

Scopes was found guilty of breaking the law—a fact that was never in question—and fined \$100. While the Scopes Trial showcased a major cultural and religious division, it did not heal the conflict or answer its central questions. When the trial was over, each side still believed in the truth of its position. The conflict over evolution continues today.



**Checkpoint** How did the Scopes Trial illustrate the urban-rural split in the 1920s?

## Restricting Immigration

Another cultural clash involved the ongoing boom in immigration. As in the past, Americans known as nativists argued that the new arrivals took jobs away from native-born workers and threatened American religious, political, and cultural traditions.

**Nativists Oppose Immigration** Although nativist politicians had been able to restrict immigration from China in 1882, they had failed to push through laws to restrict immigration from southern and eastern Europe. On the eve of World War I, however, Congress did pass a law requiring immigrants to take a literacy test. Immigrants who could not read or write their own language were prohibited from entering the United States. President Wilson vetoed the law, but Congress overrode Wilson's veto.

During the postwar Red Scare, fear that communists and socialists from eastern Europe were traveling to the United States with their revolutionary doctrines added an emotional edge to the debate. The problem that confronted nativists was traditional immigration policy. All Americans who could trace their ancestry back far enough discovered foreign origins. Many viewed the immigration experience as part of what made an American an American.

**Quota Laws Limit Newcomers** World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Red Scare strengthened the nativist position. Two important laws—the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 and the National Origins Act of 1924—established a **quota system** to govern immigration from specific countries.

### Comparing Viewpoints

## Should a State Ban Teaching of Darwin's Theory of Evolution?

The Scopes Trial of 1925 revolved around a Tennessee law that banned the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. The deeper issue involved a clash between traditional religious beliefs and modern science.

### THE PROSECUTION

William Jennings Bryan believed that Tennessee had a right to protect its children from ideas that violated biblical teachings.

#### Primary Source

"Science is a magnificent force, but it is not a teacher of morals. . . . In war, science has proven itself an evil genius; it has made war more terrible than it ever was before."

"It is for the jury to determine whether this attack upon the Christian religion shall be permitted in the public schools of Tennessee by teachers employed by the state."

### "When Shall We Three Meet Again?"



#### Compare

1. How does Bryan's view of science differ from that of Malone?
2. What does each man feel should happen when science clashes with religion?

### THE DEFENSE

Dudley Field Malone, who joined Clarence Darrow in the defense of Scopes, argued against a state determining what should be taught.

#### Primary Source

"We feel we stand with progress. We feel we stand with science. We feel we stand with intelligence. We feel we stand with fundamental freedom in America."

"Let the children have their minds kept open. Close no doors to their knowledge. Shut no door from them. Make the distinction between theology and science. Let them have both. Let them be taught both. Let them both live."

## TRACK THE ISSUE



### How should government regulate immigration?

The first major effort to limit immigration to the United States came in the late 1800s. By then, immigrants were streaming into the country. Many Americans worried about losing their jobs or their sense of national identity. Since then, immigration and immigration policy have remained controversial issues. Use the timeline below to explore this enduring issue.

#### 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act

Federal government makes first law to exclude a specific national group.

#### 1924 National Origins Act

Law sets quotas on numbers of immigrants from each country.

#### 1952 McCarran-Walter Act

Law establishes political beliefs as criteria for exclusion.

#### 1965 Immigration Act Amended

Congress abolishes national quotas but sets ceiling for each hemisphere.

#### 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act

Law offers amnesty to some illegal aliens.

#### 2004 Guest Worker Program

President Bush proposes law allowing temporary foreign workers.



Immigrants and foreign visitors go through a careful check before they are allowed to enter the country.

## DEBATE THE ISSUE

**Amnesty for Illegal Immigrants** In recent years, Americans have hotly debated the question of amnesty for illegal immigrants. Some Americans favor laws providing a legal route to citizenship. Critics say that laws curbing further illegal immigration would be more effective.

“Amnesty combined with serious penalties for employers that hire undocumented workers . . . is the only real way out of [this] situation. . . . It . . . is . . . the option most likely to secure the border and end the system of undocumented worker exploitation—which is precisely why our well-funded leaders in Washington have no intention of pursuing it.”

—Tom Head, author

“Amnesty for illegal aliens is simply a reward for law-breaking. No system depending on a strict regard for the rule of law can treat law-breaking so casually. Amnesty will be a magnet for further illegal immigrants, who hope to be future recipients of the nation’s compassion.”

—Edward J. Erler, Senior Fellow, Claremont Institute



### TRANSFER Activities

- 1. Compare** Why does Tom Head support amnesty? Why does Erler oppose it?
- 2. Analyze** How does the issue debated today differ from the issues that led to the passage of the National Origins Act?
- 3. Transfer** Use the following Web site to see a video, try a WebQuest, and write in your journal. **Web Code:** neh-8002



Immigrants enter New York’s Ellis Island in the 1920s.



The National Origins Act set up a simple formula: The number of immigrants of a given nationality each year could not exceed 2 percent of the number of people of that nationality living in the United States in 1890. The year 1890 was chosen because it came before the great wave of immigration from southern and eastern Europe. For example, the act permitted about 65,721 immigrants from England and Northern Ireland to come to America every year, but it allowed only about 5,802 immigrants from Italy. The act also continued to exclude most Asian immigrants. America had closed its “golden door” to many of the people trying to enter.

**More Mexicans Come North** The quota system did not apply to Mexico, which was still reeling from the chaos of the 1910 revolution. Mexicans settled in sparsely populated regions of the Southwest and made major contributions to the local economies. Most Mexican newcomers found work harvesting crops in Texas and California. A smaller number sought jobs in the factories and farms of the North or Midwest.

Many Mexican immigrants faced discrimination and hostility in their new homes. They often competed with native-born Americans for jobs and were frequently subjected to brutality and violence.



**Checkpoint** How did new laws change U.S. immigration policy in the 1920s?

## The New Ku Klux Klan

Immigration restriction was an attempt to turn back the clock to what many saw as a simpler, better time—a time before the nation became ethnically diverse. As rural Americans saw the country become increasingly urban and their own position in the nation slip in relative importance, many lashed out against symbols of change. Some even turned to organizations that supported doctrines of hate and employed violence and terror to achieve their ends.

**The Klan Rises Again** In 1915, on Stone Mountain in Georgia, a group of angry men revived the **Ku Klux Klan**. The original Klan had been formed in the South during Reconstruction largely to terrorize African Americans who sought to vote. Although the revived Klan continued to promote hatred of African Americans, it was also aimed at the new America taking shape in the cities. It targeted Jews, Catholics, and immigrants. The Klan also claimed to stand against lawbreaking and immorality. One of their leaders claimed that “every criminal, every gambler . . . every crooked politician . . . is fighting the Klan.”

At its height, the Klan’s “Invisible Empire” had perhaps 4 to 5 million members. Most were in the South, but there were also branches in the Midwest, Northeast, and West—in both rural areas and in small industrial cities. One center of Klan strength was Indiana, where Klan leader David Stephenson ruled with an iron fist and controlled numerous politicians. They burned crosses, boycotted businesses owned by anyone who was Jewish, Catholic, or African American, and terrorized citizens in the darkness of night. Klansmen

## The New Ku Klux Klan

In 1925, thousands of Klansmen (below) staged a huge march in Washington, D.C.



### Vocabulary Builder

**imperial**—(ihm PIR ee uhl) *adj.*  
relating to an empire or emperor;  
having supreme authority

usually wore masks to conceal their identities, met to wave flags and preach hate, and followed leaders with such titles as Grand Dragon and **Imperial Wizard**. But behind the Klan's confident facade were Americans fearful of change.

**Americans Oppose the Klan** Individuals, as well as organizations such as the NAACP and the Jewish Anti-Defamation League, battled against the Klan and its values. They embraced the idea of racial, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversity. For them, the notion of the “melting pot” was as old as America itself, and they drew strength from American traditions and saw hope in the American future. Journalist William Allen White noted:

#### Primary Source

“To make a case against a birthplace, a religion, or a race is wickedly un-American and cowardly. The whole trouble with the Ku Klux Klan is that it is based upon such deep foolishness that it is bound to be a menace to good government in any community.”

—William Allen White, letter to the editor of the *New York World*, 1921

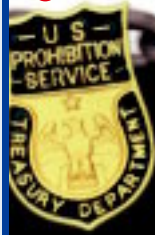
The Klan itself became thoroughly corrupt. Its leaders bribed politicians, stole from its members' dues, and lied to its members. Stephenson ended up going to prison for assault and second-degree murder. By the late 1920s, the Klan stood exposed. Although it never disappeared, it withered in importance.



#### Checkpoint

How did the goals of the new Ku Klux Klan differ from those of the old Klan?

### INFOGRAPHIC



## PROHIBITION AND CRIME

**S**upporters of Prohibition rightly pointed out that alcohol was at the root of many social ills, from child abuse to lost productivity on the job. Sadly, the attempt to ban alcohol opened the door to a new set of social problems.

During Prohibition, many ordinary Americans—rich and poor—became lawbreakers. Ignoring the Volstead Act, they found creative ways to hide alcohol. This woman has a flask hidden in her boot. ▼

Federal agents destroy a still used to manufacture illegal alcohol. Although these “feds” worked tirelessly, there were not enough of them to enforce Prohibition effectively. ▼



## Prohibition and Crime

Another divisive issue was **Prohibition**, the banning of alcohol use. Since the early 1800s, temperance reformers had crusaded against alcohol. By 1917, some 75 percent of Americans lived in “dry” counties that had banned liquor. World War I increased support for temperance. It seemed unpatriotic to use corn, wheat, and barley to make alcohol when soldiers overseas needed bread.

**Government Bans Alcoholic Beverages** In 1919, the states ratified the **Eighteenth Amendment** to the Constitution. It forbade the manufacture, distribution, and sale of alcohol anywhere in the United States. The amendment had been passed largely on the strength of rural votes. Congress then passed the **Volstead Act**, a law that officially enforced the amendment.

Advocates of Prohibition, known as “drys,” called it a “noble experiment.” They argued that Prohibition improved individuals, strengthened families, and created better societies. In fact, drinking—as well as alcoholism and liver disease caused by drinking—did decline during Prohibition.

Opponents of Prohibition, dubbed “wets,” countered that the ban on alcohol did not stop people from drinking. Instead, they argued, Prohibition helped create an atmosphere of hypocrisy and increased organized crime.

**Americans Break the Law** As the wets noted, the Volstead Act did not stop Americans from drinking, but it did prevent them from purchasing drinks

**Vocabulary Builder**  
advocate—(AD vuh kiht) *n.*  
supporter; one who argues in favor of something

**Critics of Prohibition** ▶ argued that it encouraged political corruption. In this cartoon, a row of officials from federal agents to judges hold their hands out for bribe money.

◀ Prohibition encouraged a new breed of organized crime. Racketeers like Al Capone (left) and his rival, Bugs Moran, thumbed their nose at the law and ruthlessly murdered their competitors (below).



7 CHICAGO GANGSTERS SLAIN  
BY FIRING SQUAD OF RIVALS  
SOME IN POLICE UNIFORM

### Thinking Critically

1. **Summarize** What three types of law-breaking are illustrated here?
2. **Analyze** How were these three types of lawbreaking related to one another?



### Wets Seek Repeal

Supporters of the Eighteenth Amendment had often used images of mothers and children to press for a ban on alcohol. This propaganda poster uses similar images to press for the repeal.

countries. **Bootleggers** sold illegal alcohol to consumers. In cities, secret drinking establishments, known as speakeasies, attracted eager customers.

Government agents worked tirelessly to stop the flow of illegal liquor. However, they were short-handed, and the demand for alcohol was too great. There were millions of dollars to be made by both organized and unorganized criminals. Particularly in cities, policemen and politicians tended to look the other way when liquor was concerned. They rationalized their actions by saying that if people wanted to drink they would drink.

Al Capone, a Chicago gang leader, was the most famous criminal of the Prohibition era. He defended his illegal actions:

#### Primary Source

“I make my money from supplying a public demand. If I break the law, my customers, who number hundreds of the best people in Chicago, are as guilty as I am. The only difference between us is that I sell and they buy. Everybody calls me a racketeer. I call myself a businessman.”

—Al Capone, quoted in *Era of Excess* (Sinclair)

The problem was that under the guise of providing a glass of beer or scotch, organized crime spread into other areas of society. Capone's other “businesses” included prostitution, drugs, robbery, and murder. Thus, Prohibition contributed to the growth of organized crime in America.

**Prohibition Divides the Nation** By the mid-1920s, most city politicians clamored for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. But to many rural Americans, liquor and crime were tied to other divisive cultural issues of the day. Thus, like immigration and evolution, the debate over Prohibition became part of a battle over the future of America.

In the culturally divided 1920s, Americans could not reach a satisfactory settlement on the issue. Not until 1933 did the Twenty-first Amendment finally repeal Prohibition.



**Checkpoint** What were the effects of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act?

## SECTION

# 3 Assessment

### Progress Monitoring Online

For: Self-test with vocabulary practice  
Web Code: nea-0705

#### Comprehension

**1. Terms and People** For each of the following, write a sentence explaining its importance to the social and cultural clashes of the 1920s.

- modernism
- fundamentalism
- Scopes Trial
- quota system
- Ku Klux Klan
- Prohibition
- Eighteenth Amendment
- Volstead Act
- bootlegger

#### 2. NoteTaking Reading Skill:

**Contrast** Use your table to answer the Section Focus Question: How did Americans differ on major social and cultural issues?

#### Writing About History

**3. Compare and Contrast** Write the opening paragraph for an essay comparing supporters and opponents of Prohibition. Use the information in this section as well as your own thoughts. Consider the goals and values that wets and dries might have had in common as well as the ways in which they differed.

#### Critical Thinking

**4. Recognize Ideologies** How did the two sides in the Scopes Trial represent conflicting value systems? What did each side value most?

**5. Identify Points of View** Why did both supporters and opponents of immigration quotas believe they were defending American traditions and values?

**6. Draw Conclusions** Why do you think the revived Ku Klux Klan was able to spread beyond the South and even into some urban areas?