



How far was the USA a divided society in the 1920s?

# The Rich

- **1929 1/3 of the nations wealth was shared by 5% of the pop.**
- **The National income was huge greater than 22 other countries put together, including Britain, Germany, Japan and France.**



# Rich vs. Poor

- The following groups did not enjoy the 'Boom' of the 'Roaring Twenties'.
- **Farmers**- overproduction, tariffs, competition from Canadian wheat , population falling . 6 million farmers forced off the land in 1920s, farm prices dropped by 50%
- **Old industry workers e.g. coal miners**-more efficient mining technology, competition from oil and electricity
- **The Unemployed**- in urban and agricultural areas
- **Poor white people**- in farming and the traditional industries
- **Black people** -racism and the cotton industry suffered from overproduction, demand for new materials such as cotton
- **Other minorities/immigrants** Many Hispanic people were unemployed
- There was a continuation of poverty for some, and a large rich vs. poor divide

# Race immigration controls

- Form of **Racial prejudice** against **immigrants** coming from the **South** and **Eastern Europe**. They felt that they were inferior and less well educated.
- **1917 literacy test**- favoured North and Western Europe immigrants
- **1921 Emergency Quota Act 3%**- favoured North and Western Europe immigrants
- **1924 National Origins Act 2%** Overall European immigrants restricted to 150,000

# The KKK



- Segregation
- Jim Crow Laws
- White supremacist organisation
- Used intimidation and violence-lynching, beatings rape
- Between 1920 and 1925 they had 5 million members. ( some joined because of fear others due to ignorant believe that they were protecting traditional America)n way of life)
- 1925- KKK was involved in a scandal (In Indiana KKK leader D.C. Stephenson- KKK lost much of its support.)

# Learn key words for each topic

- WASPs = White Anglo Saxon Protestants.
- Quota Law, 1922
- KKK = Ku Klux Klan.
- White Supremacists.
- KKK hated black people, Chinese, Catholics and Jews.
- Methods of KKK: terror, lynching, whipping castration and reasons for their hiding their identity.

# Prohibition

The drinking of Alcohol was prohibited by Law  
in 1920s America

- **Volsted Act of 1920** brought an amendment to the constitution into force.
- It became illegal to manufacture, distribute or sell alcohol.
- By end of WWI 75% of US states were dry any way. It was therefore a small step to spread this to all 48 states
- Alcohol was considered to be over **0.5 %**



# Prohibition continued

- There was opposition to the law. -AAPA  
(Association Against Prohibition Amendment)
- The law came into force without major protest.
- Most people were either happy with the Act or resigned to it

# Enforcement a problem

- **Agents** appointed but there were too few. ( Izzy Einstein and Moe Smith had to wear disguises as they became well known figures)
- **Speakeasies**( In New York thought to be 30,000 by 1929)
- 5,000 people died from drinking homemade **Moonshine.**
- **Bootleggers** smuggled in alcohol from Mexico and Canada



# Organised crime

- 1926-1929 gang warfare led to 1300 murders
- **Al Capone** was a gang leader, who gained control of Chicago. (**Racketeer**)
- He **bribed officials** and employed 1,000 men.
- His business was estimated at being worth between \$60 million and \$100 million dollars per year.
- **St Valentines Day Massacre-** 1929
- **Prohibition ended in 1933-** clear that not working and after Wall Street crash drinks industry would provide jobs

# Flappers

(term from the movie 'The Flapper' 1920 starring Olive Thomas)

- Lipstick, short hair, shorter skirts, high heels, permissiveness and sexual freedom, stayed out late dancing, frivolity.
- Cast aside all social restraints. Tended to be middle class and urban.
- Controversial figures many American women of the time continued with a conservative lifestyle, especially in the countryside.

# How useful source A to a historian studying prohibition in America.

- A photo of prohibition officers tipping alcohol down the drain in 1912, taken by a government official



## Why useful

- **Action taken**-Prohibition officers need try to enforce the law
- **Alcohol obtained despite Law** -Bootleg alcohol from Canada and Mexico
- **Demand for Alcohol**  
Ordinary people would not obey the law prohibition turned them into criminals
- **How the alcohol was destroyed**

## Limitations

- No information on methods: how many people arrested, how many convictions which states were most likely to break the law, role of the police, speakeasies, corruption, moonshine
- Why the government introduced prohibition and when, Volstead Act
- The link between prohibition and organised crime, Al Capone

# Provenance and purpose of the source

- Who produced the source?
  - Why was it produced ?  
( Who would be expected to look at the source?)
  - When was it produced?
  - Is the source typical?
  - Can you trust the source
- Answer the question
  - Look at mark scheme
  - What do you need to do to improve your answer.

# POWER

- Prohibition
- Organised crime
- Women
- Entertainment
- Racism

# How useful (10 mark question)

- One of the oldest and perhaps the noblest of human activities(Aims) has been the abolition of poverty.....we in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land.
- Herbert Hoover 1928
- How useful is source A for a historian studying American society in the 1920s? ( use page 187-190 and 191-193



THE ONLY WAY TO HANDLE IT.