Helps for Benchmark

- SPI – 7.5 – Recognize the new trends, ideas, and innovations of the 1920’s popular culture (i.e., radio, automobile, Prohibition, organized crime, sports).
- Radio – In November 1920 the Westinghouse Company broadcast the news of Harding’s landslide election victory from station KDKA in Pittsburgh – one of the first public broadcasts in history.
- KDKA is the oldest radio station in America.
- In 1926 the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) set up a network of stations to broadcast daily programs.
- By 1927, almost 700 stations were in America.
- Sales of radio equipment grew dramatically.
- In 1928 the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) assembled a coast-to-coast network of stations.
- The first presidential election campaign to use radio broadcasts was in 1928, when Herbert Hoover won election.
- The radio networks sold more than $1 million in advertising time.
- Automobile – By the 1920’s the automobile had become an accepted part of American life.
- Mass production, or large-scale manufacturing done with machinery, increased supply and reduced costs. Workers could be paid more and the consumer goods they bought cost less.
- Cars revolutionized American life.
- They eased the isolation of rural life and enabled more people to live farther from work.
- An entirely new kind of worker, the auto commuter, appeared.
- Since commuters could drive from their homes in suburbia to their workplace, other forms of urban transportation, such as the trolley, became less popular.
- Prohibition – The movement to ban alcohol grew throughout the late 1800’s.
- People supported the prohibition of alcohol for religious reasons; others though prohibition would reduce unemployment, domestic violence, and poverty.
- The 18th Amendment, which banned alcohol in the United States, went into effect in January of 1920.
- The 18th Amendment granted federal and state governments the power to enforce Prohibition, marking a dramatic increase in federal police power.
- The Treasury Department struggled to enforce Prohibition.
- During the 1920’s treasury agents made more than 540,000 arrests, but Americans persisted in blatantly ignoring the law.
- People went to secret bars called speakeasies, where they could purchase alcohol.
- Liquor also was readily available in rural areas, where bootlegging – the illegal production and distribution of liquor – was common.
- The battle to repeal Prohibition began almost as soon as the 18th Amendment was ratified.
- The 21st Amendment ratified in 1933, repealed the 18th Amendment and ended Prohibition.
- The 18th Amendment is the only amendment to ever be repealed.
- Prohibition had reduced alcohol consumption, but it had not improved society in the ways its supporters had hoped.
- Huge profits could be made smuggling liquor from Canada and the Caribbean.
- Crime became big business, and some gangsters had enough money to corrupt local politicians.
Al Capone, one of the most successful and violent gangsters of the era, had many police officers, judges, and other officials on his payroll.

Finally, Elliot Ness, the leader of a special Treasury Department task force, brought Capone to justice.

Sports and Entertainment – In the 1920’s motion pictures were very popular.

Audiences came to see such stars as Mary Pickford, Charlie Chaplin, Tom Mix, Douglas Fairbanks, Sr., Rudolph Valentino, and Clara Bow.

In 1927 the first “talking” picture – The Jazz Singer – was produced.

The mass media – radio, movies, newspapers, and magazines aimed at a broad audience – did more than just entertain.

Their easy availability to millions helped break down patterns of provincialism, or narrow focus on local interests.

Thanks to radio, sports such as baseball and boxing reached new heights of popularity in the 1920’s.

Babe Ruth became a national hero.

Jack Dempsey held the title of World Heavyweight Champion from 1919 to 1926, when he lost it to Gene Tunney.

Newspaper coverage helped generate enthusiasm for college football.

One of the most famous players of the 1920’s was Red Grange of the University of Illinois.

Grange was known as the “Galloping Ghost.”

Bobby Jones was the best golfer of the decade.

Tennis players Bill Tilden and Helen Willis dominated the tennis world.

In 1926 Bobby Jones became the first golfer to win the U.S. Open and the British Open in the same year.

Gertrude Ederle shattered records by swimming the English Channel in a little over 14 hours in 1927.