AMERICA # CLASS

BECOMING MODERN: AMERICA IN THE 1920S PRIMARY SOURCE COLLECTION



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# **BECOMING MODERN: AMERICA IN THE 1920S**

americainclass.org/sources/becomingmodern

A collection of primary resources—historical documents, literary texts, and works of art thematically organized with notes and discussion questions

## \_Resources by Theme\_\_\_

### THE AGE MODERNITY MACHINE PROSPERITY DIVISIONS

I. THE AGE: AN OVERVIEW	Text printout pages * Online video/audio	
1 <u>"The Age We Live In"</u> : contemporary commentary		5
2 Only Yesterday, by Frederick Lewis Allen, 1931: year-by-year selections, 1919-1929		10
3 <u>Chicago Tribune political cartoons</u> , 1918-1929 (24)		25
4 <u>New Yorker cartoons</u> , 1925-1929 (13)		9
5 Felix the Cat animated cartoons, 1922-1927 (8)	Internet Moving Picture Archive/NHC	*
6 <u>Detroit News newsreels</u> , 1923-1928 (30)	Detroit News Pictorial/WSU	*
7 <u>New York City subway posters</u> , 1918-1932 (20)		11

## **II. MODERNITY**

#### **1 MODERN YOUTH** -Contemporary commentary 11 -F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Bernice Bobs Her Hair," short story, Saturday Evening Post, Univ. of South Carolina Press 19 May 1, 1920 -Silent films: The Flapper, 1920 Internet Moving Picture Archive Our Dancing Daughters, 1928 (three clips) **Turner Classic Movies** Our Modern Maidens, 1929 (three clips) Turner Classic Movies 2 MODERN WOMAN -Contemporary commentary 16 -Alvah Posen, Them Days Is Gone Forever, comic strip series, selection, 1922-1923 5 -Sinclair Lewis, Main Street, novel, 1920, excerpts: Carol Kennicott in Washington, DC 10 -Newsreel (silent): "Are Women's Sports Too Strenuous?" 1925 British Pathé News 3 MODERN DEMOCRACY -Contemporary commentary 12

Image: John T. McCutcheon, "When the Historians Meet to Name the Dying Decade," political cartoon, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1929 (detail). Reproduced by permission of the *Chicago Tribune*. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

#### 4 MODERN FAITH

-Contemporary commentary 9 5 MODERN CITY -Lewis Mumford, "The Intolerable City: Must It Keep On Growing?" Harper's, February 1926, excerpt 7 -Contemporary commentary on the skyscraper, 1920s 9 -Newsreels (silent) -"Old and New Detroit," 1923 Detroit News Pictorial/WSU \* -"905 Feet High" (New York City), 1929 British Pathé News -Poetry on the modern city 2 -Robert Frost, "A Brook in the City," 1921 -Hart Crane, "To Brooklyn Bridge," 1930 6 MODERN CITY IN ART [New York City] -Chart: New York City in Visual Art of the 1920s 2 -Charles Sheeler, Skyscrapers, oil on canvas, 1922 Phillips Collection -Louis Lozowick, New York, lithograph, ca. 1925 British Museum -Edward Steichen, Sunday Night, 40th Street, gelatin silver print, ca. 1925 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston -Georgia O'Keeffe, City Night, oil on canvas, 1926 Minneapolis Institute of Arts -Edward Hopper, From Williamsburg Bridge, oil on canvas, 1928 Metropolitan Museum of Art -Walker Evans, Brooklyn Bridge, gelatin silver print, 1929 Metropolitan Museum of Art -Martin Lewis, Glow of the City, drypoint on tan laid paper with blue fibers, 1929 Smithsonian American Art Museum -Bertram Hartman, Trinity Church and Wall Street, oil on canvas, 1929 Brooklyn Museum -Florine Stettheimer, The Cathedrals of Broadway, oil on canvas, 1929 [Metropolitan Museum of Art] **7 MODERN CITY IN FILM** -Manhatta, silent art film, 1921 Internet Moving Picture Archive -Intertitles text from Walt Whitman, Leaves of Grass 1 -Skyscraper Symphony, silent art film, 1929 YouTube -The Crowd, Hollywood silent film, 1928, opening sequence Turner Classic Movies -Cockeyed, special-effects newsreel, ca. 1925, clip Natl, Film Preservation Foundation

British Pathé News

### **III. MACHINE**

-"The City of Skyscrapers," newsreel, early 1920s

	<ul> <li>"MACHINE AGE"</li> <li>-Contemporary commentary</li> <li>-Charles Demuth, <i>My Egypt</i>, oil on fiberboard, 1927</li> </ul>	Whitney Museum/Art Beyond Sight	16 *
_ :	2 FACTORY		
	-Charles Sheeler, industrial landscapes, 1927-1932		
	-Ford River Rouge industrial complex, Detroit, photographs, 1927	Detroit Institute of Arts	*
	-American Landscape, oil on canvas, 1930	Museum of Modern Art	*
	-Classic Landscape, oil on canvas, 1931	National Gallery of Art	*
	-River Rouge Plant, oil on canvas, 1932	Whitney Museum of Art	*
	-Silent films by Ford Motor Company, ca. 1932		
	–A Tour thru the Rouge Plants	British Pathé News	*
	-The Source of the Ford Car	Internet Moving Picture Archive	*
_ ;	3 AUTOMOBILE		
	-Contemporary commentary		13
	-Will Rogers, humorist, on traffic safety		
	-Syndicated column, April 4, 1926		2
	-Address to traffic chiefs, sound recording, June 2, 1923	Library of Congress	*
	-Transcript		1
	-Silent film: Wheels of Progress, U.S. Bureau of Roads, ca. 1927	Internet Moving Picture Archive	*
	-Intertitles text		1

	<ul> <li>–Newsreels (silent)</li> <li>–"Motorists try brakes for police department," 1927</li> <li>–"Had your automobile brakes tested yet?" 1928</li> </ul>	Detroit News Pictorial/WSU	*
_ '	<ul> <li>AIRPLANE         <ul> <li>-"Has Aviation a Future," <i>The Forum</i>, August 1928, excerpts</li> <li>-The "Aeroplane" in Art</li> <li>-Stanton Macdonald-Wright, <i>Aeroplane Synchromy in Yellow-Orange</i>, oil on canvas, 1920 [Metropolitan Museum of Art]</li> <li>-Elsie Driggs, <i>Aeroplane</i>, oil on canvas, 1928 [Museum of Fine Arts, Houston]</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		4 3
	<ul> <li>–Newsreels on aviation innovations, 1923-1930 (silent/sound, 7)</li> <li>–On the "phenomenon of Lindbergh," by Fitzhugh Green, in Lindbergh, "We," 1927</li> <li>–Lindbergh-inspired animated cartoons</li> </ul>	British Pathé News	* 5
	–Felix the Cat, <i>The Non-Stop Fright</i> , 1927 (silent) –Mickey Mouse, <i>Plane Crazy</i> , 1928 (sound)	Internet Moving Picture Archive Disney Animation/YouTube	*
_ !	<ul> <li><u>FADIO</u> <ul> <li>Contemporary commentary</li> <li>WLS Chicago Showboat, the "Floating Palace of Wonder," variety program, broadcast,</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	ca. 1926, audio & transcript	8 */10
_ (	<ul> <li>MOVIES         <ul> <li>Herbert Blumer, Movies and Conduct, 1933, Ch. 10, "Schemes of Life," excerpts</li> <li>Monta Bell, "Movies &amp; Talkies," The North American Review, October 1928</li> <li>From Silent to Sound in twenty-two minutes                 <ul> <li>Live-action films (scenes)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Warner Bros.	10 6
	-Silent: La Bohème, 1926 -Sound: Show Girl in Hollywood, 1930 -Animated cartoons	Wanter Dros.	*
	-Sound: Steamboat Willie, Mickey Mouse, 1928	Internet Moving Picture Archive Disney Animation/YouTube	*

### **IV. PROSPERITY**

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-	1 " <u>AGE OF PROSPERITY</u> " –Contemporary commentary –Political cartoons (12); cartoonist analysis chart	10 13
_ :	2 <u>BUSINESS</u> –Contemporary commentary –Bruce Barton, <i>The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus</i> , 1925, excerpts	9 6
_ :	<ul> <li>CONSUMERISM         <ul> <li>Contemporary commentary</li> <li>Florine Stettheimer, <i>The Cathedrals of Fifth Avenue</i>, oil on canvas, 1931             <li>[Metropolitan Museum of Art]</li> <li>Humorists on advertising                  <ul></ul></li></li></ul></li></ul>	16 2 2 2 *
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_ {	5       LABOR UNION        AFL, Letters to a Bishop, 1920, correspondence between Samuel Gompers and William Quayle, 1920, excerpts         -AFL Declaration: The Challenge Accepted—Labor Will Not Be Outlawed or Enslaved, 1921, excerpts         -AFL silent film: Labor's Reward, 1925 (clip, and third reel)         Natl. Film Preservation Foundation/Silent Beauties	6 7 *

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## **V. DIVISIONS**

 1	KU KLUX KLAN		
	-Contemporary commentary		12
	–Political cartoons (16)		15
	-Newsreel (silent): Klan parade in Washington, DC, August 1925	British Pathé News	*
	-Sound recording: Will Rogers, "Timely Topics," humor monologue, 1923 (with transcript)		*
 2	BLACK & WHITE		
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	-W. E. B. Du Bois on the 1917 East St. Louis race riot, essay, 1917		8
	-Clarence Darrow on the Sweet murder trials, Detroit, 1925-1926, in Darrow, The Story of	<i>Mv Life</i> . 1932	7
	-Silent film drama: Oscar Micheaux, Within Our Gates, 1920	Internet Moving Picture Archive	*
	-Miscegenation scene in Show Boat, Broadway musical by Kern & Hammerstein, 1927;	YouTube	*
	as presented in 1936 sound film Show Boat		
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 3	<u>CITY &amp; TOWN</u>		
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	-Main Street, novel, 1920: Carol Kennicott in Washington, DC		10
	-Babbitt, novel, 1922: George Babbitt's booster speech on the city of Zenith		5
	-Robert Frost, "The Need of Being Versed in Country Things," poem, 1920		1
 4	WETS & DRYS		
	-"Five Years of Prohibition and Its Results," The North American Review, summer & fall, 19	925, excerpts	11
	-Political cartoons (8)		9
	-Edward Hopper, The Bootleggers, oil on canvas, 1925	Currier Museum of Art	*
	-Newsreels (sound)	British Pathé News	
	-"The Dodgers! A Prohibition Sidelight from Buffalo," 1931		*
	–"Someone Is Going Short of Christmas Spirits!" 1932		*
5	RELIGION & SCIENCE		
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	-Silent animated cartoon: Felix the Cat, Felix Doubles for Darwin, 1924	Internet Moving Picture Archive	*
 6	LABOR & CAPITAL		
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7	NATIVE & FOREIGN		
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 8	<u>"REDS" &amp; "AMERICANS"</u>		
	-Contemporary commentary		12
	-Political cartoons: Red Scare (8)		9
	-Sinclair Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i> , novel, 1922: Good Citizens' League		5
	-Political addresses on "Americanism," 1920 (recordings, with transcripts)	Library of Congress	
	–Franklin D. Roosevelt, Democratic Party		*
	–Leonard Wood, Republican Party		*

-Silent animated films

*–Uncle Sam and the Bolsheviki-IWW Rat*, Ford Motor Co., 1919 –Felix the Cat, *All Puzzled*, 1925

Natl. Film Preservation Found. \*

Internet Moving Picture Archive \*