

American Expatriates in the 1920s: Why Paris?

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Overview

In the 1920s, Paris was the place to be! Paris' allure was great in spite of the fact that the world was between two great wars and had seen destruction that was previously beyond all comprehension. So many men died that male populations in some areas of the world were completely decimated. In the United States, we had the "Roaring Twenties." Exuberance, a thriving stock market, enthusiasm in dance, art, and music was evident. Harlem attracted people as never before, and experienced a Renaissance of its own. Skyscrapers in Chicago and New York reached new heights, as did hemlines. Charles Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic, and people were doing the Lindy Hop. They also danced the Charleston, played jazz, and could buy a Ford for \$290. Wasn't all of this a metaphor for new hope and vitality here at home? So why Paris? Why did so many American artists leave the U.S. and head to France? What was going on politically here and abroad that made artists long for other shores?

This unit will look at the forces at work leading to the creation of a large community of expatriates living in Paris. *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald will serve as primary examples of literature, which exposed the dark underbelly of a society that was intent on "living it up" here at home. How did the time period inform the writing? What were the forces of modernism at work in the art, literature, and music of the era, and were there similarities in tone between these various works?

Rationale

Teaching important writers of American and British Literature is a key element for my Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition. It is also important for my Advanced English 3 class for 11th grade where the focus is American Literature. It is

part of my job to help students understand the disillusionment and despair expressed in both of these seminal pieces of literature. Why are these authors so disgusted with modern society and its values? What precipitated their sense of frustration with our nation at that time? This curriculum unit will examine those factors as background information and as thematic material to keep in mind as we read the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald.

We will relate these themes to an examination of Paris. What made Paris a place where these writers and many others could find inspiration, distance, and the freedom to put these thoughts to paper? How did the intellectual and artistic community provide what was needed? To deepen our understanding of the literature, we will examine contemporary works of art and music and the life of Paris and its expatriates.

Background Information

Problems at home

“Many Americans who settled in Paris in the twenties [believed] their native land was a cultural sink” (Toll 6). Here are some of the reasons:

Prohibition

July 16, 1920, the beginning of the “Roaring Twenties,” was marked by the passage of the Volstead Act – i.e. Prohibition. Even one half-ounce of the “Demon Rum” was outlawed, and proponents imagined empty jails and happy homes in a society where alcohol, the root of all evil, would be no more. Proponents of Prohibition “even claimed that nearly three thousand infants were smothered in bed each year by drunken parents” (Goldberg, R. 107). In fact, it was thought that the sale of alcohol increased crime of all types. This very Act may have produced a decade of unprecedented lawlessness in the United States. Organized crime, with characters such as Al Capone and Dutch Schultz, flourished as the supplier for the great demand for alcohol. Speakeasies were just one of the alternatives people found to get their much desired liquor. They could not be supplied legally, so gangsters took this opportunity and filled the gap. The money earned from the sale of illegal alcohol financed Organized Crime, which found bigger and better fields of endeavor once Prohibition ended. They quickly expanded their enterprise to include “prostitution, gambling, and extortion. In the process, they became involved in turf wars that, combined with their extortion rackets, made many northern cities dangerous places to live” (Sayres 1). Of course, between the bathtub gin produced at home, the speakeasies, doctors prescribing alcohol as frequently as they chose, and the fact that common people did not really consider drinking a crime, the attempt to ban liquor was a failed endeavor from the start.

Censorship

The early twenties also saw the introduction of a move toward censorship in the movie industry. “The new sexual freedom [was] condemned as un-American” (Goldberg, Ronald 102). Scandals of sex and drugs off the screen and scenes with similar content on the screen caused an outcry among certain circles of society, and their champion was Will Hays. He created the Production Code (“Hays Code”), which attempted to “enforce a moral authority over Hollywood films” (*Production Code*). The Code was not fully accepted by the industry until the next decade when it was clear that the government might step in.

Institutionalized Racism

The landmark film *Birth of a Nation* premiered in 1915, both reflecting and strengthening existing racism. The Ku Klux Klan had been active only sporadically in the South following the Reconstruction in the 1870s. The enormous popularity of the film, and its endorsement by President Woodrow Wilson, signaled a resurgence in the North and the South, and provided ipso facto permission for even more heinous acts of racism. One such event took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma:

A hysterical white girl related that a nineteen-year-old colored boy attempted to assault her in the public elevator of a public office building...Without pausing to find out whether or not the story was true, ...a mob...set forth on a wild rampage that cost the lives of fifty white men; of between 150 and 200 colored men, women and children; the destruction by fire of \$1,500,000 worth of property; the looting of many homes; and everlasting damage to the reputation of the city of Tulsa and the State of Oklahoma. -- Walter F. White, "The Eruption of Tulsa," *The Nation*, June 29, 1921 (America 1).

What came to be called the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921 was just one example of the explosiveness and danger of race relations in the Roaring Twenties. Lynchings were commonplace. The Ku Klux Klan was at the height of its power, experiencing enormous growth as “thousands joined ... in the two years following” (America 1) the Tulsa Race Riot. In addition, “the Tulsa Riot leads us to others in which whites stormed into black neighborhoods and burned and looted and killed whomever they found” (America 1).

Rampant discrimination was not only aimed at African Americans. Anti-Semitism was on the rise. Henry Ford, the auto manufacturer, made Anti-Semitism his personal crusade, and even saw to it that his Ford dealerships across the country internationally distributed free copies of his anti-Semitic book, *The International Jew* (America 1). The Ku Klux Klan even set up headquarters in Detroit, thanks to Ford.

The study of eugenics and IQ testing provided support for those in fear of all the “foreigners” finding their way to our shores. “Between 1900 and 1917, nearly 14.3 million people arrived in the United States...In 1920...there were nearly 14 million foreign-born people out of a population of 105, 700,000...many Americans had ‘a fear of being overwhelmed and of suddenly finding one day that they are no longer themselves.’ [It didn’t help that] most were Catholics and Jews from southern and eastern Europe and possessed different core values”(Goldberg, R. 111).

A Troubled Economy

America in the twenties had an economy poised for cataclysm. People ran up debts greater than ever before due to various factors. It became easier and easier to buy on credit:

The installment plan was a newly popular method of purchase. People could pay a little bit every month, plus interest, of course, which was often high. This was new to Americans, who had traditionally been a thrifty, cautious race, saving their money against a rainy day (in part because they knew the government would not bail them out of a tight spot). Now, however, manufacturers and stores offered to let consumers make a down payment, and then pay a little bit every month (with interest, which was usually high). Factories did this because they were producing goods faster than people could buy them, and businesses needed a way to sell them and make some money off them, or else they would go out of business. In the short run this seemed good for Americans, as people had luxuries they had never before enjoyed, but in the long run it created a debt-ridden nation (Sayres 1).

The use of credit proved to be most dangerous in the stock market. Many were caught up in the exuberance and heady increases of the stock market. With a belief that prices would only go up, many purchased stocks on margin (paying only a small percentage of the price up front). As soon as prices decreased, there were “margin calls,” forcing people to come up with the funds on demand. Few could meet this demand, forcing sales of the stocks, and leading to bankruptcy. Furthermore, these speculative investments were based on the misleading runs on the market rather than on any real value in the companies in which they were “investing.” The market resembled a balloon filling more and more with air rather than substance.

In reality, many companies were struggling, facing excessive of inventory and decreased demand. Businesses began advertising more than ever before to create a “need” for their products, and with this, the birth of a consumer society. Billboards began appearing touting goods in new and interesting ways. Billboards were perfect for a

population purchasing more and more cars. In the beginning of the decade, 8 million cars were registered, compared with twenty-three million by decade's end (Great 1).

Isolationism and Fear of the Foreign

"A feeling of deep anxiety existed in the United States after World War I" (Goldberg, R 102). Americans wanted to pull away from involvement with nations around the world and elect administrations that reflected that isolationist policy. This policy had several detrimental effects. Congress voted to not participate in the League of Nations, ironically making the possibility of the next war even greater. The government instituted protectionist policies in the area of trade, placing import quotas on foreign goods to shelter our own industries. This backfired. Foreign countries responded with their own quotas, decreasing sales for manufacturers, and hitting our farmers especially hard. The United States also instituted restrictive immigration policies, in part because "there was a fear of the foreign-born, who had not yet adapted to American ways" (Goldberg, R. 102). These policies were strongly supported by the growing membership of the KKK, which fought for an America for Americans, a policy put forth in the Imperial Wizard Hiram Wesley Evans' publication *The Menace of Modern Immigration*. In fact, according to Ronald Goldberg, "The Klan's greatest selling point became the protection of traditional American values and it especially opposed the New Immigrant from southern and eastern Europe, blaming him for causing a moral breakdown" (102).

Attractions of Paris

Donald Pizer spoke of "the Paris moment." Virgil Thomson said, "France was more than just another country...but a miracle spot like ancient Greece..." (Toll) Paris of the twenties was a "fertile moment" in time and place that brought all the right elements together to attract and inspire the artistic mind. Hemingway called it "the town best organized for a writer to write in that there is" (A Moveable Feast 182). "The world one has been bred in is perceived to suffer from intolerable inadequacies and limitations; another world seems to be free of these failings and to offer a more fruitful way of life" (Pizer 1). So on one hand we had an America that seemed to have buried its collective head in the sand, while across the ocean beckoned Paris, with its beauty, its freedom, and its art. For many, it was not a hard choice to make.

A Freer Society

Paris did not suffer from the same puritanical restrictions as the U. S. "Artists and intellectuals migrated to the "City of Light," finding there a freedom of existence and an exhilaration of thought unlike anywhere else in the world. 'It's not so much what France gives you,' said expatriate Gertrude Stein from her flat on the Rue de Fleurus, 'It's what it doesn't take away'"(Chandler). The importance of the sense of freedom for the artist was not to be underestimated. It governed not only the behavior of the artist, but personal

expression in their works of art. “The image of Paris as the city of light aptly renders the intellectual openness and intensity that earlier generations of Americans abroad had associated with the city. But for the expatriates of the twenties and thirties, Paris was above all a world of sexual freedom — a place where the writer could feel desire, could translate (if he or she wished) desire into action, and could write about desire” (Pizer 12).

No Prohibition

Paris did not have prohibition, and with favorable exchange rates, drinking in cafes or at Gertrude Stein’s salons was certainly a big part of each day’s activities for many of the artists, even those lacking much in the way of funds. The writers, artists, and composers that left the United States for Paris “rejected the values of post World War I America and relocated to Paris to live a bohemian lifestyle” (Lost).

A Synergistic Effect

The attraction and the fertility of Paris in this era are in part explained by the mere presence of so many artists. The more that arrived in Paris, the more others were interested in coming. Sherwood Anderson, Ezra Pound, Ernest Hemingway, Picasso, Aaron Copland, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry Miller, and James Joyce were just some of the expatriates from American and elsewhere who made Paris their home in the 20s. They wanted to read each other’s works, to discuss their latest thoughts with other like-minded individuals, and, if lucky, to glean inspiration. Sylvia Beach arrived and opened “Shakespeare and Company,” a bookstore still standing on the banks of the Seine. It provided a meeting place for those interested in books written in English. “News of Shakespeare and Company spread in American literary circles, ‘and it was the first thing the pilgrims looked up in Paris...Many of them looked upon [it] as their club’” (Carpenter 43). She often went beyond merely running this bookstore. In the case of James Joyce, she helped him find lodgings, employment as a language tutor, and “he became a regular at the bookshop.” He met other authors, finished his masterpiece *Ulysses*, and even accepted help from Ms. Beach for its first publication. Sylvia Beach’s bookstore and Gertrude Stein’s salon helped artists find one another. “Sylvia was encouraged to appear at the Saturday-night salons at 27 rue de Fleurus, and she began to bring American writers to meet Gertrude, since they were often too nervous to approach her direct: “So the poor things would come to me, exactly as if I were a guide from one of the tourist agencies”” (Carpenter 42).

New Directions in Art, Music and Literature

Following the debacle of the First World War, there was an awakening to the fact that the world could not remain as it was. No longer could one be excited by the prospect of a war, with crowds waving flags and cheering on the enlistees. The devastation of war was now all too evident. The strictly drawn class lines, even where most deeply entrenched,

were blurred, and both rich and poor suffered equally. It is hardly surprising, then, to see these changes reflected in art.

The first decades of the twentieth century witnessed upheavals in long-established political, social, economic, and religious patterns, with the result that the stability of nineteenth-century life was shattered beyond recall... Modernism reflected the tumult of this world in various ways. On one level, the movement rebelled against the artistic past. In painting, this rebellion took the form of a complete abdication of what, until then, had preoccupied most artists in the post-medieval West — the imitation of external reality. As if by prior agreement, modern artists of all nations and types deliberately chose not to reproduce reality or copy from nature, perhaps because photography could do so in a much more faithful way. Indeed, artists distorted natural forms and even rejected the principle of single perspective that had prevailed since the days of Michelangelo (Berggren 1).

Music also abandoned old forms, rejecting the chromatic scale (and thus the basis for harmony that had been in use for centuries), and instead opted for discordant sounds, “and even included non-musical sounds such as those of fire engines as well as artificially produced ones” (Berggren 1).

Donald Pizer makes the argument that the writing style of authors such as Gertrude Stein, Hemingway and Henry Miller specifically reflect the new modernism in art. He states, “Stein underscores not only what she has done as a promoter of modernism in painting but also how she has appropriated its underlying principles for her prose”(35). He compares her style to the work of Cezanne and Picasso, particularly their use of cubism. Pizer explains that “one of the cardinal aims of a cubist painting...is to bring various angles of perceiving an object into a single simultaneous vision (as in a cubist portrait that superimposes one on another the different geometric shapes that the different angles of vision present)” (35). The result, he continues, is that Stein that structures her *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* as “an associational body of recollection[s]” demonstrating her acceptance of “the cubist assumption that the consciousness of the perceiver determines both the method of perceiving and what is perceived” (36)While modernist painting offers “conscious distortion of traditional visual representation to achieve clarity and emphasis,” likewise modernist literature presents a “conscious distortion of conventional narrative representation” (Pizer 40). Painters, composers, and authors of poetry and prose come together to discuss, enjoy, and experiment each in their own way, yet “all are similar in relating the emergence of a personal aesthetic to the Paris moment” (Pizer 40).

Objectives

The concepts of modernism and a deeper understanding of the “Roaring Twenties,” both its high life and its days of scandal, will serve as introductory material for *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Hollow Men* by T. S. Eliot, and other poetry of the era. The target audience is an advanced class of eleventh graders. American literature is typically the focus of eleventh grade.

The primary objective of this unit is to help students better understand the time period in which the works of literature were written. They will hopefully get a feel for the excitement of the era, including its music, clothes, dances, and drinks — the entire milieu. The next step is to increase student awareness of the consequences of the “Roaring Twenties” — the alcoholism, the bankruptcy, the excessive spending on frivolity, and the loss of appreciation for what really matters in life.

The second objective is to show how the high life of the period disguised life as it really was — a theme that so clearly runs through Fitzgerald’s novel. This goal is to heighten student awareness of the themes of the authors and the world of the characters in the literature they will be reading. This way they can better understand why the narrators of *Gatsby* and the *Hollow Men* speak so negatively about a world which seems, on the surface, to be so much fun.

In addition, students will examine the structure of *The Great Gatsby* and the poetry of the era for its modernist qualities. Are they organized in a linear way, or do they come closer to the style of cubist painting, attempting new ways of perceiving events and new ways of depicting those events? Part of this examination will be to question the author’s intent. Students will present theories about why the author selected one means of organization or structure over another at a particular point in the story. This will remind students that authors of this caliber do not select their structure in a vacuum, but will relate it to the meaning and theme they are hoping to convey,

Strategies

Jigsaw method

Students will be engaged in a great deal of group work. One strategy for selecting group members is the jigsaw method. The instructor will create mini-jigsaw puzzles by cutting pictures into four or five pieces each. The number of puzzles needed must equal the number of groups the instructor wants. For this unit, photographs or drawings related to the “Roaring Twenties” will be most useful, such as an image of a “flapper” or a picture of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Next, the instructor will place all puzzle pieces in a large envelope. The teacher will have students select one puzzle piece at random. Students will then be instructed to

find the missing pieces to their puzzle by mixing and matching with classmates. Once students have a completed puzzle, they will have their group.

The Reading Response Journal

There are many ways of doing Reading Response Journals. Here is one version from the Talbot County Public Schools Web Site:

Keep a READING JOURNAL, in a double entry reading log format, as shown below

1. Write...a concise summary of the plot, main characters and themes.
2. **Fold** several loose-leaf pages in half vertically to make two equal long columns. **Label** the left hand column “Quotes” and the right hand column “Significance”.
3. As you read, **choose 8-10 quotes that you feel are significant** (in terms of a key character’s development, a recurring or important theme, or which simply made you think about an idea in a new or different way)...
4. On the right column, **reflect** on the significance of what is being said. Ponder your selected quotes and try to answer your own questions in this space. Make connections to the world outside the reading, explain how the selected quote is important to a character or event, and/or use the quote as a springboard for personal reflection.

Evaluation:

Selection and tracking of a substantial number of quotes

Thinking on significance of quotes

Response to literature

Following directions carefully

Questioning the Author

This method poses a series of questions that allow students to more closely examine an author’s intent and his level of success at communicating with the reader. The following questions are taken from the *Core Curriculum Educational Resources* for the School District of Philadelphia.

1. What is the author trying to tell you?
2. Why is the author telling you that?
3. Does the author say it clearly?
4. How could the author have said things more clearly?
5. What would you say instead? (132)

Classroom Activities

Before Reading:

Lesson Plan One (three to five class periods)

Each student will be assigned one of the following topics to research and report on to the class. They will have a partner in the class who is researching the material with them. Students will be asked to complete a three to five page report on their own, as well as presenting their findings to the class with their partner.

Since many will be using the internet to find much of their information, guidelines for evaluating the validity of internet sites will be presented in advance of beginning the research project. Two web sites with useful activities and questions for evaluating web sites are “A WebQuest About Evaluating Web Sites” at www.sdst.org/shs/library/evalwebstu.html from the Springfield Township High School Virtual Library and “Evaluating Web Sites” from the Lesley University, Library, www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html.

Students will then receive instruction on the proper use of parenthetical citations and the format of a works cited page following the MLA format for their research papers. Cautions about the dangers and consequences of plagiarism will be given as well.

Here are research topics that will be randomly assigned as background material for the reading of the literature:

- The Eighteenth Amendment (Prohibition) and its effects on the lives of Americans.
- The effects of the increased presence of automobiles on the lives of Americans.
- The new consumerism of the 1920s: What were the developments in purchasing on credit?
- The new consumerism of the 1920s: What were the advances in advertising?
- The immigration legislation of the 1920s
- The Sacco and Vanzetti case.
- The state of race relations in the 1920s.
- Report on Billie Holiday’s song *Strange Fruit*. What was its significance for the country?
- New freedoms for women in the twenties.
- Fixing the World Series.
- The Teapot Dome scandal.
- The Fatty Arbuckle scandal.
- Police involvement in crime in the 1920s.

- The Scopes “Monkey Trial” of 1925.
- The collapse of the German economy in 1927.
- The rise of Fascism in Germany and Italy.
- The “Black Sox” World Series Scandal

Assessment

Student research papers will be evaluated for their writing clarity and coherence, for their apparent understanding of the assigned topic, and the proper citing of resources. In addition, each group will present their findings to the class. This will assist in the prevention of plagiarism.

Pennsylvania State Standards addressed in this lesson include 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.8.

Lesson Plan Two (three to five class periods)

Using the jigsaw method described in the “strategies” section, students will be assigned to one of four groups. Each group will plan a Roaring Twenties Party. To prepare this party, each group will be given a budget, but they may purchase what they need on the installment plan as was first introduced in that time period. Each group will research each of the following required items for their party (students may add others if they wish), and include pictures, prices, and all details necessary to actually conduct their event:

1. The drinks you will serve (what were the cocktails of the day?)
2. The music you will play
3. The clothes you will wear, including jewelry
4. The food you will serve (what new hors d’oeuvres were being served?)
5. The venue you will use to hold your party (what were the popular clubs of that day that could be used)
6. The dances you will do
7. The transportation you will use (in what cars will you arrive?)

Here are some web sites students can visit to assist them in their planning:

For Overall Party Ideas:

1. “Roaring Twenties Party Supplies and Ideas!” *Reason to Party*
<http://www.reasontoparty.com/roaringtwenties.htm>
2. “Party Planning.” *Mars Talent Agency.*
<http://www.marstalent.com/partyplanning/party.htm>

3. “Roaring Twenties Theme Party Ideas - 1920’s thru 1920’s” *Dinner and a Murder*. <http://www.dinnerandamurder.com/themes/1920s.htm>

For Clothing Styles and Fashions of the Day:

1. “Fashion Magazines and Pattern Books.” American Women. http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/awhhtml/awgc1/fashion_magazines.html
2. LA BELLE PERSONNE (1925) by George Barbier, Serial #6557 from the American Passages Archive (a “painting of woman posed with fan, vase, and framed by cherry blossoms and an elegant curtain. [From this image we see] definitions of female beauty and sexuality changed with modernization.”)
3. Portrait of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Serial #4911 from American Passages Archive
4. Picture of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald in a “bob” hairdo, Serial #4913 from American Passages Archive.

For Music

1. <http://www.roaringtwentiesmusic.com/>
2. The Jazz Age Page. <http://www.btinternet.com/~dreklind/threetwo/Jazzhome.htm>

Assessment

Students will be assessed on the appearance and content of a booklet that is produced which includes illustrations and explanations in detail about the party that was planned.

Pennsylvania State Standards addressed in this lesson include 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.8.

Lesson Plan Three (two to three class periods)

Students will read, copy, and discuss the list of the characteristics of “Modernism” from their textbooks *Elements of Literature, Fifth Course*. These characteristics are as follows:

- Emphasis on bold experimentation in style and form, reflecting the fragmentation of society
- Rejection of traditional themes, subjects, and forms
- Sense of disillusionment and loss of faith in the American dream
- Rejection of the ideal of a hero as infallible in favor of a hero who is flawed and disillusioned but shows “grace under pressure”

- Interest in the inner workings of the human mind, sometimes expressed through new narrative techniques, such as stream of consciousness
- Revolt against the spiritual debasement of the modern world (565).

After students have had a chance to discuss the list above, they will examine various images from *Viewing and Representing* – one of the ancillary materials accompanying the *Elements of Literature* textbook. For each image, students will be prompted to answer, “Is it modern or traditional? Does it fit the criteria of Modernism? If it does, in what way?”

Some of the images we will examine will include:

- *The Poet and Painter Adolf Uzarski* by Otto Dix, 1923
- *The Walk* by Marc Chagall, 1917.
- Picasso, Pueblo. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907)
- Aaron Douglas, *The Judgment Day* (1927)
- Rene' Magritte, *The Lovers* (1928)

And compare that to more “traditional” art, such as:

- *Benjamin Franklin* by David Martin, 1767.
- *Mount of the Holy Cross* by Thomas Moran, 1875
- *Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* by John Singer Sargent

We will listen to examples of music that are “modern”

- Stravinsky, Igor. *Le Sacre du Printemps*

And compare that to music from the romantic period

- Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto #1
- Beethoven's Symphony #5

Assessment

Following an examination of these examples of “modernism,” students will then select 10 images from their textbook *Elements of Literature, Fifth Course*, and a) label the image as Modern or Traditional, and b) write an explanation of why they have selected that designation.

Pennsylvania State Standards addressed in this lesson include 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, and 1.6.

While Reading *The Great Gatsby*

Lesson Plan Four (two to three weeks)

Maintain a Reading Response Journal that incorporates all of the following:

a) For each chapter, students will write five to ten points that summarize the major events that occur and the things you learn about the major characters.

b) For each chapter, students will find lines or phrases that strike them in some way. Does it remind them of something in your own life? Can they relate to it in some way? Does it seem like something they did not expect? They will then copy that line and respond to it in one paragraph.

c) Students will take notes on things that are said in the chapter that are related to the major themes and symbols in the novel. Here are some themes they should be aware of as they read:

1. The Disillusionment with the American Dream
2. The Empty Lives of the Members of the Upper Class
3. Blindness to What is Really Going On

After Reading *The Great Gatsby*

a) Examine the works of art, music, and poetry from the “modern” period. Discuss comparisons in style, tone and theme with *The Great Gatsby*. Some examples include:

- Stravinsky, Igor. *Le Sacre du Printemps*
- Picasso, Pueblo. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907)
- Aaron Douglas, *The Judgment Day* (1927) (Serial #4766 from American Passages Archive)
- *The Hollow Men* by T. S. Eliot.

Assessment

Student progress and understanding of this lesson will be evaluated via an essay in which they discuss one of the themes of the novel, referring to their reading journals as they work. They will quote from passages in the novel as evidence, using parenthetical citations.

Pennsylvania State Standards addressed in this lesson include 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, and 1.5.

Resources

Annotated Resources for Teachers

“A Brief Guide to Modernism.” *Poets.Org from the Academy of American Poets*. 2007.

<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/5664>

This web site provides a wealth of information, including the text of poems, biographies of poets, and informative articles on related topics.

American Cultural History: 1920 -1929. <http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade20.html>

This personal web site offers information on many aspects of the 1920s including art, architecture, books, literature, fads, fashion, historical events, and links to other useful sites.

“America in the 1770s, 1850s, and 1920s.” *The E Pluribus Unum Project.*

<http://www.assumption.edu/ahc/raceriots/default.html>

On this page you will find photographs of the Tulsa Riots, details of lynchings and other race riots, scandals of the 1920s, information about the rise in Anti-Semitism, the Harlem Renaissance, and numerous links on these topics.

“American Masters: For Teachers.” *PBS39.*

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/education/index.html>

Here you will find detailed lesson plans related to broadcasts from the American Masters Series.

Chandler, Arthur. “Post-War Paris.” from *World's Fair Magazine*, Volume VIII,

Number 3, Copyright 1988, World's Fair, Inc. January 2000

<http://www.retopolis.net/exposition/postwarparis.html>

“Evaluating Web Sites.” *Lesley University Library.* 4/19/07.

http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html

This site, aimed at very advanced high school students or college students, provides lists of important questions for evaluating web sites in the categories of purpose, authority, objectivity, appropriateness, currency, responsibility, clarity, and accessibility. It also offers links for examining possible biases.

Goldberg, David J. *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s (The American Moment).* The Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore. 1999.

This provides an interesting look at all of the problems in the United States following WWI. It includes a chapter on the plight of African Americans, and another on the Rise and Fall of the Ku Klux Klan.

Goldberg, Ronald Allen. *American in the Twenties.* Syracuse University Press: Syracuse. 2003.

The section concerning the problems of the 1920s was more concise and just as informative the other sources I found. It was easier to use when compared to an entire book on the subject.

McAlmon, Robert, and Kate Boyle. *Being Geniuses Together, 1920-1930.* 1968. San Francisco. 1984.

I found here a chatty account of the lives of the American Expatriates in Paris in the 1920s.

“Music: Paris is the Twenties.” *Bbc.co.uk*. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/music/features/paris/>
This site provides an opportunity to listen to music of Paris in the 1920s as well as information on poetry, style, and various forms of pleasure of the era.

Pizer, Donald. *American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment*. Louisiana State University Press: Baton Rouge. 1996.

This provides a detailed, interesting, and informative examination of how American Expatriates used modernist techniques in their writing. He focuses his attention on the works of Hemingway, Stein, Dos Passos, Fitzgerald, Anais Nin, and Henry Miller.

“Reading Journals: AP 11: Language and Composition.” Talbot County Public Schools. <http://www.tcps.k12.md.us/uploads/EHSMC/2006-12PAP.pdf>
The Talbot County Public Schools offer a useful technique, clearly explained, for doing a reading journal. There are details for all high school grades on various sites.

Sayres, Mr. “The Roaring Twenties.” *American History Course Notes*. 2003.

<http://www.sayersnet.com/~dusty/history/usyll.htm>

A series of class notes by a professor on topics from European Exploration to the Fall of the Soviet Union.

Stricker, Frank. "Affluence for Whom? — Another look at Prosperity and the Working Classes in the 1920s." *Labor History* Vol.24.Winter, 1983.

This is an interesting article, though technical and long, that avers that economic success in the 1920s was not equitable, and indeed, non-existent for many.

“Study Guide: The Great Gatsby.” *Sparknotes*. 2006.

<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/gatsby>

Sparknotes provide useful chapter summaries, explanations of characters, themes, and symbols for a wide variety of classic literature. Be aware that students may try to use these in place of actually reading the novel.

“The Jazz Age or The Roaring Twenties: The Lost Generation.”

<http://www.westga.edu/~mmcfar/The%20Jazz%20Age%20or%20The%20Roaring%20Twenties%202.htm> On this very brief web page, you will find an excellent list of modernist characteristics as well as characteristics of the writing of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and others.

Toll, Seymour. "A Sunday Afternoon with Virgil Thomson." *American Scholar*. Fall, 1990.

This is an interesting interview with a man who actually lived as an American Expatriate who rejects the idea of a lost generation.

"The Great Gatsby Unit." *TeacherVision: lesson plans, printables, and more.* Pearson Education, Inc. 2000-2007. <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/literature/lesson-plan/2925.html?detoured=1>

Many useful ideas for a teacher teaching this novel, including project ideas, vocabulary, study questions, and historical background are to be found here.

The "Roaring Twenties." *Schools History*. 2004.

<http://www.schoolshistory.org.uk/america/roaringtwenties.htm>

This is a personal web site from England where you will find lesson plans for a wide variety of historical periods. However, some of the links send me to a spam blocker, so be careful.

Valenza, Joyce. "A WebQuest About Evaluating Web Sites." *Springfield Township High School Virtual Library*. January 2, 2001.

<http://www.sdst.org/shs/library/evalwebstu.html>

This web site, aimed at students in grades 9 - 12, provides a list of web sites on commonly-researched topics, as well as useful questions for site evaluation.

Resources for Students

Beers, Kylene and Lee Odell. *Elements of Literature, Fifth Course*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston: Orlando 2005.

"Evaluating Web Sites." *Lesley University Library*. 4/19/07.

http://www.lesley.edu/library/guides/research/evaluating_web.html

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *Babylon Revisited. audio excerpt*. Serial #8684.

http://www.learner.org/amerpass/slideshow/archive_search.php This excerpt provides an interesting description of Paris in the 1920s.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby* (1925) Scribner Classic. 1953.

"Ludwig van Beethoven - Symphony No.5, Op.67." *Classical Music Pages*.

http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/beethoven_sym5.html.

This site allows you to play this famous symphony, movement by movement.

- Picasso, Pueblo. *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* (1907).
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/flashpoints/visualarts/images/picasso_big.jpg
- Stravinsky, Igor. *Le Sacre du Printemps*. London Symphony Orchestra. Claudio Abbado, conductor. Audio CD. Deutsche Grammophon. July 15, 1997.
- Tanguy, Yves. THE LOOK OF AMBER (1929), item # 4530 From American Passages Archive http://www.learner.org/amerpass/slideshow/archive_search.php
- Tchaikovsky, Peter. *Violin Concerto No. 1*. BBC Symphony Orchestra. Sir Colin Davis, conductor. Universal Classics. Audio CD. June 10, 2003.
- Valenza, Joyce. "A WebQuest About Evaluating Web Sites." *Springfield Township High School Virtual Library*. January 2, 2001.
<http://www.sdst.org/shs/library/evalwebstu.html>

Appendix: Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening for Grade 11

1.1. Learning to Read Independently

- A. Locate various texts, media and traditional resources for assigned and independent projects before reading.
- D. Identify, describe, evaluate and synthesize the essential ideas in text. Assess those reading strategies that were most effective in learning from a variety of texts
- G. Demonstrate after reading understanding and interpretation of both fiction and nonfiction text, including public documents.
 - Compare and contrast texts using themes, settings, characters and ideas.
 - Make extensions to related ideas, topics or information.
 - Assess the validity of the document based on context.
 - Analyze the positions, arguments and evidence in public documents.
 - Evaluate the author's strategies.
- H. Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading.

1.2 Demonstrate fluency and comprehension in reading

A. Read and understand essential content of informational texts and documents in all academic areas.

- Differentiate fact from opinion across a variety of texts by using complete and accurate information, coherent arguments and points of view.
- Distinguish between essential and nonessential information across a variety of sources, identifying the use of proper references or authorities and propaganda techniques where present.
- Use teacher and student established criteria for making decisions and drawing conclusions.
- Evaluate text organization and content to determine the author's purpose and effectiveness according to the author's theses, accuracy, thoroughness, logic and reasoning.

1.3. Reading, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature

A. Read and understand works of literature

F. Analyze the relationships, uses and effectiveness of literary elements used by one or more authors in similar genres including characterization, setting, plot, theme, point of view, tone and style.

J. Read and respond to nonfiction and fiction including poetry and drama

1.4. Types of Writing

F. Write complex informational pieces (e.g., research papers, analyses, evaluations, essays).

- Include a variety of methods to develop the main idea.
- Use precise language and specific detail.
- Include cause and effect.
- Use relevant graphics (e.g., maps, charts, graphs, tables, illustrations, photographs).
- Use primary and secondary sources

G. Write persuasive pieces.

- Include a clearly stated position or opinion.
- Include convincing, elaborated and properly cited evidence.
- Develop reader interest.
- Anticipate and counter reader concerns and arguments.
- Include a variety of methods to advance the argument or position.

1.5. Quality of Writing

- A. Write with a sharp, distinct focus.
 - Identify topic, task and audience.
 - Establish and maintain a single point of view.
- B. Write using well developed content appropriate for the topic.
 - Gather, determine validity and reliability of, analyze and organize information.
 - Employ the most effective format for purpose and audience.
 - Write fully developed paragraphs that have details and information specific to the topic and relevant to the focus.
- C. Write with controlled and/or subtle organization.
 - Sustain a logical order throughout the piece.
 - Include an effective introduction and conclusion.
- D. Write with a command of the stylistic aspects of composition.
 - Use different types and lengths of sentences.
 - Use precise language.
- E. Revise writing to improve style, word choice, sentence variety and subtlety of meaning after rethinking how questions of purpose, audience and genre have been addressed.
- F. Edit writing using the conventions of language.
 - Spell all words correctly.
 - Use capital letters correctly.
 - Punctuate correctly (periods, exclamation points, question marks, commas, quotation marks, apostrophes, colons, semicolons, parentheses, hyphens, brackets, ellipses).
 - Use nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, prepositions and interjections properly.
 - Use complete sentences (simple, compound, complex, declarative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative).

1.6. Speaking and Listening

- A. Listen to others.
 - Ask clarifying questions.
 - Synthesize information, ideas and opinions to determine relevancy.
 - Take notes.

- B. Listen to selections of literature (fiction and/or nonfiction).
 - Relate them to previous knowledge.
 - Predict solutions to identified problems.
 - Summarize and reflect on what has been heard.
 - Identify and define new words and concepts.
 - Analyze and synthesize the selections relating them to other selections heard or read.
- C. Speak using skills appropriate to formal speech situations.
 - Use a variety of sentence structures to add interest to a presentation.
 - Pace the presentation according to audience and purpose.
 - Adjust stress, volume and inflection to provide emphasis to ideas or to influence the audience.
- D. Contribute to discussions.
 - Ask relevant, clarifying questions.
 - Respond with relevant information or opinions to questions asked.
 - Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of others.
 - Adjust tone and involvement to encourage equitable participation.
 - Facilitate total group participation.
 - Introduce relevant, facilitating information, ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion.
 - Paraphrase and summarize as needed.
- E. Participate in small and large group discussions and presentations.
 - Select and present an oral reading on an assigned topic. (I)
 - Organize and participate in informal debate around a specific topic. (A)
 - Use evaluation guides (e.g., National Issues Forum, Toastmasters), evaluate group discussion (e.g., of peers, on television).
- F. Use media for learning purposes.
 - Use various forms of media to elicit information, to make a student presentation and to complete class assignments and projects.
 - Evaluate the role of media in focusing attention and forming opinions.
 - Create a multimedia (e.g., film, music, computer-graphic) presentation for display or transmission that demonstrates an understanding of a specific topic or issue or teaches others about it.

1.8. Research

- A. Select and refine a topic for research.

B. Locate information using appropriate sources and strategies.

- Determine valid resources for researching the topic, including primary and secondary sources.
- Evaluate the importance and quality of the sources.
- Select sources appropriate to the breadth and depth of the research e.g., dictionaries, thesauruses, other reference materials, interviews, observations, computer databases).
- Use tables of contents, indices, key words, cross-references and appendices.
- Use traditional and electronic search tools.

C. Organize, summarize and present the main ideas from research.

- Take notes relevant to the research topic.
- Develop a thesis statement based on research.
- Anticipate readers' problems or misunderstandings.
- Give precise, formal credit for others' ideas, images or information using a standard method of documentation.
- Use formatting techniques (e.g., headings, graphics) to aid reader understanding.