



# WHAT IS CONSUMERISM?



Consumerism, and in general, the consumption of goods, was promoted significantly during the Roaring 20s. With technological advances in transportation, manufacturing, and other sectors, coupled with American prosperity and the fact that Americans had more disposable income, this time period was one of immense spending.

## KEY TERM

**Consumerism**, the theory that increasing consumption of goods is good for the economy

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**Calvin Coolidge**, President from 1923-1929; his era was a time of American prosperity; created a "business climate" with increased advertising

## WHY PAY CASH?

This Popular Store affords you an opportunity to make your selection of its immense stock of Wearing Apparel at any time you wish and to take advantage of our liberal Credit System—paying the account by the week or month.



### SPRING & SUMMER TAILORED SUITS

The styles shown here are in many instances exclusive—the prices are popular and our alteration department is in charge of an expert.

**\$1.00 PER WEEK**

**POPULAR PRICED MILLINERY**—This is the first season of this new department and Smartly Tailored and Ready Trimmed Hats are being shown exclusively. This splendid line is offered at prices that will save you money.

### National Outfitting Co.

SEATTLE'S POPULAR CREDIT STORE  
1515 Second Avenue

# USE OF CREDIT

## KEY TERM

**Installment plan**, a method of credit where consumers could pay for goods over a period of time (cars, furniture, radios, etc.)



"Buy now, pay later" was a common phrase in the Roaring 20s. Credit at the time started growing and becoming more popular which made more of these consumer goods more affordable. People didn't have to pay up front, and lines of credit were opened up by many companies - many automobiles were sold on credit. It also increased the amount of debt Americans had because credit put these people in debt.



## KEY TERM

**Model T**, With this new car on the market, people with lower incomes could afford a vehicle. Ford's use of the assembly line and mass production kept costs low.

# AUTOMOBILES

Automobiles were one of the most purchased items during the Roaring 20s and a hallmark of consumerism, going from about 10 million registered vehicles in 1920 to 26.5 million in 1930. Automobile production and various techniques within this process, including the development of the assembly line, meant that mass production was cheaper, and eventually cars were more accessible to American consumers.



# HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCES & RADIO

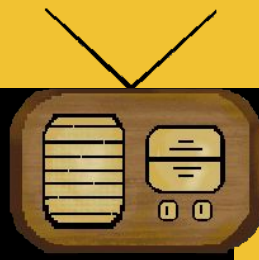


Innovations revolutionized home life, inspiring consumerism. **Household appliances** - whether they were vacuum cleaners, refrigerators, irons, or washing machines - meant more time for leisure. Although these items were often expensive, installment plans allowed for more people to buy them.

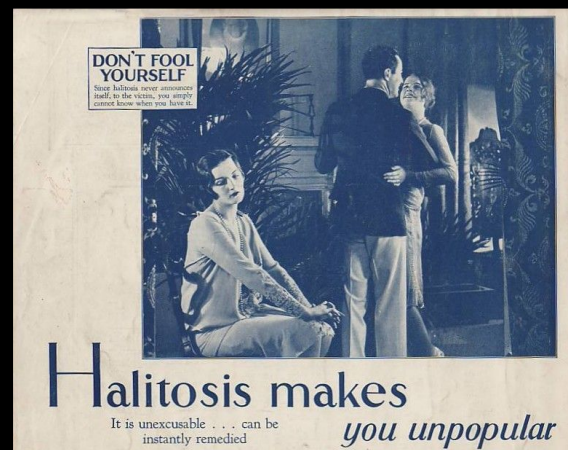


In Handling the **'American Beauty'** You Handle **THE BEST IRON MADE**

**Radios** were also a key product that became popular during this time, with over 60% of Americans buying radios by the end of the decade. Radio helped create a more shared culture, was a source of leisure (sports events) and was a key source of information for many Americans.



# ADVERTISING TO PROMOTE CONSUMERISM



Along with the use of radio, new techniques were also implemented that helped for consumerism to progress, including **pop psychology**.

A famous example is from **Listerine**, where they used the "sick-sounding" term "**halitosis**," which means bad breath, to convince Americans to buy their product. Advertising soon involved famous celebrities, with testimonials often being broadcast on radios, helping to drive consumerism.

# IMPACT ON LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES

As Samuel Strauss writes in the November 1924 edition of "The Atlantic Monthly," this new stream of consumerism and innovation was seen as the "2nd chapter of America"- defined by the usage of the "opportunity (that had been) secured" for the country.

However, the mass usage of credit meant more debt for many Americans. This huge increase in debt as a result of consumerism has been attributed as one of the causes for the Great Depression.



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**\*primary sources were taken from the collection in source #7 and #9.**