

# Roaring Twenties Projects



# Projects 1 & 2: Creating a 1920s Advertisement & "Buy Now, Pay Later" Consumer Credit Activity

**Objective:** Students will design a full-page vintage advertisement for a popular 1920s consumer product to demonstrate how mass production, brand-new technologies, and the rise of consumer credit shifted American buying habits during the Roaring Twenties.

**Step 1: Introduce 1920s Economic Angles** Explain to students that the 1920s economic boom relied heavily on convincing regular families to buy brand-new inventions. Introduce the three primary "persuasive angles" of the decade:

- **The Luxury Angle:** *"Be the envy of your neighbors!"* (Focuses on status symbols).
- **The Time-Saving Angle:** *"Give mother more free time every afternoon!"* (Focuses on modern electrical labor-savers).
- **The Credit Angle:** *"Why wait? Take it home today for just \$1.00 down!"* (Focuses on the brand-new concept of installment plans).

**Step 2: Examine Authentic Examples** Show students the included classroom examples to analyze real 1920s layout styles:

- *The Mock 1920s Luxury Catalog Page* (featuring the Model T, tabletop radio, electric washing machine, and vacuum cleaner) to look at pricing structures and installment text.
- *The 1923 Ladies' Home Journal Campbell's Soup Advertisement* to study authentic font styles, slogans, and artistic layouts from the era.

**Step 3: Review Persuasive Techniques** Before students begin writing their own ad copy, review core media literacy concepts (such as bandwagon, celebrity endorsement, and emotional appeal).

💡 **Teacher Tip:** You can find a complete breakdown of these strategies and ready-to-use worksheets on the [Persuasive Techniques Handout](#).

**Step 4: Select a Product & Create** Distribute drawing paper or a digital slide template. Have students select one iconic 1920s product from the provided price sheet (such as a mechanical refrigerator, a side-swing electric toaster, a Kodak Brownie camera, or an electric clothes iron) to design their page.

## Student Project Requirements

To receive full credit, the student's advertisement must include the following elements:

- [ ] **Bold, Simple Illustration:** A large, central drawing of the product mimicking the clean, blackline print style of 1920s newspapers.
- [ ] **Catchy Slogan:** A prominent headline that uses at least one historical **Persuasive Angle** (Luxury, Time-Saving, or Credit).
- [ ] **The "Buy on Credit" Element:** Explicit pricing copy that shows how advertising encouraged buyers to use debt (e.g., listing both the *Cash Price* and the low *Installment Plan* weekly/monthly options).
- [ ] **Three Persuasive Techniques:** Integrated body text or callout bubbles utilizing at least three specific advertising strategies (e.g., an emotional appeal about family health, a bandwagon statement about modern households, or a testimonial).

## 1920s CONSUMER ECONOMY

# SHOPPING FOR MODERN LUXURIES



**A MODERN RADIO**  
HEAR THE NEWS LIVE!

CASH PRICE: **\$30.00**  
INSTALLMENT: \$3.00 Down,  
☞ \$1.00 Week.



**HENRY FORD'S MODEL T**  
THE CAR FOR EVERY FAMILY

CASH PRICE: **\$290.00**  
INSTALLMENT: \$5.00 Down,  
☞ \$5.00 Month.



**ELECTRIC WASHING  
MACHINE**  
SAVE TIME & LABOR.

CASH PRICE: **\$75.00**  
INSTALLMENT: \$5.00 Down,  
\$2.50 Month.



**THE "WHIRLWIND"  
VACUUM CLEANER**  
KEEP DUST OUT OF YOUR HOME.

CASH PRICE: **\$45.00**  
INSTALLMENT: \$4.00 Down,  
\$1.50 Month.

# A treat for your hunger!

Give this hearty, filling soup the supreme test. Eat Campbell's Vegetable Soup when you are hungry. Relish its delicious satisfaction. Its many different flavors are so perfectly blended that it delights the taste trained to the best of food. Its nourishment is so generous that it is ideal for luncheon or as a part of the principal meal of the day. Fifteen fresh, succulent vegetables are in it, with invigorating broth of fine beef, choice cereals, dainty herbs and seasoning. Have Campbell's Vegetable Soup always on hand to serve whenever you wish your soup to be a substantial part of the meal.



21 kinds

12 cents a can

# Campbell's SOUPS

LOOK FOR THE RED-AND-WHITE LABEL

## Example Products for Advertisements

### Small Home Appliances (The Labor Savers)

**The Electric Iron:** Before this, irons had to be heated directly on a stove. The electric iron was marketed as a miracle for keeping clothes crisp without heating up the whole kitchen.

**Cash Price:** \$6.00

**Installment Plan:** \$1.00 down, \$1.00 a week

**The Electric Toaster:** Early 1920s toasters didn't "pop up"—they had little porcelain or metal swing-doors on the side that you had to manually flip to toast the other side of the bread.

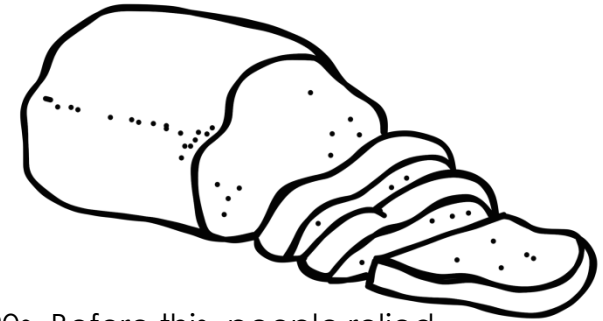
**Cash Price:** \$5.00

**Installment Plan:** \$1.00 down, \$0.50 a week

**The Mechanical Refrigerator:** Brands like Frigidaire and Kelvinator took off in the 1920s. Before this, people relied on an "icebox" that required a literal block of ice delivered by an ice man every week.

**Cash Price:** \$250.00

**Installment Plan:** \$15.00 down, \$10.00 a month



## Entertainment & Technology

**The Camera (The Kodak Brownie):** Kodak made photography accessible to regular people and children. Students can advertise a camera by encouraging families to "capture their vacation memories" or "snapshot the kids."

**Cash Price:** \$4.00

**Installment Plan:** Cash only *(Typically low enough that credit wasn't offered)*

**Electric Record Players (The Phonograph/Gramophone):** While the catalog featured a cabinet radio, a phonograph allowed families to bring jazz music into their living rooms on vinyl records whenever they wanted.

**Cash Price:** \$50.00

**Installment Plan:** \$5.00 down, \$4.00 a month



## Food & Daily Culture

**Sliced Bread (Wonder Bread):** Invented at the very tail-end of the decade (1928), it was marketed as a technological marvel. It's a hilarious and highly relatable item for kids to write a dramatic advertisement for.

**Cash Price:** \$0.10 per loaf

**Installment Plan:** Cash only

**Canned Foods and Snacks:** Brands like **Campbell's Soup**, **Heinz Tomato Ketchup**, and **Welch's Grape Jelly** flooded the brand-new chain grocery stores. Students could also pitch classic 1920s treats like **Popsicles** (patented in 1924) or **Baby Ruth** candy bars.

**Campbell's Tomato Soup**

**Cash Price:** \$0.12 per can

**Installment Plan:** Cash only

**Baby Ruth Candy Bar**

**Cash Price:** \$0.05

**Installment Plan:** Cash only

## Project #2 "Buy Now, Pay Later" Consumer Credit Activity Teacher Information

### How to Do It:

Provide students with a fixed 1920s cash budget and the “**1920s Consumer Economy**” and “**Example Products for Advertisements**”. Students must choose whether to pay upfront with cash or use an installment plan (“buying on credit”). Students map out a multi-month family ledger to track their weekly payments and examine how debt fueled the decade's economic boom.

Students write a brief prediction about what might happen to a family's installment plan goods if the main earner suddenly lost their job, foreshadowing the transition into the Great Depression.

### Teacher Information

#### Henry Ford's Model T

- **Catalog Price:** \$290.00
- **Historical Reality:** A brand-new, no-frills Model T runabout dropped to its lowest price of **\$260 to \$290** around 1924–1925. Because an average factory worker made roughly \$5 a day at the time, saving up or using an installment plan allowed a family to own a vehicle for the first time in history.

#### A Modern Radio

- **Catalog Price:** \$30.00
- **Historical Reality:** In the early 1920s, high-end console radios could cost well over \$100. However, by 1926, mass production flooded the market with table-top models, vacuum-tube sets, and smaller units that sold right around the **\$30 to \$45** range.

#### Electric Washing Machine

- **Catalog Price:** \$75.00
- **Historical Reality:** Electric appliances were the ultimate "status symbol" for 1920s homes transitioning to electricity. Early electric washing machines (like the Thor or Maytag models) typically ran between **\$75 and \$150**. Because this was a massive chunk of change, washing machines were one of the number one items bought on installment plans.

#### The Vacuum Cleaner

- **Catalog Price:** \$45.00
- **Historical Reality:** An upright electric vacuum cleaner (like a classic Hoover or Premier) cost right around **\$35 to \$50** in Sears or Montgomery Ward catalogs during the late 1920s.

Buying all four items upfront would cost a family **\$440.00** in cash—an impossible amount for a family bringing in \$25 to \$30 a week. But by using the installment plans shown on the sheet, they could bring all four luxuries home immediately for just **\$17.00 down** and a manageable-looking **\$10.00 a month**.

It's a fantastic, historically accurate way to show students exactly how consumer debt quietly built up right before the 1929 crash!

## Project #3 — Harlem Renaissance Artist Spotlight

Students explore the cultural explosion of the 1920s by stepping into the sights, sounds, and rhythms of the Harlem Renaissance. By linking historical fiction to genuine jazz roots, students gain a firsthand appreciation for the decade's vibrant musical and artistic shifts.

**How to Do It:** Read Chapter 15 or 16 of *Dave at Night* by Gail Carson Levine, focusing on the sensory descriptions of the late-night Harlem rent party, the live music, and the slang. While reading or immediately after, play a historical audio clip of 1920s jazz legends like Louis Armstrong or Duke Ellington. Have students map out a sensory chart detailing what Dave saw, heard, and felt, noting specific historical slang and cultural markers used in the text.

### Materials:

- excerpts from *Dave at Night* (Chapters 15 or 16)
- audio player and recordings of 1920s jazz music
- sensory graphic organizer or notebook paper

**Optional Extension:** Students use 1920s slang terms found in the book to write a short, creative dialogue or mock journal entry from the perspective of a young person experiencing city life during the Jazz Age.



## Project #4 — Roaring Twenties Pop Culture Collage

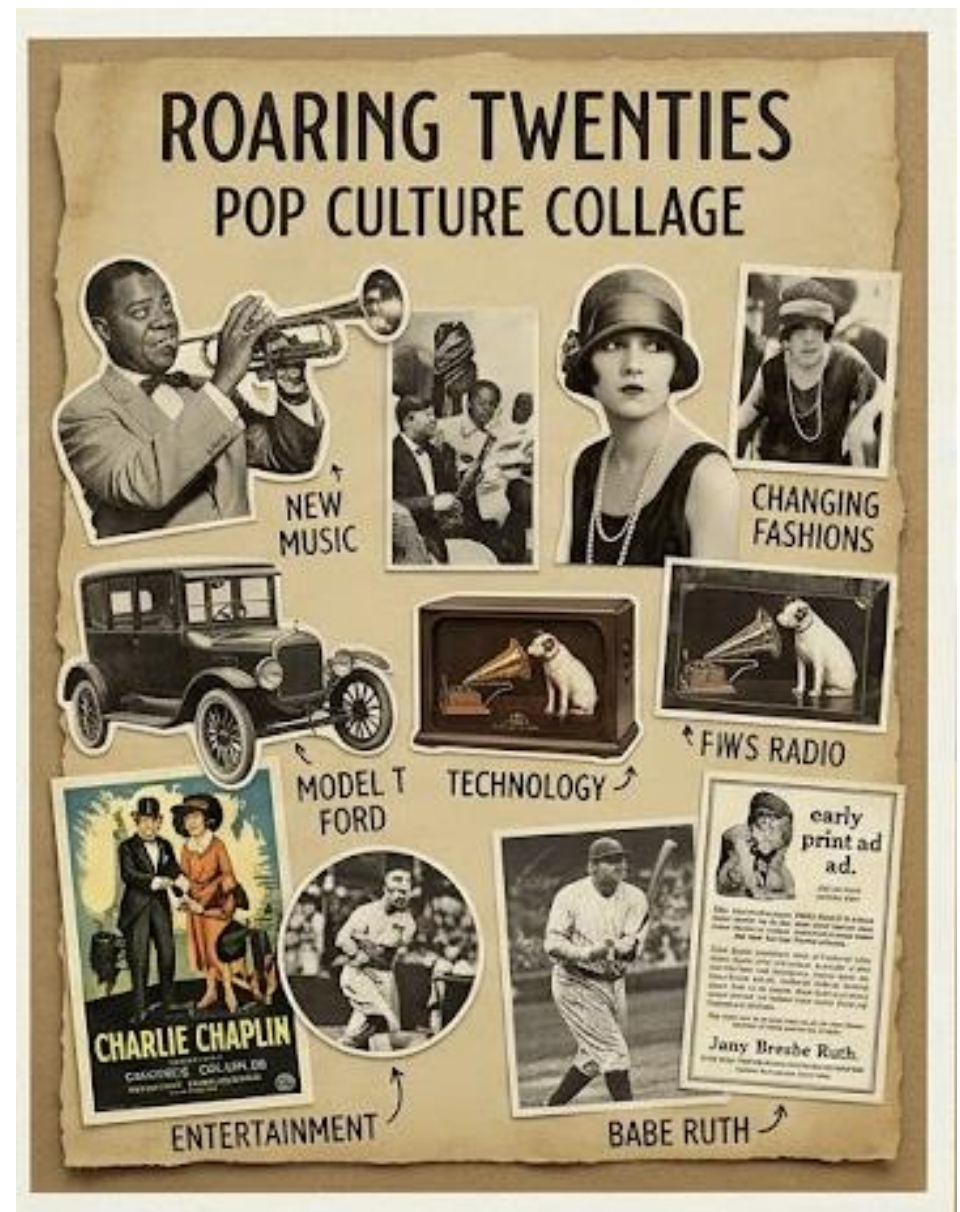
Students visually synthesize the sweeping social changes of the 1920s by creating a multi-media culture collage. This project highlights the rise of mass media, consumerism, and brand-new entertainment trends that reshaped American daily life.

**How to Do It:** Have students research the vibrant symbols of the era. On large paper, students draw or compile a diverse collage featuring iconic imagery from the decade. They must include representations of at least four categories: Jazz Age musicians, changing fashions (such as flappers), early print advertisements or consumer inventions (like the radio or Model T), and classic entertainment like silent movies or baseball stars.

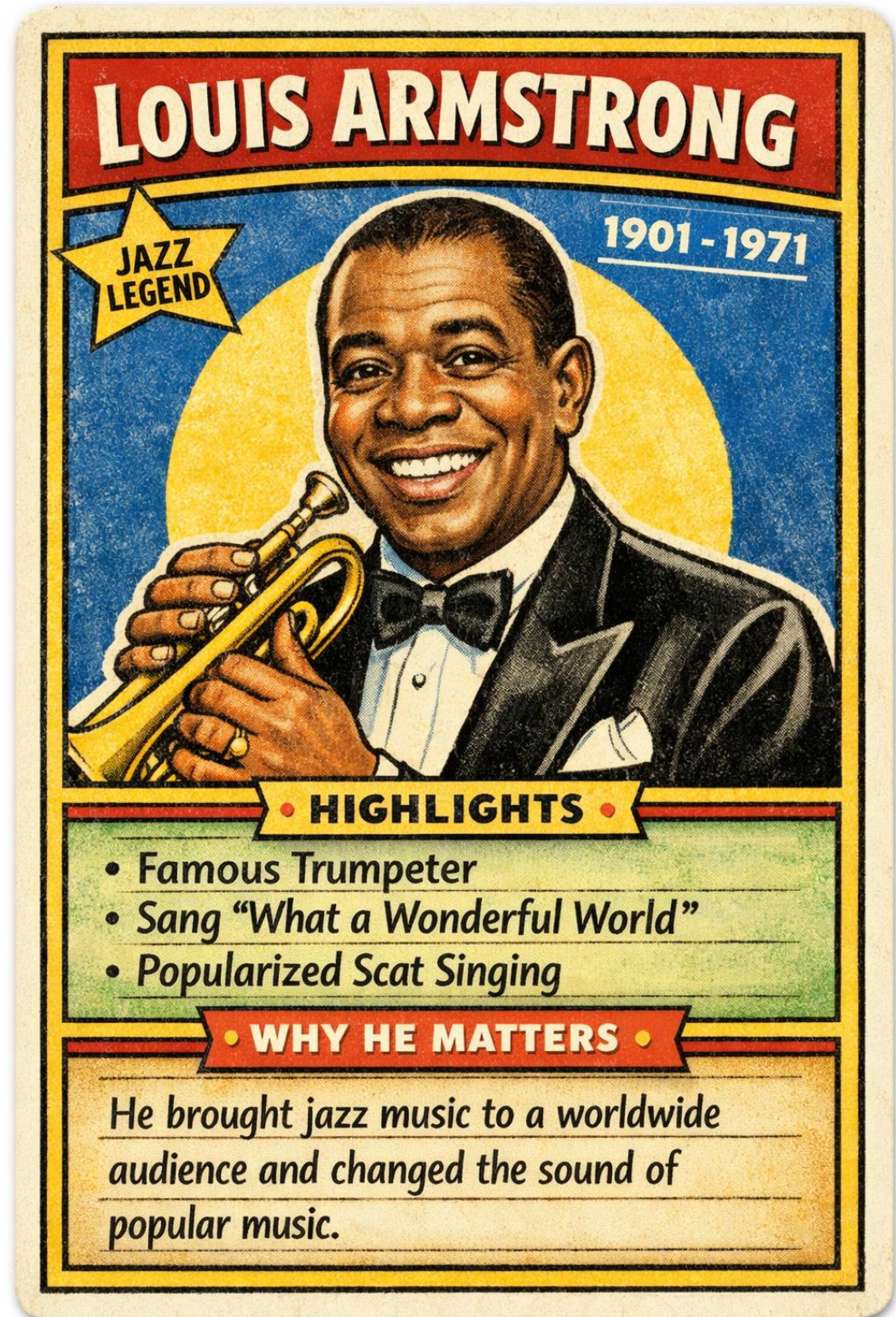
### Materials:

- large construction paper or poster board
- markers, colored pencils, or historical clip art cutouts
- glue sticks and scissors
- classroom research materials or safe historical image databases

**Optional Extension:** Students act as a museum curator and write a 3–4 sentence “exhibit placard” explaining how their chosen images represent the spirit of optimism and rebellion that earned the decade its “Roaring” nickname.



Project #5 — Famous People of the  
Twenties Trading Cards



## Project #6 — Roaring Twenties Match-Up Activity

### Preparation

1. Print the three pages of boxed images on card stock.
2. Print the matching name cards and description cards on separate sheets.
3. Cut apart all cards along the borders. You will have three sets per person:
  - image card
  - name card
  - description card

### Setup Options

- **Individual Practice:** Give each student one complete set of cards to match independently.
- **Small Groups:** Mix all cards together and let groups race to complete the matches.
- **Learning Centers:** Place the cards in envelopes or bins labeled *Roaring Twenties Match-Up* for self-guided review.

### Activity Directions

1. Students read each description and decide which person it describes.
2. They match the description card to the correct name card and image card.
3. When finished, students check their matches using the teacher answer key.

### Teacher Tip

Laminate cards for durability if using in centers or multiple classes.

### Optional extension:

Have students write one sentence explaining how each person represented change or progress in the 1920s.

Please note that  
the cards are in  
the correct order  
and will serve as  
an answer key.

**Louis Armstrong**



**jazz musician  
celebrated for his  
trumpet playing and  
joyful singing style that  
helped spread jazz  
around the world**

**F. Scott Fitzgerald**



**wrote stories about  
wealthy young people  
chasing pleasure and  
success during the Jazz  
Age**

**Ernest  
Hemingway**



**known for simple, direct  
writing about courage  
and adventure; served  
as an ambulance driver  
in World War I**

**Jack Dempsey**



famous heavyweight boxer whose thrilling matches drew huge crowds and radio audiences in the 1920s

**Gertrude Ederle**



Olympic swimmer who became the first woman to swim across the English Channel, beating the men's record time

**Charles Lindbergh**



pilot who made the first nonstop solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean, inspiring worldwide admiration

**Sinclair Lewis**



criticized small-town life and American business culture in his novels; first American to win the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**Babe Ruth**



became a national sports hero by hitting record-breaking home runs and helping make baseball America's favorite pastime

**Duke Ellington**



composer and bandleader whose elegant jazz performances made Harlem's Cotton Club famous

# Project #7 — Governor Austin Peay's Reform Checklist

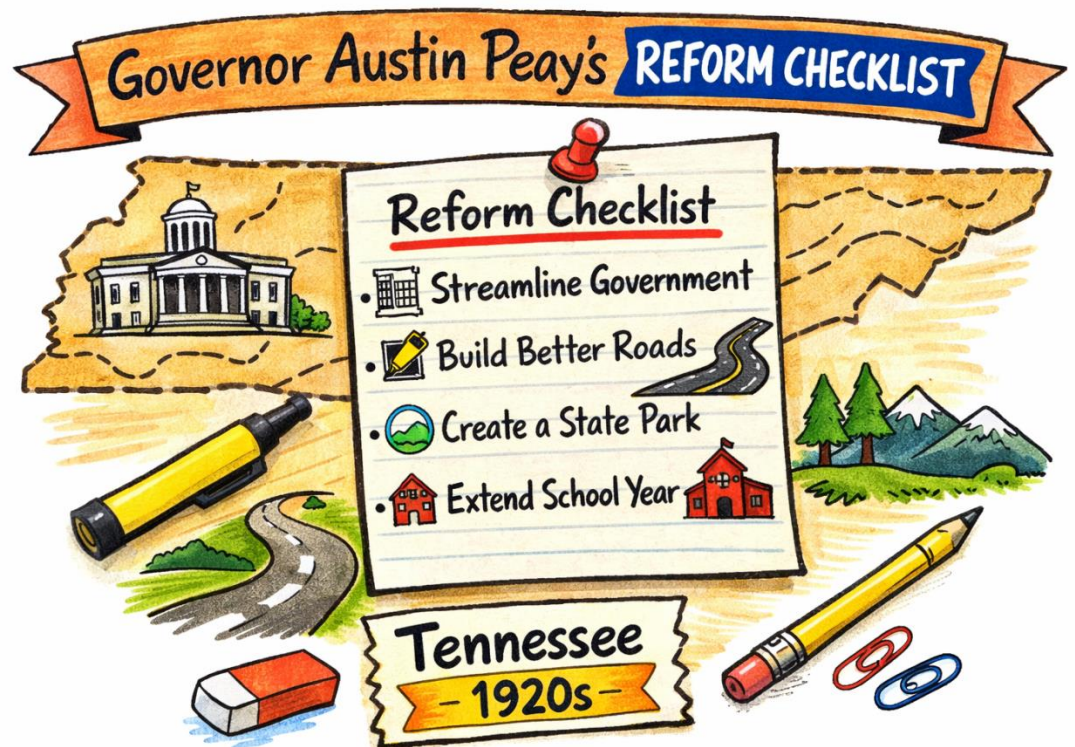
Students explore how state-level political leadership reshaped daily life in the 1920s. By examining the reforms of Tennessee Governor Austin Peay, students discover the lasting impact of government infrastructure, conservation, and education policies.

**How to Do It:** After reading the political overview, provide students with a "State Reform Checklist" featuring Governor Peay's key initiatives: roads, school term extensions, government reorganization, and national park creation. Students analyze each reform and write a brief explanation detailing how it directly improved life for regular citizens and families during the decade.

## Materials:

- Lesson 4 reading text or webpage summary
- Reform Checklist graphic organizer
- pencils and highlighters

**Optional Extension:** Students design a commemorative travel postcard or a vintage state highway map celebrating the opening of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park or the newly improved 1920s state roads.



# Governor Austin Peay's Reform Checklist

**Directions:** Governor Austin Peay served as Tennessee's governor from 1923 to 1927. He passed massive reforms to modernize the state. For each item on the checklist below, read the historical text and explain in **one or two complete sentences** how this change directly improved daily life for regular citizens and families in the 1920s.

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## 1. Reorganizing the State Government

•**Historical Fact:** Governor Peay consolidated 64 scattered, inefficient state departments down into just 8 streamlined bureaus to save money and reduce corruption.

•**How it improved daily life:**

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## 2. Improving and Paving State Roads

•**Historical Fact:** He created the state's first major highway fund, constructing thousands of miles of paved roads connecting rural areas to major cities.

•**How it improved daily life:**

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## 3. Creating the Great Smoky Mountains National Park

•**Historical Fact:** Governor Peay actively pushed for the preservation of the land, helping secure the initial state funds to buy up timber acres for a new public park.

•**How it improved daily life:**

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## 4. Guaranteeing an 8-Month School Term

•**Historical Fact:** Before his reform, rural schools often closed early when funding ran out. He passed a law ensuring every public school stayed open for at least 8 months a year.

•**How it improved daily life:**

## Project #8 — Harding vs. Coolidge: Debate Cards

Students create debate-style cards comparing the political ideas of Presidents Warren Harding and Calvin Coolidge. This activity helps students understand how each leader shaped the decade.

### How to Do It:

Students create two cards:

**Harding Card:** "Return to normalcy," stability after WWI, high tariffs

**Coolidge Card:** Limited government, support for business, economic growth

Students then write a short explanation of how these policies affected the economy of the 1920s.

**Materials:** Index cards or notebook paper, colored pencils or markers, pencil

**Optional Extension:** Students choose one policy and explain how it might affect families, workers, or businesses.

# AMERICAN HISTORY SERIES World War I & Roaring Twenties

Reading Passages, Activities & Organizers

Teach the [Roaring Twenties](#) with confidence. These student-friendly handouts break down key events with clear notes, organizers, and activities that make the era easy to understand.



Research Passages



Respond



Write

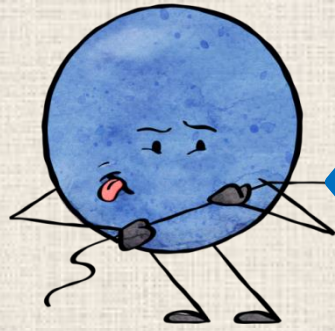
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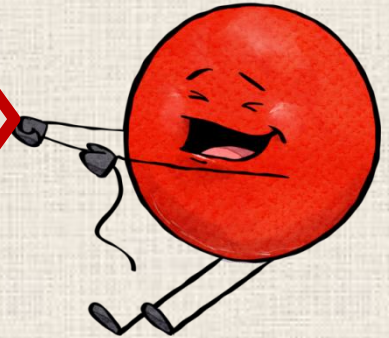




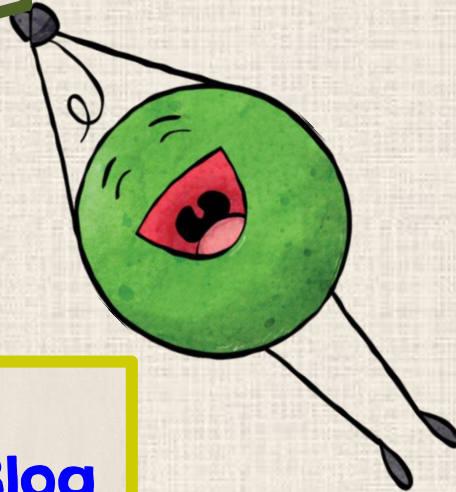
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