



TEXAS ARCHIVE
OF THE MOVING IMAGE

Texas in Transition –Social, Political, and Economic Issues in 1920s Texas

Objective:

The 1920s was a period of rapid development and urbanization in Texas. With the rise of industrial-scale agriculture and ranching alongside a dramatic increase in oil production, Texas became a part of a booming national and international economy. Wealth and Texas' role in global trade soon led to growth in urban areas, as workers moved to the centers of distribution, and well-off Texans sought the culture and services available in cities. Immigration surged at this time as well, not just in Texas, but across the nation as foreign laborers and their families moved to the state seeking new opportunities.

This economy linked states and countries even closer than before, and it was the interdependencies of Texas to the world and nation around it that made local issues part of a national conversation. Likewise, political and social issues of national concern impacted people across the state of Texas.

In this lesson plan, students will examine the culture and politics in 1920s Texas and the nation. Some of the same issues that made headlines in the 1920s are issues that our state and nation are still struggling with to this day. Subjects like civil rights, immigration, the role of women in politics, the use of natural resources, and enforcing a national moral standard were on the forefront in the 1920s. This lesson will ask students to use primary and secondary source materials such as home movies and promotional films from the era, in addition to their textbooks, to illustrate the lives and concerns of Texans in the 1920s. A reference section that provides resources for additional research is included.

Prior Knowledge:

Students should have prior knowledge in the following areas to successfully take part in this activity:

1. Students should have the skills to conduct basic independent research on their subject and be able to identify potential sources of information.
2. Students should have some knowledge of the historical context of the era (e.g. that the world had just come out of World War I, that women had not been permitted to vote in the United States until 1920, etc.)



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3. Students should have an understanding of the concept of “historical thinking,” or an analytical view of the past that takes into account different sources and perspectives.
4. Students are assumed to understand the concepts of racism and gender inequality and their presence through history.

Hook:

- Inform students that they will be learning about Texas in the 1920s and how people in Texas were part of a number of national issues during that era.
- Distribute copies of the worksheet entitled “1920s Issues: Texas and the United States” to each student.
- On the board or overhead write the following subject headings: Prohibition, Women in Society, Civil Rights, Immigration, and Oil Boom.
- Break students into groups or ask students individually if they can explain why each of these topics was important in the 1920s.
- Have students reference their textbooks and give examples of events or people that were involved in each of the topics. Complete a summary of the topic together as a class.

Lesson:

- Begin by either assigning students (in groups or individually) to one of the following topics: women in society, prohibition/moral standards, civil rights, immigration, or the oil boom.
- Using the worksheet “1920s Issues: Texas and the United States” as a starting point, have students research their topic using primary and secondary source material (see resources).
- Depending on your classroom set up, students may rotate around the room to various stations researching topics using their textbooks, printouts, and classroom computers. Or you can have them do their research in the classroom using their textbooks first, and then you can take them all to the computer lab to work on the film viewing and online research portion.
- Have students take notes on their research worksheet as they go, making notes in the notes column on each topic, including noting any questions the material raised, and recording the information about their source material.



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- Some questions that students may want to ask themselves while reviewing the resources are:
 - What does this source tell me about my topic?
 - Is there anything unusual in the video or writing that I did not expect?
 - Does what was portrayed match what I expected to see? (e.g. Were there people I didn't expect to be there? Were they acting differently than I thought?)
 - Why was the video made or the material written?

Extended Learning:

After completing research on their topic, students will collectively compile a timeline of events for each of their topics. Begin by creating a timeline on the board or on a large sheet of paper along the wall. Mark off the line for each year beginning with 1920 and continuing until 1929, leaving room at either end of the timeline for contributing events (e.g. the passage of the 18th amendment in 1919). Have students individually (or as a group) add major events to the timeline for each of their topics. Students may also print images from their resources and add them to the timeline to illustrate the events and the people involved. Each image should include an annotation describing the person or event depicted.

Independent Practice:

National news changed forever in the 1920s with the advent of the newsreel. Prior that time, people read their news in the pages of a newspaper or listened to short radio broadcasts of the events of the day. With the invention of newsreel reports, people were able to see their news on the big screen and watch as political and cultural events took place around them.

In this Extended Learning module, have students create a news report for a person or event in the 1920s in Texas. Students should write a script for their news report that includes information on the people involved, the details of the event, and the larger impact that the event would have.



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Resources:

1920s in Texas Overview

The 20th Century (page 1) from “A Concise History of Texas”

By Mike Kingston, for Texas State Historical Association

<http://texasalmanac.com/topics/history/timeline/20th-century-%E2%80%94-1>

Provides a general summary of the political, social, and economic events of the 1920s in Texas. The website covers all of the 20th century, with a focus on the 1920s on the first page.

Women in Society (Suffrage, Ma Ferguson)

Bell County Museum - Intimate Glimpse of Miriam A. Ferguson

Bell County Museum

Silent | 1920s

http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2016_00546

This edited home movie from the 1920s captures Miriam “Ma” Ferguson in Austin during her first term as Governor of Texas. The footage shows Ferguson at work in her office as well as at home in the Governor’s Mansion with her family. This primary source video provides a glimpse of the female governor in her office, as well as her family and staff.

Votes for Women! The Women’s Suffrage Movement in Texas

Texas State Library and Archives Commission

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/suffrage/index.html>

An online exhibit created by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission. For information on women’s rights in the 1920s, students should refer to the section entitled aftermath, although all sections will provide excellent context and biographical information of important figures.

Women in Texas History: Timeline

<http://www.womenintexashistory.org/timeline/>

A timeline of women’s history in Texas from the Paleoindian period to the 2000s. The timeline provides individuals and events important to women’s history by year from 1920 to 1929.



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Texas' All-Woman Supreme Court

By Mary G. Ramos for *The Texas Almanac*, Texas State Historical Association

<http://texasalmanac.com/topics/history/texas-all-woman-supreme-court>

In 1925, an all-woman supreme court was called in Texas at a time when women were not even permitted to serve on juries.

Prohibition

Juarez, Mexico - American Distiller Opens Plant Below Border, Introduces New Process to Age Certain Beverages Banned in U.S.

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

No Sound on Film | 1931

[http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Juarez, Mexico -](http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Juarez,_Mexico_-)

[_American Distiller Opens Plant Below Border, Introduces New Process to Age Certain Beverages Banned in U.S.&p=video1&b=0](http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Juarez,_Mexico_-American_Distiller_Opens_Plant_Below_Border,_Introduces_New_Process_to_Age_Certain_Beverages_Banned_in_U.S.&p=video1&b=0)

This film illustrates the impact of prohibition upon border communities, 1920-1933.

The H.R. Ketchum Film Collection, no. 5 - Trip to Galveston

Laura Ketchum

Silent | 1920s

http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2011_03376&p=video1&b=840

Primary source film depicting well to-do family in the Prohibition era drinking alcohol at their home.

Galveston: The Gilded Age of the Golden Isle (1977)

Galveston and Texas History Center - Rosenberg Library

Sound | 1977

http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2015_02001&p=video1&b=2322

Documentary video on the history of Galveston with a section covering the impact of Prohibition and its reception in the port town.



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Prohibition

K. Austin Kerr, Handbook of Texas Online

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/vap01>

Summary of the history of Prohibition in Texas.

The Rise of Civil Rights Organizations

Mexican-American Community in Corpus Christi

Texas A&M University Corpus Christi

Silent | 1920s

http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2015_01103&p=video1&b=328

This video shows members of the Corpus Christi chapter of The Order of the Sons of America. A primary source, this video allows students to see the national pride in minority organizations at this time.

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

Michael L. Gillette, Handbook of Texas Online

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ven01>

History of the establishment and the development of the NAACP in Texas. The NAACP played a major role in the campaign against the Ku Klux Klan in Texas and the fight against the ‘White Primary.’

Order of the Sons of America

Cynthia E. Orozco, Handbook of Texas Online

<https://tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/veotu>

History of one of the first Mexican-American civil rights organizations in Texas. OrdenHijos de America worked to provide the protection of law to all natural and naturalized citizens in Texas.



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LULAC History - All for One and One for All

<http://lulac.org/about/history/>

Founded with the goal of uniting all Mexican-American civil rights organizations under one umbrella, LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) played a key role in the civil rights movement in Texas.

Immigration

Halting Foreign Plant Foes

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Silent | 1922

[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Halting Foreign Plant Foes](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Halting_Foreign_Plant_Foes)

Illustrating the long-standing concern over the entry of "foreign agricultural pests" into the United States, this film features excellent shots of border crossings and inspections in the 1920s as automobiles and individuals are searched and various plants are examined and treated for potential hazards.

Border Patrol Nabs Vicious Smugglers in Surprise Attack

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

No Sound on Film | 1931

[http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Border Patrol Nabs Vicious Smugglers in Surprise Attack](http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=Border_Patrol_Nabs_Vicious_Smugglers_in_Surprise_Attack)

Depiction of the U.S. Border patrol attempting to stop smugglers from entering the United States.

August Young's Oath of Allegiance and Order Admitting to Citizenship, 1923

University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History

<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph759123/>

Primary source document. Oath of Allegiance presented to the McCulloch County District Court in which August Young renounces allegiance to any foreign power before swearing allegiance to the United States.



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Mexican Migration to the US

Christopher Rose, 15-Minute History podcast, University of Texas at Austin

<https://15minutehistory.org/2013/09/04/mexican-migration-to-the-us/>

Overview of the history of Mexican migration in Texas. This is an interview with Miguel A. Levario, Assistant Professor of History at Texas Tech University. There is both an audio recording and transcript. While some of the conversation is for higher-level students, much of the conversation provides excellent context for the immigration restrictions of the time period.

The History of Mexican Immigration to the U.S. in the Early 20th Century

Jason Steinhauer, Library of Congress *Insights* blog

<https://blogs.loc.gov/kluge/2015/03/the-history-of-mexican-immigration-to-the-u-s-in-the-early-20th-century/>

A brief explanation of the context and legal provisions surrounding 20th century immigration. Particular attention is paid to Mexican immigration in the 1920s.

The Oil Boom

Yount-Manion Films - Beaumont Oil Fields in the 1920s

Lamar University Mary and John Gray Library

Silent | 1920s

http://texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2015_02898

This very early industrial film from the late 1920s features footage of Beaumont oil fields alongside informative title cards. Do the oil fields look like you expected? What information was provided? Why was this film made?



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The Sloane Collection, no. 19 - Houston Post Composing Room and Goose Creek Oil Field
Story Sloane, III
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http://www.texasarchive.org/library/index.php?title=2011_01514&p=video1&b=183

Aerial views of Goose Creek Oil Field, Baytown Refinery, and Baytown, Texas. Goose Creek Oil Field is the site of the first offshore oil wells in Texas, and was a major field during the Texas Oil Boom. Construction of the refinery was completed in 1921, likely around the time this footage was filmed. Baytown Refinery is still active and stands as the largest oil refinery in the United States today.

“The Oil Wars”

Texas State Library and Archives Commission (part of Hazardous Business: Industry, Regulation, and the Texas Railroad Commission)

<https://www.tsl.texas.gov/exhibits/railroad/oil/page1.html>

A look at the attempts to regulate and control the oil industry during a time of exploding growth. This online exhibit provides definitions for difficult to understand concepts, such as the rule of capture.

Oil and Texas: A Cultural History

Mary G. Ramos, Texas State Historical Association

<http://texasalmanac.com/topics/business/oil-and-texas-cultural-history>

Summary of the development of the Oil Industry in Texas and its impact on society.

TEKS (4th and 7th):

4th Grade

5A – Identify the impact of various issues and events on life in 20th century Texas such as urbanization, increased use of oil and gas, and the Great Depression.



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5B – Explain the development and impact of the oil and gas industry upon industrialization and urbanization in Texas, including important places and people such as Spindletop and Pattillo Higgins.

5C – Identify the accomplishments of notable individuals in 20th century Texas.

8A – Identify and explain clusters and patterns of settlement in Texas at different time periods (1920s).

12A – Explain how people in different regions of Texas earn their living through providing goods and services.

12B – Explain how geographic factors such as climate, transportation, and natural resources have influenced the location of economic activities in Texas.

12C – Analyze the effects of exploration, immigration, migration, and limited resources on the economic development and growth of Texas.

12D – Describe the impact of mass production, specialization, and division of labor on the economic growth of Texas.

12E – Explain how developments in transportation and communication have influenced economic activities in Texas.

12F – Explain the impact of American ideas about progress and equality of opportunity on the economic development and growth of Texas.

13A – Identify ways in which technological changes in areas such as transportation and communication have resulted in increased interdependence among Texas, the United States, and the world.

13B – Identify oil and gas, agricultural, and technological products of Texas that are purchased to meet needs in the United States and around the world.

13C – Explain how Texans meet some of their needs through the purchase of products from the United States and the rest of the world.

17A – Identify important individuals who have participated voluntarily in civic affairs at state and local levels.

17B – Explain how individuals can participate voluntarily in civic affairs at state and local levels.

17D – Identify the importance of historical figures and important individuals who modeled active participation in the democratic process.



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19C – Summarize the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups in the development of Texas.

21A – Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software; interviews; biographies; oral, print, and visual material; documents; and artifacts to acquire information about the United States and Texas.

21B – Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

21C – Organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

21D – Identify different points of view about an issue, topic, historical event, or current events.

21E – Use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.

22C – Express ideas orally based on research and experiences.

22D - Create written and visual material.

22E – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

23A – Use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution.

7th Grade

1A – Understand traditional historical points of reference in Texas history. Identify the major eras in Texas history.

1B – Apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.

7A – Explain the political, economic, and social impact of the oil industry on the industrialization of Texas.

7B – Define and trace the impact of "boom-and-bust" cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries.



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7C – Describe and compare the impact of the Progressive and other reform movements in Texas in the 19th and 20th centuries such as the Populists, women's suffrage, and agrarian groups.

7D – Describe and compare the civil rights and equal rights movements of various groups in Texas in the 20th century and identify key leaders in these movements (Orden Hijos de America, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)).

7E – Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events, including World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, on the history of Texas.

7F – Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events in the early 20th century such as political and economic controversies, immigration, and migration.

11A – Analyze why immigrant groups came to Texas and where they settled.

11B – Analyze how immigration and migration to Texas in the 20th century has influenced Texas.

12A – Explain economic factors that led to the urbanization of Texas.

12B – Trace the development of major industries that contributed to the urbanization of Texas such as transportation, oil and gas, and manufacturing.

12C – Explain the changes in the types of jobs and occupations that have resulted from the urbanization of Texas.

13C – Analyze the impact of significant industries in Texas such as oil and gas on local, national, and international markets.

18B - Identify the contributions of Texas leaders (“Ma” Ferguson).

21A – Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.

21B – Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

21D – Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.

22A – Use social studies terminology correctly.



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22B – Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.

22D – Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

Worksheets:

[1920s Issues – Texas and the United States](#)

[1920s Issues – Topic Notes](#)