

AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ROARING TWENTIES

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1920

By 1920, World War I was over. The wartime boom had collapsed. Diplomats and politicians were arguing over peace treaties and the question of America's entry into the League of Nations. Overseas there were wars and revolutions; at home there were strikes, riots and a growing fear of radicals and terrorists. Disillusionment was in the air.

The giants who had dominated the political scene for a generation were gone -- Theodore Roosevelt died in 1919 and Woodrow Wilson was a broken invalid living in seclusion. Even so, the presidential election of 1920 continued the debate between the nationalistic activism of Roosevelt's presidency and the global idealism of Wilson's administration.

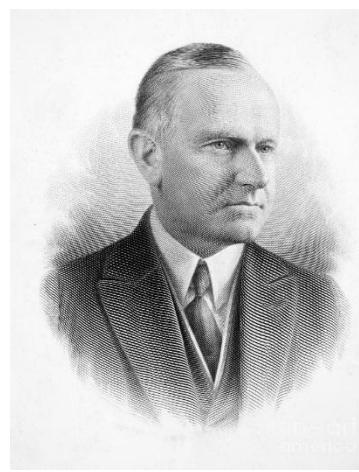
On June 8, 1920, the Republicans nominated Warren G. Harding, an Ohio newspaper editor and United States Senator, to run for president with Calvin Coolidge, governor of Massachusetts, as his running mate. The Democrats nominated another newspaper editor from Ohio, Governor James M. Cox, as their presidential candidate, and thirty-seven-year-old Franklin Delano Roosevelt for vice president.

The presidential election of 1920 was the last election campaign made accessible to the public solely through the use of record albums. By election night -- November 2, 1920 -- the "election campaign by phonograph" was a thing of the past, superseded by the first commercial radio broadcast coverage of election returns.

Name: _____



responded to his genial nature, impressive stature, and bland message; he won by a landslide.



Governor **Calvin Coolidge** of Massachusetts first achieved national prominence during the Boston police strike of 1919, when he sent a telegram to Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, saying: "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anyone, anywhere, any time."

Coolidge was a reserved, uncommunicative New Englander; writer and wit Dorothy Parker once remarked he looked as though he had been "weaned on a pickle." Even so, his obvious integrity and the simple American values he espoused soon made "Silent Cal" a popular figure. He succeeded to the presidency upon Harding's death in 1923, and was elected to the White House in his own right in 1924.

Warren Harding, publisher and editor of the *Ohio Marion Star*, was active in politics throughout his life. He served as an Ohio state Senator (1900-1904), as Lieutenant Governor of Ohio (1904-1906), and as a United States Senator (1915-1921). While Harding was serving in the Senate, the Republican party nominated him as their presidential candidate for the election of 1920. Harding's campaign promised a return to "normalcy," rejecting the activism of Theodore Roosevelt and the idealism of Woodrow Wilson. Voters

"READJUSTMENT" - Campaign speech by Warren Harding

My countrymen, there isn't anything the matter with the world's civilization except that humanity is viewing it through a vision impaired in a cataclysmal war. Poise has been disturbed, and nerves have been racked, and fever has rendered men irrational. Sometimes there have been draughts upon the dangerous cup of barbarity. Men have wandered far from safe paths, but the human procession still marches in the right direction. Here in the United States we feel the reflex, rather than the hurting wound itself but we still think straight; and we mean to act straight; we mean to hold firmly to all that was ours when war involved us and seek the higher attainments which are the only compensations that so supreme a tragedy may give mankind.

America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality but sustainment in triumphant nationality. It's one thing to battle successfully against the world's domination by a military autocracy because the infinite God never intended such a program; but it's quite another thing to revise human nature and suspend the fundamental laws of life and all of life's requirements.

The world calls for peace. American demands peace, formal as well as actual, and means to have it so we may set our own house in order. We challenge the proposal that an armed autocrat should dominate the world, and we choose for ourselves the claim that the representative democracy which made us what we are. This republic has its ample task if we put an end to false economics which lure humanity to utter chaos. Ours will be the commanding example of world leadership today. If we can prove a representative popular government under which the citizenship speaks what it may do for the government and country rather than what the country may do for individuals, we shall do more to make democracy safe for the world than all armed conflict ever recorded.

The world needs to be reminded that all human ills are not curable by legislation, and that quantity of statutory enactments and excess of government offer no substitute for quality of citizenship. The problems of maintained civilization are not to be solved by a transfer of responsibility from citizenship to government and no eminent page in history was ever drafted to the standards of mediocrity. Nor, no government worthy of the name which is directed by influence on the one hand or moved by intimidation on the other. My best judgement of America's need is to steady down, to get squarely on our feet, to make sure of the right path. Let's get out of the fevered delirium of war with the hallucination that all the money in the world is to be made in the madness of war and the wildness of its aftermath. Let us stop to consider that tranquility at home is more precious than peace abroad and that both our good fortune and our eminence are dependent on the normal forward stride of all the American people. We want to go on, secure and unafraid, holding fast to the American inheritance, and confident of the supreme American fulfillment.

This recording has been reproduced by the Library of Congress through the generosity of the family of Guy Golterman, and with the cooperation of CBS-Sony Records and the Recording Industry Association of America.

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 AMERICAN MEMORY

AMERICAN HISTORY

THE ROARING TWENTIES

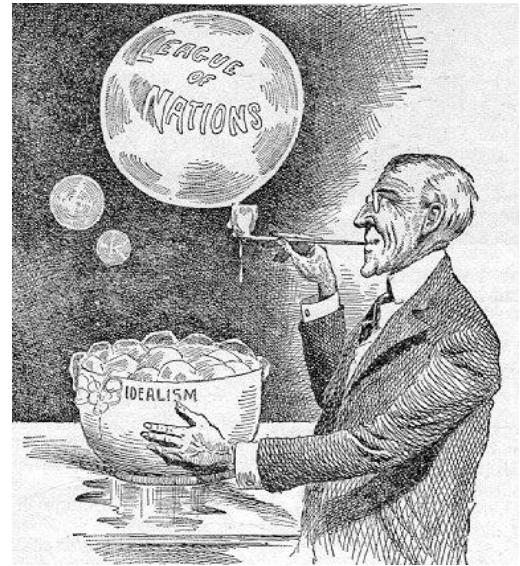
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Questions for Analysis: Presidential Election of 1920 and “Readjustment”

1. The reading describes Warren Harding’s campaign message (a return to “normalcy”) as “bland,” yet also notes that he won by a landslide. *Does this make sense to you? Why would voters choose a candidate so overwhelmingly “bland”?*



2. In his “Readjustment” speech, Harding says, “America’s present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; ...” *What sorts of events/individuals/movements is he talking about when he refers to “heroics, nostrums, revolution, etc.”?*



3. Reformers during the progressive era, beginning in the middle class and continuing through presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, believed in the potential of government to solve many of society’s problems. *What does Harding say about this notion, expressed in his speech? In your own words, summarize his position.*

THE PENDULUM OF AMERICAN POLITICS THROUGH HISTORY

How involved should the government be in American life and business?

Over time, the majority of Americans' attitudes about the role of government has wavered between getting more and less involved in people's lives and business. It is almost like the motion of a "pendulum," swinging to one side, then back to the other. On which side was the "pendulum" during the following eras of history?

For each era of American history below, choose which side the "pendulum" was generally on, and list a few examples from what you have learned to support your



	A lot!	Not much!
The "Gilded Age"		
The "Progressive Era"		
The "Roaring Twenties"		
(What comes next??)		