

# Questions for “The Age We Live In”

from "THE AGE." *"The Age" Commentary, America in the 1920s, Primary Sources for Teachers, America in Class, National Humanities Center.* National Humanities Center, n.d. Web. 23 Feb. 2014.

<<http://americainclass.org/sources/becomingmodern/theage/text1/text1.htm>>.

## Discussion Questions

1. To organize the commentary for analysis, complete the chart below to group the speakers by the attitudes expressed toward "the age." Several have been entered; remember to include the cartoonists.

<b>POSITIVE, ENTHUSIASTIC</b>	<b>CRITICAL, WARY</b>	<b>DESCRIPTIVE, NEUTRAL</b>
<i>Atlanta Constitution</i>	H. L. Mencken	the Lynds

2. Select two statements on "the age" that represent the range of opinion from enthusiastic to critical. What do the extremes reveal about the Twenties and the people who experienced the decade?
3. What aspects of the Twenties were singled out for awe and enthusiasm? Why?
4. What aspects generated resistance and concern? Why?
5. How was the word *modern* used and defined? Find evidence in the sources for the statement of the *Forum* that "with so many meanings . . . there is some question as to whether *modern* really means anything anymore."
6. How were the factors of *speed* and *activity* emphasized? What positive and negative consequences were perceived?
7. Why did the A. B. Dick Company describe the mimeograph machine as a "striking measure of civilization"?

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8. Analyze the use of the word *civilization* in the commentary. What kind of new "civilization" was embodied in the "new age"?
9. What generational factors influenced the commentary ("older folks" and "young folks")?
10. Study the humor in "Life Lines," the *New Yorker* cartoon, the comic strip *Them Days Is Gone Forever*, and the political cartoon "The Happy Family." How does humor function as a unique mode for commentary?
11. At what point in the political cartoon "The Happy Family" does the family's happiness end? Why?
12. What perspective was added by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who embodied the "Jazz Age" in his life and fiction?
13. What is the nature of Tom's and Amory's disagreement in the excerpt from Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920)? Why is World War One an ever-present feature in Fitzgerald's perspective on the 1920s?
14. Explain the restlessness and ennui of the young generation expressed by F. Scott Fitzgerald, Barbara Shermund, and others.
15. What points are emphasized by the Protestant clergymen?
16. Explain how Rev. Merrifield answered his question "Is this really a new age?"
17. Select several statements that echo Rev. William Ladd's concern that "our material development has outrun our thinking." How is a similar concern expressed today?
18. Compare Walter Lippmann's concern that news inundates readers in "mere flashes of publicity" with concerns about media overload and multitasking today.
19. According to the commentators, what American attitudes would place the U.S. at the forefront of world modernity?
20. Why did Aldous Huxley assert that "the future of America is the future of the world"? According

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to Henry Canby, why would American movies hasten this process?

21. What is the "new kind of man" that America has created, according to William Allen White? How would Reinhold Niebuhr respond?
  
22. Why did H. L. Mencken condemn movies of the 1920s? How would Walter Lippmann respond?
  
23. Write a poem, editorial, movie trailer, exhibition promo, advertising copy, cartoon, or website home page synthesizing the Twenties as lived and perceived by Americans. Title it "The Age We Live In." Select one of the lines below as an epigraph and incorporate its point in your piece. Write a one page commentary on your work including why you chose the epigraph you used and how your piece reflects the attitudes of the 1920s. Use images and videos from the 1920s to illustrate your work. You can use your textbook and <http://www.ushistory.org/us/46.asp> as additional sources. Good sources for pictures include: [Wikimedia Commons](#); [Library of Congress](#); [National Archives](#); [Internet Archives](#)

- **"[W]ho can name an age more golden and galvanic?"**  
editorial, The Atlanta Constitution, March 15, 1929

- **"Jazz is the rhythm of today."**  
editorial, The Chicago Tribune, Oct. 23, 1927

- **"Things move very fast. Life changes while you wait."**  
E. S. Martin, "The War against Prejudice," Harper's, Sept 1924

- **"Speed—time-and-money-saving speed!"**  
A. B. Dick Co., print ad for the mimeograph machine, 1929

- **"We can't help it, dear—it's the Age."**  
cartoon, The New Yorker, August 27, 1927

- **"Here was a new generation . . ."**  
F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise, 1920

- **Them Days Is Gone Forever**  
comic strip series by Alvah Posen, early 1920

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## The Age We Live In Rubric

	3	2	1
Required Elements	Student has created a work that is titled "The Age We Live In" and contains one of the epigraphs given in the assignment. Student's name is on the assignment.	Student has created a work based on an epigraph. One of the required elements (title or epigraph) is missing. Student's name is on the assignment.	Student has created a work. It is not titled correctly and it does not contain an epigraph. Student's name is on the assignment.
Demonstration of Knowledge	The ideas in the work indicates in depth knowledge of the 1920s.	The ideas in the work indicates some knowledge of the 1920s.	The ideas in the work do not show knowledge of the 1920s.
Choice of epigraph	The epigraph used clearly relates to the ideas in the work.	The epigraph used somewhat relates to the ideas in the work.	The epigraph used does not relate to the ideas in the work.
Applicability	Images, video, fonts accurately reflect the 1920s. Images help expand understanding of work. All images are cited in MLA format.	Images, video, fonts reflect the 1920s. Images help illustrate the work. All images are cited in MLA format.	Images, video, fonts do not reflect the 1920s.or do not expand understanding of work. All images are cited in MLA format.
Commentary	The commentary explains what the work is about, what symbols/symbolism are used, how the work relates to the 1920s, and why the student created a piece about that topic.	The commentary clearly explains three out of the four required elements (what the work is about, what symbols/symbolism are used, how the work relates to the 1920s, and why the student created a piece about that topic).	The commentary explains two out of the four required elements (what the work is about, what symbols/symbolism are used, how the work relates to the 1920s, and why the student created a piece about that topic).
Creativity	The ideas in the work reflect a exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display.	The ideas in work reflect some creativity in their creation and/or display.	The ideas in the work reflects an idea similar to one of the works that we studied.

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## The Age We Live In

Golden Age, alivest, best, marvels  
liberation, confidence, accomplishments  
new generation, run faster, reach farther  
transoceaninc, round-the-world, Americanized  
forming history  
grand and awful time, sublime,  
internal combustian, rhythm of today  
vital oneness, a new age  
ready-to-wear, ready-to-eat, ready-to-use  
busy buying things, remodeling our world,  
new developments, extraordinary times  
no beginning, no middle, no end  
a new kind of man, virility and strength,  
not meant for old men

**Things move very fast. Life changes while you wait.**

Sources:

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