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# i Think = U.S. History

1920's and 30's



by Sharon Coletti  
and Kendra Corr

\*\* It is the goal of InspirEd Educators, Inc. to create instructional materials that are interesting, engaging, and challenging. Our student-centered approach incorporates both content and skills, placing particular emphasis on reading, writing, vocabulary development, and critical and creative thinking in the content areas.

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## Turning Inward

### Springboard:

Students should study “World War I Statistics” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain American isolationism after World War I.

**Materials:** World War I Statistics (Springboard handout)  
What’s Your Position? (handout)

**Terms to know:** **isolationism** - policy of a nation to avoid affairs with foreign countries  
**disarmament** - reduction in arms  
**tariff** - tax on goods entering a country

### Procedure:

- While reviewing the Springboard, explain that after the war many Americans became increasingly isolationist (review term) and wanted to avoid any relationships with other nations. Go on to explain that in this lesson the student(s) will take on the role of a policy advisor to the president to examine some of the issues of the time and how the public would have wanted the government to act on them.
- Distribute “What’s Your Position.” Have the student(s) work individually or in pairs to study the issues and complete the form. (Answers will vary but points to consider include:
  - The League of Nations:** *Isolationists would not have wanted to become involved in this organization, fearing future wars and other involvement. However, if the United States, the new “world power” didn’t join, the League would be much weaker and not be very effective.*
  - Disarmament Conference:** *Though it may seem that there was little need for a big navy if the country were to stay out of foreign affairs, the need to defend the United States must also be considered.*
  - The Fordney-McCumber Tariff:** *Isolationists would have wanted to discourage foreign trade, but the effects of such actions on the economy and whether or not other nations would retaliate with tariffs of their own should have been taken into account.)*
- Have the student(s) share and compare their answers and lead a discussion including the following questions:
  - ? Do you think that isolationism is a good policy? Why? (Answers will vary and should spark discussion.)
  - ? Do you think that the United States is an isolationist nation today? (Answers may vary, but examples of U.S. involvement outside of its borders should be noted.)

# WORLD WAR I STATISTICS



	The United States	Great Britain
Population in 1914	92,000,000	45,400,000
Troops Deployed	4,735,000	8,904,000
Killed in action	116,000	908,000
Wounded	204,000	2,090,000
Civilian deaths	757	109,000
Cost of war	\$22,625,253,000	\$35,334,012,000

Which of these statements is **FALSE** according to table information?

- A. World War I cost Great Britain more than the United States.
- B. There were more wounded British soldiers than American.
- C. The British sent more troops to World War I than the U.S.
- D. The war was more costly to the U.S. than to Great Britain.

Which of these statements can be **PROVEN** by table information?

- A. The Americans and their allies won World War I.
- B. In 1914, ninety-two million people lived in the U.S.
- C. There were more wounded soldiers in World War II.
- D. The cost of the war was about twenty two million dollars.

The term “civilian” **MOST NEARLY** means

- A. troops.
- B. foreign.
- C. non-military.
- D. soldier.

Another title for this table could be

- A. “The War in Europe.”
- B. “The Horrors of War.”
- C. “Never Again... until World War II?”
- D. “Death and Destruction of World War I”

Based on this information, what do you think the mood was like in the United States after World War I? How do you think people might have been affected by this?

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# WORLD WAR I STATISTICS ANSWERS & EXPLANATIONS



	The United States	Great Britain
Population in 1914	92,000,000	45,400,000
Troops Deployed	4,735,000	8,904,000
Killed in action	116,000	908,000
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Which of these statements is **FALSE** according to table information?

- A. World War I cost Great Britain more than the United States.
- B. There were more wounded British soldiers than American.
- C. The British sent more troops to World War I than the U.S.
- D. The war was more costly to the U.S. than to Great Britain.\*

*(Choices A, B, and C are supported information in the table, but the cost of the war was higher for Britain, making choice D false.)*

Which of these statements can be **PROVEN** by table information?

- A. The Americans and their allies won World War I.
- B. In 1914, ninety-two million people lived in the U.S.\*
- C. There were more wounded soldiers in World War II.
- D. The cost of the war was about fifty eight billion dollars.

*(There is insufficient information to prove Choices A or C. Students may think D makes sense but should realize there were far more than two countries in W.W. I.)*

The term “civilian” **MOST NEARLY** means

- A. troops.
- B. foreign.
- C. non-military.\*
- D. soldier.

*(Choices A and D are similar and B makes no sense, making C the correct choice.)*

Another title for this table could be

- A. “The War in Europe.”
- B. “The Horrors of War.”
- C. “Never Again... until World War II?”
- D. “Death and Destruction of World War I.”\*

*(Choice A ignores the U.S., B is too general, and C doesn’t make sense; so D is the best choice.)*

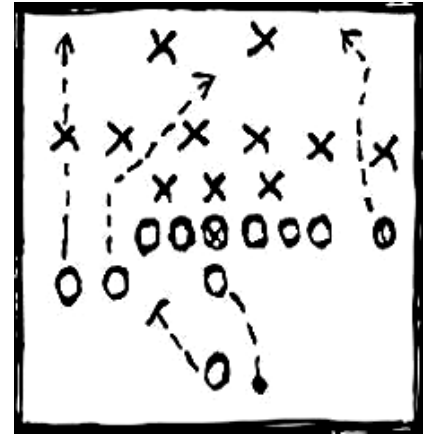
Based on this information, what do you think the mood was like in the United States after World War I? How do you think people might have been affected by this?

*Answers will vary widely, but students should infer that the horrors of World War I might make people fearful and hesitant to get involved in world affairs again. Student answers should spark discussion.*

# WHAT'S YOUR POSITION?

**SETTING THE SCENE:** You are an advisor to the president after the end of World War I. Your job is to give advice that will help him gain support among the American people, who are feeling very isolationist right now.

**DIRECTIONS:** Study the issues the president has to make decisions about. How will you advise him to act on each? Be sure to identify and explain both sides of each issue in the space provided.



## ISSUE ONE: The League of Nations

After World War I several nations joined together to form this organization, whose mission was to achieve international peace through cooperation and diplomacy. What advice will you give the president about joining the League of Nations? \_\_\_\_\_

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## ISSUE TWO: Disarmament

In 1921 an international meeting was held in Washington D.C., attended by nine of the world's major naval powers (Soviet Russia was not invited.). The nations spoke about limiting production of some battleships and scrapping or destroying some that were already built. How will you advise the president? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Issue Three: The Fordney-McCumber Tariff

In 1922 Congress passed this law, increasing taxes on farm products and food coming into the United States from other countries. Will you advise the president to sign it into law? \_\_\_\_\_

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## BOOM!

### Springboard:

Students should read “America’s Post-War Economy” and answer the questions.

**Objective:** The student will be able to explain the causes and effects of America’s economic boom in the wake of World War I.

**Materials:** America’s Post-War Economy (Springboard handout)  
Don Your Thinking Caps (2-page handout)

**Terms to know:** **consumerism** - economic principle that increased buying is beneficial for the economy

### Procedure:

- After reviewing the Springboard, explain that *in this lesson the student(s) will learn about some new technologies of the 1920’s and the economic and social effects they had on consumers.*
- Hand out copies of “Don Your Thinking Caps.” Have the student(s) work individually or in groups to “brainstorm” ideas about the effects of each of the new technologies. (If desired, they could use the Internet or other resources to give them ideas.)
- Have them share their answers and discuss. During the discussion, compare consumerism of the 1920’s to modern consumerism.
- **EXTENSION:** Have the student(s) find pictures of one or more of the technological advancements of the period. Then combine the pictures to begin a collage (poster or bulletin board) about the Roaring 1920’s.

# \$\$\$AMERICA'S POST-WAR ECONOMY\$\$\$

The Great War was at that time the most destructive conflict in history, particularly for the countries of Europe. Since so much of the war was fought there, many European farms, factories, and roads were destroyed and the continent struggled for years after to recover. As Europe rebuilt, the United States, untouched by the destruction of the war, entered into a period of abundant trade and prosperity.

A major labor shortage at home during the war resulted in the need for new and more efficient methods of production as well as many new industries. These improvements made production easier and cheaper. Workers could make more for less, resulting in higher profits for growing companies. As companies earned more money, workers' pay increased.

New inventions also allowed for greater leisure time. With more money to spend and more time to spend it, the nation saw a tremendous growth in **consumerism**. Americans were buying and spending at a furious rate, bringing even greater economic growth. With lower production costs the prices of goods fell, helping to fuel the buying frenzy.

Three Republican presidents in a row supported the economic boom and the businesses that fueled it. In fact the relationship between business and government is viewed by many historians as never having been closer. Laws protected American products and businesses and discouraged foreign imports.

Prices were low, money was available, spirits were high, and to many it seemed that the prosperity would never end. The decade of the "Roaring 20's" was indeed an exciting time in American economics.

Which factor did **NOT** cause America to experience an economic boom after the war?

- A. American factories were all intact after the war.
- B. Production of European products was reduced.
- C. A labor shortage drove workers' wage higher.
- D. U.S. goods were needed in foreign markets.

The American buying frenzy was fueled by all of these factors **EXCEPT**

- A. people had more leisure time.
- B. workers earned more money.
- C. goods and services cost less.
- D. laws discouraged imports.

Given the information in the passage, what do you think the term "consumerism" means? \_\_\_\_\_

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# \$\$\$ AMERICA'S POST-WAR ECONOMY ANSWERS AND EXPLANATIONS \$\$\$

The Great War was at that time the most destructive conflict in history, particularly for the countries of Europe. Since so much of the war was fought there, many European farms, factories, and roads were destroyed and the continent struggled for years after to recover. As Europe rebuilt, the United States, untouched by the destruction of the war, entered into a period of abundant trade and prosperity.

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Prices were low, money was available, spirits were high, and to many it seemed that the prosperity would never end. The decade of the "Roaring 20's" was indeed an exciting time in American economics.

Which factor did **NOT** cause America to experience an economic boom after the war?

- (*Though a labor shortage*)
- A. American factories were all intact after the war. *WOULD tend to drive*
  - B. Production of European products was reduced. *wages higher, in the*
  - C. A labor shortage drove workers' wage higher. \* *1920's wages went up*
  - D. U.S. goods were needed in foreign markets. *as profits increased.)*

The American buying frenzy was fueled by all of these factors **EXCEPT**

- A. people had more leisure time. (*Choice D was more of a benefit to businesses than consumers.*)
- B. workers earned more money. (*Competition of any kind is usually good for consumers.*)
- C. goods and services cost less.
- D. laws discouraged imports. \*

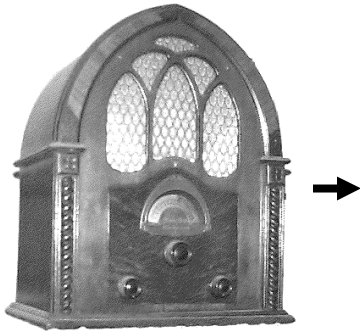
Given the information in the passage, what do you think the term "consumerism" means? *It is the idea that consumer spending boosts the economy. If consumers are positive about the economic outlook (or have a high level of consumer confidence), they tend to spend more which will generally boost the economy.*

# Don Your Thinking Caps!

New technologies made work easier and more pleasant, and life was good.  
Brainstorm ways that each invention changed America's culture and economy.



The Model-T Ford



The Radio



Silent Movies and  
(after 1926) Talkies



# Don Your Thinking Caps!



New technologies made work easier and more pleasant, and life was good.  
Brainstorm ways that each invention changed America's culture and economy.



**Airplanes**



**The Refrigerator**



**Gas and Electric Stoves**