

Cultural Conflicts

READING FOCUS

- What were the effects of Prohibition on society?
- What issues of religion were at the core of the Scopes trial?
- How did racial tensions change after World War I?

MAIN IDEA

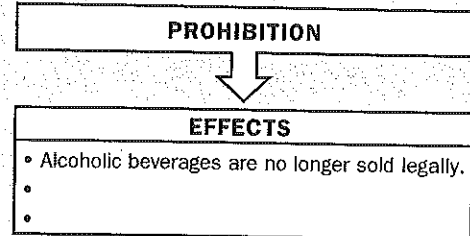
Rapid social change after World War I caused conflicts among people with differing beliefs and values.

KEY TERMS

bootleggers
speakeasies
fundamentalism
Scopes trial

TAKING NOTES

Create a chart like the one below. As you read, fill the chart with some of the effects of Prohibition.



Setting the Scene Prohibition of all alcoholic beverages became the law of the land when the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution took effect on January 16, 1920. Yet for many people, life went on as before. Even President Harding did not heed the law, as the daughter of former President Theodore Roosevelt witnessed:

“ Though violation of the Eighteenth Amendment was a matter of course in Washington, it was rather shocking to see the way Harding disregarded the Constitution he was sworn to uphold. . . . there were always, at least before the unofficial dinners, cocktails in the upstairs hall outside the President’s room. . . . One evening . . . a friend of the Hardings asked me if I would like to go up to the study. . . . No rumor could have exceeded the reality; . . . trays with bottles containing every imaginable brand of whiskey stood about. . . . ”

—Alice Roosevelt Longworth, *Crowded Hours*, 1933



Prohibition forced many beer companies to find new beverages to brew, as these labels show.

Prohibition

The main goals of Prohibition seemed worthy: (1) Eliminate drunkenness and the resulting abuse of family members and others. (2) Get rid of saloons, where prostitution, gambling, and other forms of vice thrived. (3) Prevent absenteeism and on-the-job accidents stemming from drunkenness. Congress passed the Volstead Act in 1919 to provide a system for enforcing the Eighteenth Amendment, but it was widely ignored—especially in the large cities along the coasts and in the upper Midwest. A 1924 report showed Kansans obeying the law at a rate of about 95 percent and New Yorkers at a rate of only about 5 percent. Thus Prohibition sharpened the contrast between urban and rural moral values during the 1920s.

Bootlegging Liquor, beer, and wine could no longer be manufactured, sold, or transported in the United States. Americans who chose to defy the Volstead Act needed to find a private source of alcoholic beverages. For this they turned to a new type of criminal: the bootlegger.

VIEWING HISTORY The government struggled to stop the illegal flow of liquor during Prohibition. Federal agents are shown destroying cases of beer during a raid in Philadelphia. **Analyzing Information** What were the biggest problems in enforcing Prohibition?



In the old days, **bootleggers** merely had been drinkers who hid flasks of liquor in the leg of their boots. Now the term was used to describe suppliers of illegal alcohol. Some bootleggers operated stills—devices used to produce alcohol from corn, grain, potatoes, or other fruit and vegetable sources. Others smuggled liquor overland from Canada or by ship from the Caribbean. A smuggler's ship might anchor far off the coast, where its illegal cargo would be loaded onto speedboats fast enough to outrace Coast Guard cutters. The boats would then head to secluded harbors where trucks were waiting to carry the liquor to warehouses. From there, it would be transported to retail outlets. Those outlets included restaurants, nightclubs, and speakeasies.

Speakeasies were bars that operated illegally. These bars flourished in the cities. One observer estimated that there were 700 speakeasies and 4,000 bootleggers in Washington, D.C., a city with only 300 licensed saloons before Prohibition. The whole state of Massachusetts had 1,000 saloons before Prohibition, while during it Boston alone had 4,000 speakeasies and 15,000 bootleggers. A customer could not just stroll into a speakeasy. A heavy gate usually blocked the entrance, and the customer had to show a membership card or be recognized by a guard. A

COMPARING PRIMARY SOURCES

The Eighteenth Amendment

Violations of Prohibition led Congress to hear testimony on whether the Eighteenth Amendment should be repealed.

Analyzing Viewpoints Compare the main arguments made by the two speakers.

In Favor of Repeal

"I will concede that the saloon was odious [offensive], but now we have delicatessen stores, pool rooms, drug stores, millinery shops, private parlors, and 57 other varieties of speakeasies selling liquor and flourishing."

—Representative Fiorello La Guardia of New York, 1926

Against Repeal

"Instead of lowering our standards, we urge that the law be strengthened. . . . The closing of the open saloon . . . has resulted in better national health; children are born under better conditions, homes are better, and the mother is delivered from the fear of a drunken husband."

—Ella A. Boole, president of the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union, 1926

number of speakeasies rejected the standard gate for a more creative entrance, as a French diplomat observed in New York City:

“Some speakeasies are disguised behind florists’ shops, or behind undertakers’ coffins. I know one, right in Broadway, which is entered through an imitation telephone-box; it has excellent beer. . . .”

—Paul Morand, 1929

Organized Crime Supplying illegal liquor was a complex operation, involving manufacture, transportation, storage, and sales. This complexity, and bootlegging’s huge potential for profit, helped lead to the development of organized crime.

At first, local gangsters operated independently, competing to supply liquor. Then some of them found that by joining forces they could create an organization large and efficient enough to handle the entire bootlegging operation. When these organizations tried to expand their territory, they clashed with other gangs. As rival groups fought for control with machine guns and sawed-off shotguns, gang wars and murder became commonplace. The streets of American cities became a battleground.

Successful bootlegging organizations often moved into other illegal activities, including gambling, prostitution, and a highly profitable business called racketeering. In one kind of “racket,” gangsters bribed police or other government officials to ignore their illegal operations. In another, gangsters forced local businesses to pay a fee for “protection.” Those who refused to pay might be gunned down or have their businesses blown to bits. In one period of a little more than a year, racketeers set off 157 bombs in Chicago. Terrified citizens went along with the gangsters’ demands. The supporters of Prohibition had never dreamed that their ideals would bear such evil fruit.

Al Capone The most notorious of the gangster organizations operated in Chicago. There, bootlegging had added immense wealth to an already successful gambling, prostitution, and racketeering business that reached into nearly every neighborhood, police station, and government office.

In 1925, a young gangster murdered his way to the top of Chicago’s organized crime network. He was Al Capone, nicknamed “Scarface.” Capone was a ruthless criminal with a talent for avoiding jail. With so much money at his disposal (\$60 million a year from bootlegging alone), Capone easily bought the cooperation of police and city officials. Politicians, even judges, took orders from him.

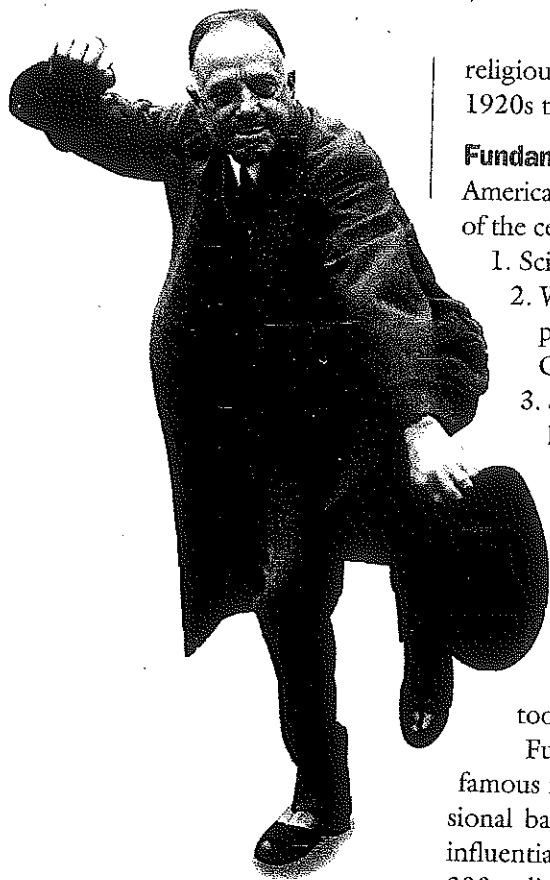
The government fought back with improved law enforcement. The Bureau of Investigation (later named the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or FBI), headed by J. Edgar Hoover, became a dedicated, independent force against organized crime during the 1920s. Still, Capone managed for years to slip out of any charges brought against him. Finally, in 1931, a federal court convicted him of income-tax evasion and sent him to prison. Bootlegging remained a problem, however, until Prohibition ended in 1933.

Issues of Religion

Prohibition highlighted the differences between urban and rural areas of the country. Another issue that tended to split Americans along urban and rural lines was the teaching of evolution. Many Americans felt that the theory of evolution conflicted with their

VIEWING HISTORY Chicago gangster Al Capone (left) confers with his lawyer in this 1929 photo. **Synthesizing Information** Why was it so difficult for the government to bring Capone to justice?





Fundamentalist preacher Billy Sunday drew large crowds at religious revivals.

religious beliefs. The teaching of this theory in some public schools during the 1920s touched off a debate that continues today.

Fundamentalism Before the teaching of evolution became an issue, many Americans already felt uneasy with certain changes in society. During the early part of the century, challenges to traditional beliefs came from several directions:

1. Science and technology were taking a larger role in everyday life.
2. War and the widespread problems of modern society were causing more people to question whether God took an active role in human affairs or if God even existed.
3. Some scholars were saying that the Bible was a document written by humans and that it contained contradictions and historical inaccuracies.

In response to these challenges, between 1910 and 1915, religious traditionalists published a series of 12 pamphlets called *The Fundamentals*. They stated a set of beliefs that have since come to be called **fundamentalism**. In addition to supporting traditional Christian ideas about Jesus, fundamentalists argued that God inspired the Bible, so it cannot contain contradictions or errors. They declared that the Bible is literally true and that every story in it actually took place as described.

Fundamentalism gained tremendous attention in the 1920s. The most famous fundamentalist preacher of the time was Billy Sunday, a former professional baseball player. Sunday's sermons on the evils of alcohol made him an influential figure in the Prohibition movement. His series of more than 300 religious revival meetings attracted an estimated total attendance of 100 million. Another popular preacher, Aimee Semple McPherson, was a master of theatrical presentation. Her followers gave \$1.5 million to build her the massive Angelus Temple in Los Angeles, where she preached to huge crowds. "Sister Aimee," as she was called, owned her own radio station, which allowed her to broadcast her revival meetings. By doing so, she used radio in an innovative way: to broaden the reach of her ministry.

Evolution and the Scopes Trial The theory of evolution deeply disturbed fundamentalists. This theory states that human beings and all other living species developed over time from simpler life forms.

Fundamentalists denounced the evolution theory, saying that it contradicts the history of creation as stated in the Bible. They worked for the passage of laws to prevent public schools from teaching evolution. When Tennessee passed such a ban in 1925, a science teacher named John T. Scopes agreed to challenge it as unconstitutional, thus denying him personal and religious freedom. He defied the law and was arrested for teaching evolution. Thus began the case popularly known as the **Scopes trial**.

The case became a battle between two of the country's greatest lawyers. William Jennings Bryan, an outspoken fundamentalist, volunteered to help prosecute Scopes. Clarence Darrow, a passionate supporter of free speech, volunteered to help defend him. Both men were known for their debating skills. Bryan had run for President three times. Darrow had won fame for defending political and labor activists such as Eugene V. Debs.

The trial took place in the small town of Dayton, Tennessee, in the withering heat of July 1925. In this new era of mass media, journalists swarmed around the courthouse, telegraphing some 2 million words of

VIEWING HISTORY William Jennings Bryan (right) and Clarence Darrow (left) faced off on the issue of evolution in Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925. **Drawing Inferences** What constitutional issue was at the heart of the matter?



reporting to their papers over the ten days of the trial. This was the first trial ever broadcast over American radio.

On the surface, the case was a simple one. The judge ruled that the jury should determine only whether Scopes had taught evolution, which he readily admitted he had. The jury took just a few minutes to find Scopes guilty, and the judge fined him \$100. However, more complex issues were at stake, including the clash between the country's modern beliefs and its traditional values.

The dramatic climax of the case came when Darrow put Bryan himself on the stand to testify as an expert on the Bible. Darrow set about testing the logic of Bryan's faith by citing passages from the Bible and forcing him to try to explain them. In the process, Darrow ridiculed fundamentalist beliefs. Under Darrow's intense, often brutal, questioning, Bryan admitted that even he did not believe all of the Bible literally. He kept fighting back, however, at one point saying, "I am simply trying to protect the word of God."

This grueling battle exhausted Bryan, who died just a few days after the trial ended. Fundamentalists saw Bryan as a martyr for their cause. Modernists saw Darrow as a defender of science and reason. Although fundamentalists considered the trial a setback, their movement remained active. In later decades, it would grow in membership and strength.

Racial Tensions

Americans clashed over race in the 1920s. African Americans took part in the Great Migration to the North in the early 1900s for two main reasons. They wanted to take advantage of greater job opportunities in the North, and they wanted to escape the increasing violence against African Americans in the South. Many of them, however, found both racial prejudice and violence in the North.

Violence Against African Americans During the summer of 1919, mob violence between white and black Americans erupted in about 25 cities. That summer became known as the "Red Summer" for all the blood that was spilled. Omaha, Tulsa, and Washington, D.C., all suffered periods of racial turmoil. The worst of these race riots, however, occurred in Chicago.

The African American population of Chicago had doubled since 1910. This increase led to overcrowded neighborhoods and heightened tensions between blacks and whites. An incident at a beach on Lake Michigan touched off the violence. On one especially hot July day, stone-throwing had erupted between whites and blacks on a beach typically used only by whites. Meanwhile, a 17-year-old black boy, swimming just offshore with his friends, accidentally floated into the "whites only" area. A white man, who had been throwing rocks at the swimmers for some time, struck the boy, and he drowned. Furious blacks accused the whites of killing him, and more fights broke out. The riot spread through the city. For several days, chaos reigned in parts of Chicago. By the end, some 23 African Americans and 15 whites were dead, another 537 people were wounded, and the destruction caused by rioting had left hundreds homeless.

Focus on GOVERNMENT

How Laws Are Challenged When the state of Tennessee passed a law banning the teaching of evolution in 1925, John T. Scopes disagreed with the law and took action to challenge it. In the American system of checks and balances, individuals, organizations, and state and local governments can challenge the meaning of a law, and even its constitutionality, by going to court.

Interest groups often assist individuals in preparing their case if the case can be used to "test" the legitimacy of a law that the group opposes. For example, Scopes was assisted in his case by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). They resolved to take the Scopes case through the court system all the way to the United States Supreme Court. By doing so, they hoped that the court would find the law, and other similar laws, to be unconstitutional.

Because Scopes' \$100 fine was later thrown out by the Tennessee Supreme Court, however, the case never had the opportunity to reach the Supreme Court.



Race riots broke out in several cities in the summer of 1919.



This 1920s poster illustrates the Ku Klux Klan's views on immigration.

READING CHECK

Where and how did racial issues surface in the 1920s?

Some whites also directed racial violence against specific individuals. During the 1920s, the lynchings of the Jim Crow era continued. Many of these new crimes were the work of an old enemy of racial harmony, the Ku Klux Klan.

Revival of the Klan During Reconstruction, President Grant's campaign against the Ku Klux Klan had largely eliminated it. However, in 1915 a former Methodist circuit preacher from Atlanta, Colonel William J. Simmons, revived the organization. The Klan used modern fundraising and publicity methods to increase its influence and size. By 1922, Klan membership had grown to about 100,000. Two years later, it had ballooned to 4 million. The new Klan was no longer just a southern organization. In fact, the state with the greatest number of Klansmen was Indiana. The Klan's focus shifted, too. The organization vowed to defend their own white-Protestant culture against any group, not just blacks, that seemed to them un-American:

"Klansmen are to be examples of pure patriotism. They are to organize the patriotic sentiment of native-born white, Protestant Americans for the defense of distinctively American institutions. Klansmen are dedicated to the principle that America shall be made American through the promulgation [circulation] of American doctrines, the dissemination [spread] of American ideals, the creation of wholesome American sentiment, the preservation of American institutions."

—Klansman's Manual, 1925

During the early 1920s, Klan members carried out many crimes against African Americans, Catholics, Jews, immigrants, and others. They rode by night, beating, whipping, even killing their victims, terrorizing blacks and whites alike. Then, in 1925, the head of the Klan in Indiana was sentenced to life imprisonment for assaulting a girl who later poisoned herself. The nation was finally shocked into action, and police began to step up enforcement. By 1927, Klan activity had diminished once again.

Fighting Discrimination Increasing violence against African Americans rallied the efforts of the NAACP. During the 1920s, the NAACP worked in vain to pass federal anti-lynching laws. A proposed law passed the House of Representatives in 1922 but died in the Senate. Law enforcement improved at the state level, and the number of lynchings gradually decreased. Ten lynchings were reported in 1929.

During the 1920s, the NAACP also worked to protect the voting rights of African Americans, but again it had only limited success. For example, the Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional a Texas law prohibiting blacks from voting in the Democratic primary. Yet the Texas legislature got around the law by giving political parties the right to decide who could vote in primary elections. African Americans in the South still could not exercise their full political rights.

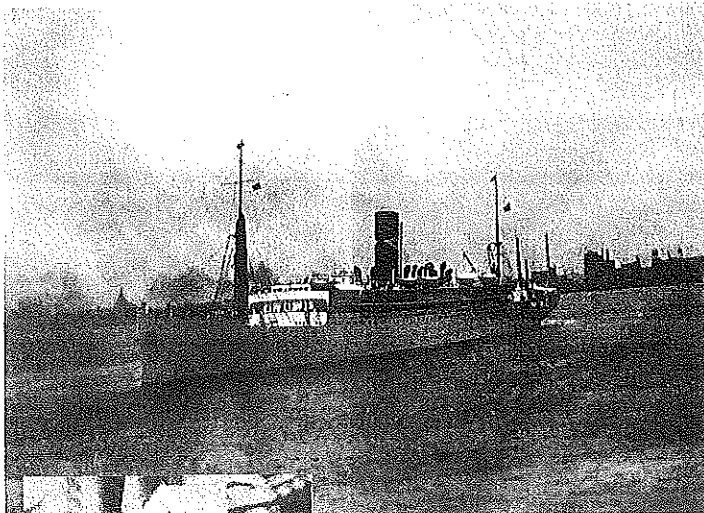
The Garvey Movement Some African Americans, frustrated by continued violence and discrimination, dreamed of a new homeland where they could live in peace. An African American named Marcus Garvey worked to make that dream a reality. Garvey had come to New York City from his native Jamaica in 1916 to establish a new headquarters for his Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Through the UNIA, Garvey sought to build up African Americans' self-respect and economic power. African Americans were encouraged to buy shares

in Garvey's Negro Factories Corporation, a set of small black-owned businesses. He also urged African Americans to return to "Motherland Africa" to create a self-governing nation. Garvey's message of racial pride and independence attracted a large number of followers to his black nationalist movement. Garvey held regular UNIA meetings in Harlem, and his followers could be seen in military-style uniforms reflecting their status, whether as members of the marching band, the Black Cross Nurses, or the African Legion. Several respected African American leaders, such as W.E.B. Du Bois, criticized the movement, however. They objected to Garvey's call for separation of the races, as well as his careless business practices.

Garvey gathered \$10 million for a steamship company, the Black Star Line, that would carry his followers back to the motherland. Corruption and mismanagement plagued the shipping line, however, and in 1925, Garvey was jailed on mail fraud charges relating to the sale of stock in the steamship company. From prison the same year, he wrote in an essay: "Why should we be discouraged because somebody laughs at us today? Who [is] to tell what tomorrow will bring forth? . . . We see and have changes every day, so pray, work, be steadfast and be not dismayed."

Garvey's sentence was later commuted, and he was deported to Jamaica in 1927. Without his leadership, the UNIA in America collapsed. Still, Garvey's ideas remained an inspiration to later "black pride" movements.



VIEWING HISTORY This ship belonged to Marcus Garvey's Black Star Line steamship company, founded in 1919. It was one of many enterprises Garvey (left) hoped would strengthen the African American community. **Drawing Conclusions** Was Marcus Garvey a successful leader?

Section

3

Assessment

READING COMPREHENSION

1. What were the goals of Prohibition?
2. How did organized crime profit from **bootleggers** and **speakeasies** during Prohibition?
3. How were religious issues and **fundamentalism** at odds with the teaching of evolution?
4. Which positions did William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow each represent in the **Scopes trial**?
5. Why were many African Americans drawn to Marcus Garvey's message and movement?

CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

6. **Predicting Consequences** How might life in the 1920s have been different without Prohibition?
7. **Synthesizing Information** Consider the racial tensions that existed in the 1920s and those that exist today. Why are racial issues difficult to resolve?
8. **Writing a Conclusion** Write a short essay that supports the following conclusion: Differences between traditional and modern beliefs were responsible for the cultural conflicts of the 1920s.



Take It to the NET

Activity: Creating a Poster
Research arguments for and against Prohibition, and then create a poster that either promotes Prohibition or calls for its repeal. Use the links provided in the *America: Pathways to the Present* area of the following Web site for help in completing this activity.
www.phschool.com