

## The Roaring Twenties

### Lesson 4

# The Twenties Woman

## Key Terms and People

**flapper** Young woman who embraced the new fashions and values of the 1920s

**double standard** Set of principles granting one group more freedom than another group

## Before You Read

In the last lesson you read about Prohibition and the Scopes trial. In this lesson you will learn how women's lives changed during the 1920s.

## As You Read

Use a chart to take notes on the changes women experienced in the 1920s.

## YOUNG WOMEN CHANGE THE RULES

### What was a flapper?

The twenties brought about a new world for young Americans. This was due in part to World War I, the growth of cities, and changing attitudes. Many young women began to take part in the rebellious, pleasure-loving life of the twenties. They rejected 19th century values in favor of independence. They wanted the same freedom as men.

The new symbol of women was the **flapper**. She was a liberated young woman with independent, urban attitudes. She was assertive. She liked the sophisticated new fashions of the day.

Instead of old style dark ankle-length dresses she now wore bright loose-fitting short skirts and dresses. Skin-toned stockings replaced corsets and petticoats. She wore pumps and strings of beads. She cut her long hair short

and maybe even dyed it black. She often smoked cigarettes and drank alcohol in public. She danced new, exciting dances such as the tango, fox trot, camel walk, shimmy, and Charleston.

Other attitudes changed, too. Many young men and women began to see marriage as more of an equal partnership. However, housework and raising children remained a woman's job.

At the same time, churches and schools protested the new values. The majority of women were not flappers. Many people felt torn between the old values and the new ones.

One result of this clash between old values and the image of the flapper was the **double standard**. This was a set of principles or values generally accepted by society. One American double standard allowed men to have greater sexual freedom than women. Women were expected to observe stricter standards of behavior than men did.

Lesson 4, *continued*

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1. How did the flapper represent the spirit of the twenties?

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**WOMEN SHED OLD ROLES AT HOME AND AT WORK**

***How did women’s roles change?***

Many women had gone to work outside the home during World War I. This trend continued in the twenties. But their opportunities had changed after the war. Men returned from the war and took back traditional “men’s jobs.” Women moved back into the “women’s professions” of being a teacher, nurse, or librarian.

Big business provided another role for women: clerical work. Millions of women became secretaries, typists, file clerks, and stenographers. Many others became salesclerks in stores. Many women also worked on assembly lines in factories. By 1930, 10 million women had paid jobs outside the home. This was almost one-fourth of the American work force.

Women did not find equality in the workplace. Few women rose to jobs in management. Women earned less than men. Men regarded women as temporary workers whose real job was at home keeping house and raising children. In the twenties, patterns of

discrimination against women in the business world continued.

Family life changed, too. Families had fewer children. Electrical appliances made housework easier. Many items that had been made at home such as ready-made clothes, sliced bread, and canned foods could now be bought in stores.

Public agencies took over some family responsibilities, too. They provided services for the elderly and the sick. While most women remained homemakers, they had more free time. However, some women had to work and also run their homes. It was hard for them to combine these roles.

In the 1920s, marriages were more often based on romantic love than arranged by families. Children were no longer part of the work force. They spent their days in school and other activities with people of their own age. Peer pressure began to be an important influence on teens’ behavior. Some adolescents went against their parents’ wishes and rebelled. This reflected the conflict between traditional attitudes and modern ways of thinking.

2. Describe two changes in women’s roles in the workplace.

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Lesson 4, *continued*

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Complete the chart about women's changing roles in the 1920s.

<b>SOCIAL LIFE IN THE 1920S</b>	
1. What are two ways women's fashions changed?	
2. What are two ways women's social behavior changed?	
3. What two words describe the attitude reflected by these changes?	
<b>WORK AND HOME LIFE IN THE 1920S</b>	
4. What is one way women's work opportunities improved?	
5. What are two ways women's home and family life improved?	
6. What are three negative effects that accompanied women's changing roles in the 1920s?	