

The Jazz Age

By Sarah Gudgeon

1. Read

Do you prefer cities or the countryside? Do you like living in an apartment building or do you dream of a big farmhouse with horses and chickens and sheep? Well, in the past, people didn't have a choice; you generally lived in the area where you were born. There were no cars to move from place to place, no cosmopolitan cities, few city jobs and no jobs at all for women. Women stayed home and they had a lot of children. Then, in 1920s America, everything started to change. The Ford car company produced cheap cars, businessmen opened chain stores, women got the vote and young people from all over the country moved to cities to work. There was a cultural explosion; freedom, fashion, dance and music meant that young people could have fun. Jazz bands played their music in big cities like New York and people danced the Charleston and the Black Bottom. Not everybody was happy about the liberated 'roaring twenties', but the new generation continued to party and left the modern consumer society as their legacy.

Glossary

Chain store: un negozio che fa parte di una catena

The Charleston and the Black Bottom: i nomi di due tipi di balletti jazz.

The roaring twenties: il nome dato agli anni venti che erano caratterizzati da divertimento e libertà.

2. True or False?

- a. Everyone in America lived in the countryside in the past. T / F
- b. Before the 1920s there were no jobs for women. T / F
- c. Ford produced motor cars that cost a lot of money. T / F
- d. Businessmen opened boutiques. T / F
- e. American culture changed in the 1920s. T / F
- f. We now live in a consumer society. T / F

3. Talk to a partner

A: Do you like jazz music?

B: Yes, I do. / No, I don't.

A: Why / Why not?

B: Because... / I prefer...

Teacher's Notes

2. True or False?

a. F b. T c. F d. F e. T f. T

3. Talk to a partner

Post-task: If you have the possibility, let your students listen to some jazz music and show them a video clip of young people doing the Charleston.

Extend the discussion by asking the students what other kinds of music they like.