

## Section Summary

### A NEW MASS CULTURE

As urban Americans' wages rose in the 1920s, workers also enjoyed shorter workweeks. For the first time, a large city-dwelling population had free time and money to spend on entertainment. One of the most popular forms of entertainment was movies, which were attended by 60 to 100 million Americans each week. Actors such as comedian **Charlie Chaplin**, heartthrob Rudolf Valentino, and cow boy William S. Hart became silent film stars. Then in 1927, the movie **The Jazz Singer** startled audiences when Al Jolson said, "You ain't seen nothin' yet." *The Jazz Singer* became the first movie to include sound matched to the action on the screen, and the era of "talkies" was born.

For entertainment at home, Americans bought millions of phonographs and radios. By 1923, almost 600 licensed radio stations broadcast to more than 600,000 radio sets. Americans across the continent listened to the same songs, learned the same dances, and shared a popular culture as never before. People admired the same heroes, such as baseball player **Babe Ruth**, the home-run king, and aviator **Charles Lindbergh**, who was the first to fly solo and non-stop across the Atlantic Ocean.

American women challenged political, economic, social, and educational boundaries. With passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, they won the right to vote. Many ran for political office and more joined the workforce. Some women, known as **flappers**, shocked society by wearing short skirts and bobbed hair. At home, new electric appliances made housework easier. Popular magazines, sociological studies, novels, and movies all featured the "New Woman" of the 1920s prominently.

A spirit of modernism grew, especially in cities. Austrian psychologist **Sigmund Freud** contributed to modernism with his theory that human behavior is driven by unconscious desires rather than by rational thought. Painters rejected artistic norms. Writers, including **F. Scott Fitzgerald** and **Ernest Hemingway**, wrote about the meaning of life and war. Their literary masterpieces examined subconscious desires and the dark side of the American dream.

### Review Questions

1. What technological advances led to cultural change during the 1920s?

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2. What changes in the 1920s allowed urban Americans to enjoy more entertainment?

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### READING CHECK

Who developed a theory about behavior and the unconscious?

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### VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *sociological* mean in the underlined sentence? The term *socio* means "relating to society." The term *-ology* usually refers to a type of study. Use these definitions to help you figure out the meaning of *sociological*.

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### READING SKILL

**Summarize** List three ways American culture changed in the 1920s.

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