The Shared 1920s

How four media shaped work, spending, and daily life

SS24.US2.3a "Describe how the automobile, cinema, print media, and radio contributed to the rise in mass culture, economic growth, and expansion of the middle class during the 1920s."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Read the passage. Underline one way each medium spread shared experiences, and circle one way each supported paid work or spending.

A Nation Buys and Listens

1 In 1920s America, a family with a steady income might save for a car. Assembly-line production lowered prices, while installment plans let buyers pay over time. Car sales supported jobs in factories, steelmaking, rubber, road construction, and roadside businesses. Cars also carried families to the same vacation spots and shops, helping spread shared habits across regions. Those wages helped some workers enter a growing middle class, although many households still could not afford a car.

2 At a neighborhood theater, a ticket bought entry to a story seen by audiences across the country. Hollywood studios made films on a large scale, and movie theaters hired workers in many towns. Stars' clothing and gestures became familiar far beyond California, offering shared points of reference. Newspapers and magazines carried national advertisements alongside news and entertainment. By promoting the same products to distant readers, print media helped create a national consumer culture; publishing and advertising also provided middle-class office jobs.

3 Radio brought live music, sports, and comedy into homes, often at the same time nationwide. Manufacturers sold sets, stations sold advertising time, and networks hired performers and technicians. Radio ads could reach large audiences quickly, boosting demand for products heard about at home. Together with cars, films, and print, radio linked consumer spending to paid work and shared experiences. Still, access was unequal: buying a set, a ticket, or an advertised product required money many families lacked.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did cars support both paid work and shared habits?

2. How did cinema support both local jobs and a national culture?

3. How did print media connect consumer spending with middle-class work?

4. How did radio create a shared experience and generate income?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine you own a 1920s business and want customers in other states. In one paragraph, choose two media from the passage and explain how you would use them together to spread a buying habit, support paid work, and account for people who might be left out.

ANSWER KEY # The Shared 1920s

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Read the passage. Underline one way each medium spread shared experiences, and circle one way each supported paid work or spending. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did cars support both paid work and shared habits?	**Car sales supported factory and roadside jobs, while car travel brought families to some of the same shops and vacation spots.**
2	How did cinema support both local jobs and a national culture?	**Theaters hired workers in many towns, while films made stars and their styles familiar to audiences across the country.**
3	How did print media connect consumer spending with middle-class work?	**National ads promoted products to distant readers, while publishing and advertising provided middle-class office jobs.**
4	How did radio create a shared experience and generate income?	**People nationwide could hear the same programs, while sales of radio sets and advertising supported businesses and jobs.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I own a clothing store that sells felt hats. I would buy a magazine ad showing a hat like one worn by a popular film star. Moviegoers in different cities might recognize the style, then look for it after seeing the ad. More orders could mean paid work for hat makers, printers, and store clerks. The film and ad could make that style familiar nationwide, but families who cannot afford movie tickets or new hats might not take part.

Accept other accurate links between each medium, shared culture, and economic activity. For Part 3, look for a plausible combined use of two media, a specific source of paid work, and a realistic limit on access.