Twelve political cartoons examining facets of economic prosperity in the 1920s appear on the following pages. From four general circulation (white-owned) newspapers and one black-owned newspaper, they span the years 1919, when the nation was mired in postwar recession and unrest, to 1928, when unparalleled prosperity seemed in the grasp of anyone with capital, energy, and gumption.

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?

- **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?

- **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.

- **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon’s meaning?

- **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist’s point?

- **TONE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?

- **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist’s point?

**QUESTIONS**

- How does the object labeled “prosperity” (in all but three of the cartoons) impact the cartoon’s point?

- How did white and black cartoonists address the unequal distribution of American prosperity in the 1920s?
“Carefull”

Los Angeles Times, August 19, 1919
Cartoonist: Edmund Gale
"A Simple Remedy for Insomnia for Those Who Lie Awake Worrying About Being Blown Out of Bed"

Des Moines Register, November 17, 1919
Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

Industrial Magnates. U.S. INDUSTRIAL PROSPERITY. Don't blow the safe / Here is the combination — D-I-V-I-S-I-O-N-O-F PROFITS. Some of the cake. Some of the comforts. A dram of the [---]
"On the Road to Normalcy"

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 6, 1920
Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

Homeward Bound: Thrift. Industry.

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Brookhart: Smith Wildman Brookhart, U.S. Senator from Iowa whose Progressive stand for farmers’ aid and railroad regulation antagonized his fellow Republicans, earning him such labels as “agrarian radical” and “renegade Republican.”

Lafollettism: Support for the Progressive policies of Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette.

Reproduced by permission of the Chicago Tribune. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“It’s Hard to Fool Those Backstage”

The Pittsburgh Courier, June 13, 1925


“Watch Your Step!”

Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1925
Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

Reproduced by permission of the Los Angeles Times. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Hot Dog”

*Los Angeles Times*, July 25, 1926

Cartoonist: Morris [George Matthew Adams Newspaper Service]

Copyright holder of Adams Newspaper Service content unidentified; search in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Prosperity! Blah!!”

Public Ledger, Philadelphia [n.d.]
as reprinted in the Los Angeles Times, Sept. 14, 1926
Cartoonist: Charles Henry “Bill” Sykes
“Neglecting the Other Child”

Los Angeles Times, October 11, 1926

Cartoonist: Morris [George Matthew Adams Newspaper Service]
In April 1927 a joint report of the National Industrial Conference Board and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recommended measures to provide relief for American farmers who continued to struggle through an intransigent postwar agricultural depression while the nation’s business and industrial sectors expanded at a seemingly unstoppable rate.

Reproduced by permission of the Chicago Tribune. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Sound as a Dollar”

*Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 1927

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

Regular surveys of business “health” were conducted by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce under Secretary Herbert Hoover.

Reproduced by permission of the Los Angeles Times. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
“Getting Ahead of the Band Wagon!”

*Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1928

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

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