

# The Roaring 20s: Flapper Culture

What do the youth of today have in common with the flappers of the 1920s?

1920s culture clashes

## Traditional vs modern ideals

In the 1920s, most Americans centered their lives on work, family, church, and local community. The separation of races, ethnic groups, and gender roles was the accepted norm in these settings. Traditionalists advocated a strict moral code, including the prohibition of alcohol and restrictive immigration laws.

But industrialization and urban development gave birth to new attitudes and priorities. The world of immigrants and factories brought modern city life into focus. Traditional ideals often clashed with this evolving modern culture (that included flapper girls). Many Americans saw these modern, urban-centered trends as a threat. The most extreme response came from groups like the Ku Klux Klan, who opposed immigration.



Watch The Rise and Fall of the 1920s Ku Klux Klan to answer the following questions.

- 1 Why did the KKK focus on traditionalism as a way to protest changes under way in the modern industrial society?
- 2 What were some of the mainstream political actions against immigrants that the KKK sought to influence?

3

Where was the influence of the KKK strongest?

4

How did the KKK influence reporting on klan activities in the 1920's press?

## Flapper culture

### New attitudes

Despite the influence of traditional culture in the 1920s, post-World War I America was changing dramatically. A growing segment of the population, mostly younger and more urban, embraced new trends. In the prosperous consumer economy, affordable, mass-produced automobiles brought new mobility.

The expanding cities were fertile ground for this new cultural diversity. The young valued progressive ideas about women's roles in society and experimented with new styles of dress and behavior. Seeking to break out of what they considered old-fashioned moral codes, they sought enjoyment in the present. Many young people danced to a new music called "jazz" and embraced a culture inspired by new fashion designs called "flapper."

### Criticism of the flappers



Let's review some of the common accusations against the new "flapper" culture in this 1921 editorial, "Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation". Be sure to read the Introduction and click the links provided to access the other three parts of the article.

1 Who wrote this article and where was it published?

2 According to the author, what "serious situation" was facing America in the 1920s?

3 What rule does Faulkner claim was adopted by the National Dancing Master's Association, and why?

## A generational divide?

Read the first eight paragraphs of this [Flapper's Appeal to Parents](#) to answer the following questions using quotations from this primary source text. Audio is also available. (Please note that in this context the term "make love" refers to sweet talking.)

1 Who wrote this letter? Describe the audience the letter is addressing.

2 What characteristics of flapper style does she identify in the first paragraph?

3 What does she identify as differences between her generation and her parents' generation?

- 4 What does she suggest causes girls to become flappers?



## Fashion in the 1920s

Read *Fashions and Accessories in the 1920s* (particularly *The 1920s—a "Cloche and Flapper" Decade, and More*) to answer the following questions.

- 1 Describe the two fashions most associated with the 1920s.

- 2 Describe the mood represented by the people and music in the video "Flappers – the Roaring Twenties."

- 3 Describe the songs that young people listen to today. How would you describe the mood(s) of these songs?

# Culture clashes today?

## Flappers vs today's youth

Watch this Roaring Twenties video and compare 1920s youth to young people today.



Using what you have learned, provide descriptions of 1920's flappers and today's youth on the various cultural topics listed in the center of the table below.

| Flappers of the 1920s | Topic to Consider                    | Today's Youth        |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|
| <input type="text"/>  | Entertainment and Leisure Activities | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/>  | Clothing and Fashion                 | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/>  | Music                                | <input type="text"/> |
| <input type="text"/>  | Reaction from Parents                | <input type="text"/> |



Write a response describing what the youth of today have in common with the flappers of the 1920s.