Fault Lines of Change

Read how disputes over ideas and belonging divided the 1920s

SS24.US2.3c "Explain why the 1920s comprised a period of significant social conflict as manifested by the Scopes trial, growth of the Ku Klux Klan, rise of nativist thinking, the Red Scare, and antisemitism."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Circle each of the five examples of social conflict in the passage. For each one, underline the belief or fear that helped drive it.

Who Could Teach, Speak, and Belong?

1 In 1925, a Tennessee classroom became the center of a national argument. State law banned public school teachers from teaching that humans evolved from earlier forms of life. John T. Scopes was tried for violating that law. Supporters of the ban argued that evolution threatened religious beliefs and local control of schools. Opponents defended scientific teaching and freedom of inquiry. Newspapers carried the debate far beyond Tennessee. The trial was not simply a contest over one lesson. It exposed a larger question: who should decide what Americans learn when newer scientific ideas challenge long-held beliefs?

2 Other conflicts turned on who counted as fully American. The revived Ku Klux Klan gained millions of members in the 1920s and targeted Black Americans, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants. It used intimidation and political influence to defend a vision of white Protestant dominance. Nativist thinking also shaped federal law. The Immigration Act of 1924 set national-origin quotas that sharply restricted immigration from southern and eastern Europe and barred most immigration from Asia. Supporters claimed these limits protected American jobs and culture. Critics saw a government choosing whose ancestry was welcome. Violence, campaigns, and legislation made exclusion a public issue, not merely a private opinion.

3 Fear of revolution brought another kind of pressure. During the Red Scare of 1919 and 1920, officials raided suspected radicals and arrested thousands; some were deported. Bombings and labor unrest fed fears of communism, but suspicion also fell on people with no proven involvement in violence. Antisemitism spread through claims that Jews secretly threatened the nation. Automaker Henry Ford's newspaper published false conspiracy claims about Jews, giving prejudice a powerful platform. These struggles differed, yet each asked whose ideas or identities would be treated as dangers. The decade's booming economy did not erase battles over belonging, authority, and freedom.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Why did the Scopes trial become a social conflict rather than just a case about one teacher?

2. How did the Ku Klux Klan and the Immigration Act of 1924 turn ideas about who belonged into public conflict?

3. How did fear during the Red Scare affect people suspected of holding dangerous ideas?

4. How did Henry Ford's newspaper contribute to social conflict, and what did its claims have in common with the Klan's targets?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 75 to 100 word opening label for a museum exhibit titled “Who Belonged?” Connect the Scopes trial, the Red Scare, and one example of exclusion from the passage. Explain a fear the conflicts shared and one important difference in how they played out.

ANSWER KEY

Fault Lines of Change

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.3c

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Circle each of the five examples of social conflict in the passage. For each one, underline the belief or fear that helped drive it. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why did the Scopes trial become a social conflict rather than just a case about one teacher?	**It brought a national dispute over religious beliefs, scientific teaching, and who should control what schools teach into a courtroom.**
2	How did the Ku Klux Klan and the Immigration Act of 1924 turn ideas about who belonged into public conflict?	**The Klan used intimidation and political influence against groups it targeted. The act used national-origin quotas and restrictions on immigration from Asia to limit who could enter the country.**
3	How did fear during the Red Scare affect people suspected of holding dangerous ideas?	**Officials raided and arrested suspected radicals, and some were deported. Suspicion also reached people with no proven involvement in violence.**
4	How did Henry Ford's newspaper contribute to social conflict, and what did its claims have in common with the Klan's targets?	**The newspaper spread false conspiracy claims about Jews. Like the Klan, it treated Jews as a threat to the nation.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The 1920s tested who could teach, speak, and belong. In the Scopes trial, a Tennessee law put scientific teaching in conflict with religious beliefs about schools. During the Red Scare, fear of revolution led officials to raid and arrest suspected radicals, even when violence was unproven. The Ku Klux Klan targeted Black Americans, Catholics, Jews, and immigrants through intimidation and politics. All three conflicts involved fear of change, but they played out differently: a classroom law restricted teaching, government raids targeted suspected political beliefs, and an organized movement threatened people's place in society.

Accept other supported explanations of the beliefs and fears behind each conflict. For the exhibit label, look for a defensible connection among the three required examples and a clear distinction between their methods.