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# SOCIAL STUDIES



The Roar of the 1920s | The Great War to the Great Depression

HIGH SCHOOL | 2022-23

# NOTES



# UIL Social Studies Notes

## 2022-2023

### TOPIC: The Roar of the 1920s and Their Echo Through Time: From the Great War to the Great Depression

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*UIL Social Studies Notes* is a time-tested 'tool kit' for building a solid annual topic foundation. Covering concepts, documents, terms, people, themes, events, and a plethora of significant facts, *Social Studies Notes* is arranged to facilitate full-topic comprehension and the order of discussion may differ from the actual test. In this regard, students will be able to form their own unique ideas and opinions which are especially useful in the essay portion of the contest as well as in everyday life. We encourage students to become familiar with the format of the contest while reading, however, which consists of 45 multiple-choice questions and an essay.

UIL High School Social Studies contest test format is as follows, for a possible total of 100 points.

- Part 1—General Knowledge = 20 points (20 questions, 1 point each)
- Part 2—Primary Reading = 30 points (15 questions, 2 points each)
- Part 3—Supporting Documents = 30 points (10 questions, 3 point each)
- Essay = 20 points

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## **Social Studies Notes 2022-2023**

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1915, Robert T. A. Innes discovered what was to be called Proxima Centauri, the closest star to our solar system. Close is a relative term, and at over four light-years, away this "close" star exists at such a great distance as to have no discernible influence or relation to our solar system and certainly not to our planet or the daily happenings on it. That statement does not hold any obvious controversy within its confines, but what if we went further and discovered that the system that contains Proxima Centauri also contains a terrestrial planet known as Proxima Centauri b, existing within the goldilocks zone that makes it a possible sister-planet to our own? Imagine further that we learn the same year of our original interstellar discovery, 1915, as one of the most powerful earthquakes of the century rocked Pleasant Valley, Nevada, at a devastating 7.7 magnitude on the same day at nearly the same hour a massive shift of tectonic plates was registered on this sister planet. Would you then start to believe that not only are these planets linked, but the events themselves share such a glaring similarity in chronology that they too must be linked?

This, of course, is only a thought experiment as Proxima Centauri b was discovered a full century after the star it revolves around, and seismology was still maturing as a field of study in 1915 due to research spawned by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. However, the thought experiment has a very practical purpose: When confronted with seemingly unrelated events that share a close chronology, many people assume there is a much stronger relationship between the events than originally believed. This is because people naturally tend to put an unwarranted emphasis on timing.

In the realm of social studies, this means there is a seemingly preternatural obsession with defining history in terms of eras, times, and especially when looking at the 20th century, decades. This can lead to a truncated understanding of an event's root causes or its aftermath and legacy. What's worse is it can lead people to overgeneralize certain aspects of this artificially or arbitrarily constructed era to being representative of the entire period or to all the areas, peoples, or events within it. This is all to say, that trying to find a defining theme, truth, or even description of a time in history just because it has similar or even shared chronology can lead one to some pretty "out there" conclusions. This is not to say that timing is not important, but one event's timing may have been caused by forces dating back hundreds of years while another occurring at the exact same moment may trace its impetus to only a few days prior.

With this year's topic, we look at the era known as the Twenties but cannot confine ourselves to the oversimplified constraints of mere years. It is imperative that the social, political, economic, cultural, and scientific aspects of the topic are traced back to their natural beginnings and then parsed and analyzed to discover their impacts and ramifications no matter how far past the calendar-defined decade they may travel. The U.S. in the Twenties was struggling with problems created on the same day the U.S. Constitution was signed and to this day is searching to find common ground on issues articulated for the very first time during that decade.

Having that academic awareness in mind as we address this topic, let's dive into the Twenties. This topic is obviously a mainly historical one as opposed to some domestic years that in some ways tie into modern day or foreign years that absolutely deal with the up-to-date discussions about a country, region, or movement. Do not let that fool you into thinking that it is limited to the past or is hopelessly distant to our present concerns and way of life.

1924	
The Anti-Evolution League was founded with Kentucky preacher Dr. J. W. Porter as its president.	
January 1924	<i>American Mercury</i> was first published by H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan.
March 28, 1924	Coolidge agreed to demand the resignation of Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty due to mounting scandals.
May 10, 1924	J. Edgar Hoover was named head of the Bureau of Investigation (later the FBI).
June 2, 1924	The Indian Citizenship Act was passed, granting citizenship to American Indians (voting would be limited by states until 1957).
Aug. 16, 1924	The Dawes Plan was created to help with German reparation repayment and control its economy.
Sept. 10, 1924	The Leopold and Loeb Trial ended with the judge sentencing both to life plus 99 years in prison.
1925	
<i>The Great Gatsby</i> by F. Scott Fitzgerald was released.	
Feb. 21, 1925	The first issue of the weekly <i>New Yorker</i> was released by publisher Harold Ross.
July 21, 1925	The Scopes Trial ended in Dayton, TN, after Clarence Darrow cross examined William Jennings Bryan, and John Scopes was found guilty.
July 26, 1925	William Jennings Bryan died.
Nov. 14, 1925	The Grand Dragon of Indiana, David Stephenson, was convicted of rape and murder, and after not being granted clemency, released the KKK's payoff list.
Dec. 12, 1925	The Milestone Mo-Tel became the first motel in the world and opened in San Luis Obispo, CA.
1926	
May 9, 1926	Richard E. Byrd and Floyd Bennet became the first to fly over the North Pole.
June 23, 1926	Famous preacher Aimee Semple McPherson appeared in the desert after being missing for over a month and claimed to have been kidnapped.
Aug. 23, 1926	Rudolph Valentino died unexpectedly at age 31, and mourners (some paid) lined the street.
Sept. 18, 1926	A Category 4 hurricane made landfall near Miami, FL, and the subsequent destruction helped burst the speculative bubble of the Florida land boom.
Sept. 23, 1926	James "Gene" Tunney defeated reigning boxing champion Jack Dempsey.
Nov. 11, 1926	Route 66 was opened, connecting Chicago to Los Angeles.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Key People

This section identifies the top individuals from across the entire range of this year's topic. The following individuals are each significant in their own right but have been chosen for the way they collectively represent the breadth of the era being studied. Like the terms and the overall topic itself, the information included in these short biographies is not confined to the years 1920 to 1929. What is included has been deemed unique and notable enough to need to be known in order to understand the individual, their influence, and their overall historical weight regardless of when or where it took place.

The descriptions will begin with an overview of the individual's place in the overall topic with general statements of how they can best be summarized and described in light of their connection to the Twenties or the major issues they are associated with. The majority of the biographical sketch will deal with a fairly chronological accounting of major events in the subject's careers, and in some necessary cases, personal lives. There will be more emphasis on details surrounding events directly involved with, and related to, the overall narrative of the era. Other events, while still important, may only be briefly mentioned due to their lack of direct correlation to the themes that are pertinent to this year's topic.

**Capone, Alphonse** - Born on January 17, 1899, in Brooklyn, New York, and died on January 25, 1947, in Palm Island, Florida.

The most notorious, but also admired figure associated with Prohibition, and though he had nothing to do with its creation or implementation, it could be argued he was a significant force in its repeal (despite being one of its primary beneficiaries). Capone started as a small-time gangster and ended up with his face on the cover of *Time* magazine, thereby personifying another aspect of the get-rich-quick, celebrity-driven era.

Capone was born in the U.S. and was proud of that fact, but his Italian immigrant background played a large part in his life. With few options available, he quickly found his way into the Johnny Torrio organization. He moved to Chicago with Torrio to oversee the bootlegging operation, and that is where his legacy was made.

Capone was worth over \$100 million by 1927 and portrayed himself as a man of the people providing a key public service. Mayor "Big Bill" Thompson and a large segment of the public at-large agreed with this persona and overlooked the numerous murders he and his operation were linked to. In addition to the liquor business, he controlled elections, police, unions, and various industries, all with the understanding that his demands would be enforced with violence if needed.

The Beer Wars of 1926 and 1927 were exceptionally violent, but the St. Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929 created a sensation. With increased pressure on the Treasury Department coming from the Hoover White House, a creative approach to ending his operations was taken. On June 5, 1931, Capone finally faced federal charges for his massive Prohibition operation. The charges that would eventually stick were 3 of the 22 counts of income-tax evasion. He was sentenced to 11 years in prison later that year and served (with most of his time at Alcatraz) until his release in 1939. He had been ravaged by the effects of syphilis and died from a heart attack at his enormous south Florida mansion in 1947.

**Coolidge, Calvin** - Born on July 4, 1872, in Plymouth Notch, Vermont, and died on January 5, 1933, in Northampton, Massachusetts.

Silent Cal, or as one biographer referred to as the "Puritan in Babylon" was the 30<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. He is perhaps stereotypically known as a taciturn and straightforward politician that was the administrative style of the federal government during the 1920s incarnate. There is truth to this idea, but it is not fair to assume this man from Plymouth Notch did nothing in the White House.

**Stein, Gertrude** - Born February 3, 1874, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, and died on July 27, 1946, in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France. Stein was an art critic and collector of Cubism works. She also wrote novels and playwrights that became famous. Stein owned a salon in Paris that allowed leading artists and authors in the 1920s and 1930s to meet. She is known for coining the term "Lost Generation" and served as guide and muse for many of its writers during their time in France in the Twenties.

**Sunday, Billy** - Born November 19, 1862, in Story County, Iowa, and died on November 6, 1935, in Chicago, Illinois. Sunday was a famous evangelical Christian preacher who delivered famous sermons to large crowds around the U.S. He argued for fundamentalist beliefs and traditions after he left behind his life of drinking and a professional baseball career. He utilized electronic sound systems to amplify his voice during his sermons. He also collected donations, which helped add to his own wealth and influence in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. His huge personality was used by numerous media outlets to act as a commentator or reporter on sensational trials or events.

**Swanson, Gloria** - Born March 27, 1899, in Chicago, Illinois, and died on April 4, 1983, in New York City. Swanson was an actress in silent films, motion pictures, television shows, and on stage. She joined United Artists during the 1920s to be able to produce as well as star in films. She was nominated for the first ever Best Actress Academy Award in 1929. Her career spanned over 30 years.

**Thompson, William "Big Bill"** - Born May 14, 1869, in Boston, Massachusetts, and died on March 19, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois. Thompson was mayor of Chicago between 1915 and 1923 and again from 1927 to 1931. He was known for his open alliance with Al Capone and the crime bosses of Chicago.

**Tunney, James "Gene"** - Born May 25, 1897, in New York City, New York, and died on November 7, 1978, in Greenwich, Connecticut. Tunney was a professional boxer who held the heavyweight title from 1926 to 1928. He was the winner of one of the most famous boxing matches known as "The Long Count Fight" in 1927 which was a rematch against Jack Dempsey. Tunney wanted to be known for more sophisticated pursuits and was known to visit notable literary artists, read poetry, and even lectured on Shakespeare.

**Tyler, Mary Elizabeth** - Born July 10, 1881, and died on September 10, 1924, in Altadena, California. Tyler was a co-founder of the Southern Publicity Association that helped transform the second KKK fraternal organization into a mass-membership organization. She expanded their agenda and collected membership fees to support the organization. She was eventually ousted from the KKK in 1923 after a criminal investigation into salacious conduct.

**Valentino, Rudolph (Rodolfo Alfonso Raffaello Pierre Filiberto Gugliemi di Valentina d' Antonguolla)** - Born May 6, 1895, in Castellaneta, Italy, and died on August 23, 1926, in New York City, New York. Valentino was an Italian actor who rose to popularity in the 1920s. He was known as the "Latin Lover" and his most famous character was the "Sheik." He starred in many silent films before his sudden death at the age of 31 which saw scores of mourners crowd the streets for his funeral. It was later revealed that his promoters had paid some of the people to attend to help promote Valentino's latest film.



- a) Donald Crissinger was comptroller of the currency having worked at a small bank for a few months.
- b) Ed Scobey was a sheriff, who became the director of the mint.
- c) Numerous diplomatic positions went to contributors.
- d) Ned McLean was named a special agent of the Justice Dept.
- 5. Ms. Harding's favorite doctor from Marion was given the rank of brigadier general and named the president's personal doctor.
- 6. The Veterans' Bureau had just been established, and Charles Forbes was put in charge.
- 7. The group of cronies that used their connections within the administration was known as the "Ohio Gang."
  - a) Jess Smith was prominent amongst them and worked for Daugherty in an ambiguous position.
  - b) Howard Mannington operated a speakeasy near the White House that was a center for influence peddling and corruption.
- E. The Hardings opened the White House that had become cloistered during the Wilson years.
  - 1. Harding shook approximately 250,000 hands during his time in office, and it was simple to come and see him.
  - 2. He was likable and popular.
  - 3. He released Debs in 1921 and invited him to the White House.
  - 4. He also released 23 IWW members.
- F. The economy was in a full recession in 1920.
  - 1. Unemployment was at 20%.
  - 2. Farmers were losing their land due to inflation in supply costs coupled with catering crop prices.
  - 3. Harding was hard working but lacked the intellectual ability to think of long-term solutions or even completely grasp complex questions.
    - a) He stated, "I am not fit for this office, and I should never have been here."
    - b) He had little understanding of foreign relations and lacked an official policy to address the League.
    - c) He relied heavily on business leaders and looked to support them.
      - (1) One of the first actions of the administration was to support U.S. oil interests in Colombia.
      - (2) \$25 million was given as part of an apology for the taking of Panama during the Roosevelt administration and to open up the country to U.S. businesses.
  - 4. Hoover was seen as "an almost supernatural figure" for his success in numerous fields.
    - a) He made the Dept. of Commerce a major player in politics and government.
    - b) He fostered the creation of the second mortgage market and desegregated his department.
    - c) He had assistants who worked the press, and he personally was close with leading journalists to help his image and his policies.
    - d) Hoover did not favor government regulation but supported business endeavors through government action.
      - (1) He pushed for the association of trade associations to allow businesses to cooperate but avoid antitrust laws.

***TIP: Be sure to reread the prompt. It is of utmost importance that you understand each aspect of what the prompt is asking. Read it when you first get the test, read it after completing the objective portion, and re-read it after you have outlined and/or written your draft essay.***

***This prompt is broader than most to help include more study information about this particular subject but take notice of the specific parameters presented. This prompt is not asking for a complete biography of Mencken nor is it asking for a list of his many influential essays or other writings. That does not mean that important aspects of his life and his works cannot be mentioned, but the essay should focus on the events of the 1920s and his role shaping them.***

***If you do not make a full outline, you should at least make a "cheat sheet" of main topics for an essay. In this case, what are the main issues you need to discuss? Possible areas are Politics, specifically presidential elections, the Scopes Trial and fundamentalism, Censorship and the Comstock law, and Popular culture and the focus on consumerism.***

Henry Louis Mencken was a writer from a young age who was so enamored with his toy printing press that it basically determined the moniker and the profession he would be known by for the rest of his life. His passion for print helped him create a national soapbox with the *American Mercury*. This influential periodical was created with George Nathan in 1924, and Mencken would edit it until 1933. Through this trendsetting outlet, the "Sage of Baltimore" would seek to shape awareness and opinion concerning the major events of the 1920s, including the Scopes Trial, political conventions, and the course of mass culture in the U.S.

***TIP: According to the letter of the UIL Social Studies essay rubric, a clear thesis is needed to score above a 10 out of a possible 20 points. It does not mean a great thesis will result in a score on the higher side, but it is very difficult to do so without one. Take some time and craft your introduction in clear terms that state exactly what you plan on writing about. It is also helpful to refer back to your thesis while writing to make sure your body paragraphs contain everything that was referenced in the thesis.***

*The New York Times* described Mencken as "the most powerful private citizen" in the country and no other event highlighted his impact more than the trial of John Scopes for violating the Butler Act by teaching about evolution in a Dayton, Tennessee classroom. Mencken had long railed against the fundamentalist movement in general and William Jennings Bryan specifically. The Scopes Trial brought worldwide attention to these topics and allowed Mencken to unleash his famous wit and scathing satire. Mencken helped create this global attention by not only discussing the issues of the trial at length but recruiting the famed and controversial defense attorney, Clarence Darrow, for the defense. He corresponded heavily with the leaders of the ACLU about trial strategy beforehand and trumpeted the importance of the case during the trial. Despite Scopes being convicted and the case being denied a Supreme Court appeal when the verdict was overturned on a technicality, Mencken claimed victory by exposing the vagaries of the fundamentalists and even sardonically claimed responsibility for the death of Bryan. Mencken would continue to claim more political "victims" than just former presidential hopefuls like Bryan.

***TIP: Move to your next point. To make your ideas flow smoothly so that the reader/judge can easily follow, try to make them connect logically. The use of transition phrases when appropriate is also helpful.***

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