Social Studies 9 Roaring Twenties/Dirty Thirties

After the First World War, there was a short period of economic depression. The shift back to a peacetime economy, along with the effects of the pandemic, were factors in the economic downturn. By the early 1920’s things were starting to turn around. During this period of economic growth, new household appliances such as radios, toasters, washing machines and many others appeared. Mass transportation became commonplace. Many people owned cars for the first time. The radio became a means of mass communication. Electricity was in use in many households. People invested in the Stock Market. We refer to this period in time as “The Roaring Twenties.” It is also referred to as the “Jazz Era,” owing to a new genre of music that became popular during that time. This was also the era of Prohibition and growth of organized crime.

**Viewing recommendation**: There is a video on YouTube titled “America in the Twentieth Century: The Roaring Twenties” and it runs about half an hour. If you can view it, it will give you an interesting snapshot of this time, even though the history presented is largely American.

The new prosperity was not everywhere nor was it enjoyed by everyone. It was really more of a “haves” and have-nots” distribution. Atlantic Canada did not greatly benefit from this time, nor did many places in Western Canada.

The “Roaring Twenties” came to an end with the collapse of the Stock Market in 1929. Problems were emerging even before but a wave of panic-selling on “Black Tuesday” is generally seen as the major catastrophic event. Fortunes were lost and many people were left with nothing. This period of economic downturn would run well into the 1930’s and is generally referred to as “The Dirty Thirties.”

**Viewing Recommendation**: The movie “Cinderella Man” starring Russell Crowe and Renee Zellweger is a much enjoyed “underdog” story set in this era. It tells the story of boxer James Braddock, his family and their struggles. The story starts out in the prosperous times and then fast-forwards to 1933. If you have a chance to view the first 15 minutes or so of this story, make a mental note of the before and after elements in their lives. This is usually done as a discussion activity in the classroom.

**Assignment:**

One of the main means of mass-communication in the 20’s and 30’s was the newspaper. Your assignment is to create a (one page) newspaper from sometime in the 1920’s to 1930’s. You may find examples of old newspapers on the internet and even images of advertisements, weather reports and all kinds of stories. Office 365 has newspaper templates. Try to include all of the following items in your newspaper:

Front page story

Editorial

Letters to editor

Advertisement

Sports story

Lifestyle stories

Special interest stories