

Explain pick-up

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

This revision activity works best if you do it with a friend, and talk about it as you do it.

The 39 cards below all describe some aspect of life in America in the 1920s.

Cut up the cards and place them face down. In turn, pick up a card, explain whose life it might affect, how, and how much, then place it face up in one of two piles: 'made life better', and 'made life worse'.

When you have finished 'weigh up' the two piles – did life get better, or worse, in the 1920s?

Now repeat the game from the point of view of specific groups – e.g. **the WASPS, black Americans, immigrants, farm workers, flappers etc.** Is the answer the same for EVERYONE, or did different groups fare differently?

100 million Americans went to the movies every week	'Jim Crow' laws segregated blacks from whites – separate buses, schools etc	Automobiles allowed increased mobility and freedom
Charlie Chaplin used film to explore social issues	Contraceptives were frowned upon because they might encourage sex outside marriage	Electricity
Farm workers' wages were only a third of industrial workers' wages	Films and newsreels brought celebrities and world events to people's notice	Flappers: 'lovely, brainless, cigarette-smoking morsels of undisciplined sex'
Gangsters such as Al Capone	Government agents such as Eliot Ness	Growing surplus wealth and a shorter working week
Half a million farmers lost their farms in 1929	Americanisation classes	Illegal moonshine was smuggled by bootleggers and sold in 250,000 speakeasies

In 1929, 60% of Americans lived below the poverty line	In the south, black Americans worked as farm labourers and sharecroppers	Jesse Owens, Jackie Robinson and Josephine Baker
Less than 10% of rural houses had electricity or running water	Many black Americans suffered discrimination and had low-paying, menial jobs	Millions enjoyed sport: baseball and boxing
Most women still looked after their families without the help of any household gadgets	Native Americans lived in poverty and repression on Reservations	New jazz dances such as the Charleston and the Black Bottom
New York's black Harlem district was overcrowded and segregated	Numbers of working women rose to 10 million by 1929	Plane flights
Radio brought the world into the home	The 'Harlem Renaissance' and the 'New Negro'	The 'Monkey Trial'
The 'Red Scare'	The Anti-Flirt Association	The Ku Klux Klan grew
The NAACP (1920)	The National Origins Act (1924)	There were race riots in Chicago in 1919
Sacco and Vanzetti	Women were given the vote in 1920	Women's fashions and behaviour allowed greater freedom