

Guide to Reading

Connection

In the previous section, you learned how the war changed Europe. In this section, you will discover how the United States reacted to the change from war to peace.

Main Idea

- After the war, when businesses tried to decrease wages and inflation lowered buying power, workers went on strike across the nation. (p. 391)
- Race riots swept the nation as returning soldiers competed against African Americans for jobs and housing. (p. 392)
- Fear of a Communist revolution caused a nationwide panic. (p. 393)
- Warren G. Harding won the 1920 presidential election with the promise of a return to “normalcy.” (p. 395)

Content Vocabulary

cost of living, general strike, deport

Academic Vocabulary

widespread, authorities, restoration

People and Terms to Identify

Red Scare, A. Mitchell Palmer, J. Edgar Hoover

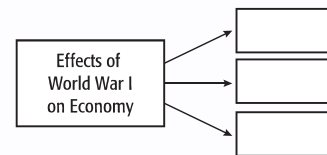
Reading Objectives

- **Describe** the effects of the postwar recession on the United States.
- **Explain** the causes of increased racial tensions after the war.
- **Discuss** the causes of and reaction to the Red Scare.

- **List** the major issues of the 1920 presidential campaign and describe the election's results.

Reading Strategy

Organizing As you read about the war's aftermath, complete a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the effects of the end of World War I on the American economy.



Preview of Events



The following are the main History–Social Science Standards covered in this section.

- 11.4** Students trace the rise of the United States to its role as a world power in the twentieth century.
- 11.4.5** Analyze the political, economic and social ramifications of World War I on the home front.

The Big Idea

The fate of nations is forever changed by monumental world events. The end of rationing brought a rush to buy goods that had been limited. The demand for products brought higher prices and inflation. Despite the cost-of-living increases, companies kept wages low because higher wages raised their operating costs. The number of unionized workers had increased during the war, and many workers now organized strikes to protest rising costs and low wages. The tension increased as soldiers returned home and began looking for jobs. Race riots erupted as minorities and returning soldiers competed for jobs and housing. A fear of communism also gripped the country during what was known as the Red Scare. Warren G. Harding was able to win the 1920 presidential election by assuring Americans that he would return the country to “normalcy.”

An Economy in Turmoil

Main Idea After the war, when businesses tried to decrease wages and inflation lowered buying power, workers went on strike across the nation.

Reading Connection How might inflation affect you or your family's spending habits? Read on to learn about the effects of postwar inflation and loss of wages.

The end of World War I brought great upheaval to American society. When the war ended, government agencies removed their controls from the American economy. This released pent-up demand in the economy. People raced to buy goods that had been rationed, while businesses rapidly raised prices they had been forced to keep low during the war. The result was rapid inflation.

★ An American Story ★

On August 20, 1919, Mary Harris Jones, also known as “Mother” Jones, was thrown in jail in Homestead, Pennsylvania. The 89-year-old had just finished delivering a fiery, impassioned speech in an attempt to gain support for steel unions. Referring to the owners of the big steel companies, she said:

“Our Kaisers sit up and smoke seventy-five cent cigars and have lackeys with knee pants bring them champagne while you starve, while you grow old at forty, stoking their furnaces. You pull in your belts while they banquet. They have stomachs two miles long and two miles wide and you fill them. . . . If Gary [chair of U.S. Steel] wants to work twelve hours a day, let him go in the blooming mill and work. What we want is a little leisure, time for music, playgrounds, a decent home, books, and the things that make life worthwhile.”

—quoted in *Labor in Crisis*

Inflation rates seemed to support Mother Jones's appeal. In 1919 prices rose at an average of more than 15 percent. Inflation greatly increased the **cost of living**—the cost of food, clothing, shelter, and other essentials that people need to survive.

Inflation Leads to Strikes Many companies had been forced to raise wages during the war, but inflation now threatened to wipe out all the gains workers had made. While workers wanted higher wages to

keep up with inflation, companies wanted to hold down wages because inflation was also driving up their operating costs.

During the war, the number of workers in unions had increased dramatically. By the time the war ended, workers were better organized and much more capable of organizing strikes than they had been before. Many business leaders, on the other hand, were determined to break the power of the unions and roll back the gains labor had made. These circumstances led to an enormous wave of strikes in 1919. By the end of the year, more than 3,600 strikes involving more than 4 million workers had taken place.

The Seattle General Strike The first major strike took place in Seattle, when some 35,000 shipyard workers demanded higher wages and shorter hours. Soon other unions in Seattle joined the shipyard workers and organized a general strike. A **general strike** involves all workers living in a certain location, not just workers in a particular industry. The Seattle general strike involved more than 60,000 people and paralyzed the city for five days. Although the strikers returned to work without making any gains, their actions worried many Americans because the general strike was a common tactic used in Europe by Communists and other radical groups.

The Boston Police Strike Perhaps the most famous strike of 1919 took place in Boston, when roughly 75 percent of the police force walked off the job. Riots and looting soon erupted in the city, forcing the governor of Massachusetts, Calvin Coolidge, to send in the National Guard. When the strikers tried to return to work, the police commissioner refused to accept them. He hired a new police force instead.

Despite protests, Coolidge agreed the men should be fired. He declared, “There is no right to strike

▼ “Mother” Jones



against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, anytime.” Coolidge’s response brought him to national attention and earned him **widespread** public support. It also convinced the Republicans to make Coolidge their vice presidential candidate in the 1920 election.

The Steel Strike Shortly after the police strike ended, one of the largest strikes in American history began when an estimated 350,000 steelworkers went on strike for higher pay, shorter hours, and recognition of their union. Elbert H. Gary, the head of U.S. Steel, refused even to talk to union leaders. Instead, the company set out to break the union by using anti-immigrant feelings to divide the workers.

Many steelworkers were immigrants. The company blamed the strike on foreign radicals and called for loyal Americans to return to work. Meanwhile, the company hired African Americans and Mexicans as replacement workers and managed to keep its steel mills operating despite the strike. Clashes between company guards and strikers were frequent, and in Gary, Indiana, a riot left 18 strikers dead. In early

January of 1920, the strike collapsed. The failure of the strike set back the union cause in the steel industry. Steelworkers remained unorganized until 1937.

Reading Check **Explaining** What caused the wave of strikes in 1919?

Racial Unrest

Main Idea Race riots swept the nation as returning soldiers competed against African Americans for jobs and housing.

Reading Connection Describe your feelings during a time when you competed against someone in a game or academic competition. Read on to learn how the returning soldiers caused racial unrest when they looked for jobs.

Adding to the nation’s economic turmoil was the return of hundreds of thousands of American soldiers from Europe who needed to find employment.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

MOMENT in HISTORY

HERO’S HOMECOMING

A wounded soldier of the 369th Regiment, the Harlem “Hell-Fighters,” accepts congratulations during a victory parade through New York City in 1919. Facing discrimination within their own army, African American soldiers at the front received a warm reception from their French allies.

“I have never before experienced what it meant really to be free, to taste real liberty,” one soldier wrote home, “in a phrase, ‘to be a man.’” Two African American infantry divisions suffered some 6,000 casualties, but at war’s end, they still came home to a segregated American society.



Effects of World War I on the United States

Developments in the War

- War-torn economies of Europe
- Russian Revolution
- Industrial demand of wartime
- Sacrifices of wartime; disappointment with Versailles Peace Treaty

Effects on U.S.

- Boom in U.S. economy; emergence of U.S. as world industrial leader
- “Red Scare” in postwar U.S.; suspicion of immigrants
- Internal migration in U.S., especially African American migration to Northern cities
- Failure to join League of Nations

Graphic Organizer Skills

World War I had profound effects on the United States.

Interpreting Why did the destruction of European economies cause an industrial boom in the United States?

Many African Americans who had moved north during the war were also competing for jobs and housing. Frustration and racism combined to produce violence. In the summer of 1919, over 20 race riots broke out across the nation.

The worst violence occurred in Chicago. On a hot July day, African Americans went to a whites-only beach. Both sides began throwing stones at each other. Whites also threw stones at an African American teenager swimming near the beach to prevent him from coming ashore, and he drowned. A full-scale riot then erupted in the city. Angry African Americans attacked white neighborhoods while whites attacked African American neighborhoods. The riot lasted for several days. In the end, 38 people died—15 white and 23 black—and over 500 were injured.

Reading Check **Analyzing** Why did the end of the war lead to race riots?

The Red Scare

Main Idea Fear of a Communist revolution caused a nationwide panic.

Reading Connection Why do you think people might fear a Communist revolution? Read on to find out about the U.S. response to the Russian Revolution.

The wave of strikes in 1919 helped to fuel fears that Communists were conspiring to start a revolution in the United States. Americans had been stunned when Lenin and the Bolsheviks seized power and

withdrew Russia from the war. Americans had become very anti-German as the war progressed, and when the Communists withdrew Russia from the war they seemed to be helping Germany. American anger at Germany quickly expanded into anger at Communists as well. Americans began to associate communism with being unpatriotic and disloyal.

Americans had long been suspicious of Communist ideas. Throughout the late 1800s, many Americans had accused immigrants of importing radical socialist and Communist ideas into the United States and blamed them for labor unrest and violence. Now Communists had seized control of an entire nation, and fears surged that they would try to incite revolutions elsewhere. These fears seemed to be confirmed in 1919, when the Soviet Union formed the Communist International—an organization for coordinating the activities of Communist parties in other countries.

The Red Scare Begins As strikes erupted across the United States in 1919, the fear that Communists, or “reds,” as they were called, might seize power led to a nationwide panic known as the **Red Scare**. Seattle’s mayor, Ole Hanson, spoke for others when he condemned the leaders of the Seattle general strike as revolutionaries who wanted to “take possession of our American government and try to duplicate the anarchy of Russia.”

In April the postal service intercepted more than 30 parcels addressed to leading businesspeople and politicians that were triggered to explode when opened. In June eight bombs in eight cities exploded within minutes of one another, suggesting a nationwide conspiracy. One of them damaged the home of



Picturing History

Terror in the Streets After the House of Morgan—a bank in New York City—was damaged by a bomb in 1920, Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer instituted raids on antigovernment activists and many immigrants, often violating their civil liberties in the process. [Whom did Palmer appoint to coordinate these investigations?](#)

United States Attorney General **A. Mitchell Palmer** in Washington, D.C. Most people believed the bombings were the work of Communists or other revolutionaries trying to destroy the American way of life.

The Palmer Raids Declaring that a “blaze of revolution” was “burning up the foundations of society,” Palmer took action. He established a special division within the Justice Department, the General Intelligence Division, headed by **J. Edgar Hoover**. This division eventually became the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). From late 1919 to the spring of 1920, Palmer organized a series of raids on the headquarters of various radical organizations. Although evidence pointed to no single group as the bombers, Palmer’s agents focused on foreign residents and immigrants. The **authorities** detained thousands of suspects and **deported**, or expelled from the country, approximately 500 of them.

Palmer’s agents often disregarded the civil liberties of the suspects. Officers entered homes and offices without search warrants. People were mistreated and jailed for indefinite periods of time and were not allowed to talk to their attorneys.

For a while, Palmer was regarded as a national hero. His raids, however, failed to turn up any hard evidence of revolutionary conspiracy. When his dire prediction that violence would rock the nation on May Day 1920—a popular European celebration of workers—proved wrong, Palmer lost much of his credibility and soon faded from prominence.

The Red Scare greatly influenced people’s attitudes during the 1920s. Americans often linked radicalism with immigrants, and that attitude led to a call for Congress to limit immigration.

 **Reading Check** **Examining** After World War I, why were Americans suspicious of some union leaders?

An End to Progressivism

Main Idea Warren G. Harding won the 1920 presidential election with the promise of a return to “normalcy.”

Reading Connection Compared to now, does the period of time before September 11, 2001, seem more “normal” to you? Read on to discover how a hope for a more normal time gave a presidential candidate an election victory.

Economic problems, labor unrest, and racial tensions, as well as the fresh memories of World War I, all combined to create a general sense of disillusionment in the United States. By 1920 Americans wanted an end to the upheaval. During the 1920 campaign, Ohio Governor James M. Cox and his running mate, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt, ran on a platform of keeping alive Woodrow Wilson’s progressive ideals. The Republican candidate, Warren G. Harding, called for a return to “normalcy.” He urged that what the United States needed was a return to the simpler days before the Progressive Era reforms:

“[Our] present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but **restoration**; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; . . . not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality.”

—quoted in *Portrait of a Nation*

Harding’s sentiments struck a chord with voters, and he won the election by a landslide margin of



▲ A. Mitchell Palmer and J. Edgar Hoover ▶

over 7 million votes. Americans were weary of more crusades to reform society and the world. They hoped to put the country’s racial and labor unrest and economic troubles behind them and build a more prosperous and stable society.

Reading Check Explaining How was Harding able to win the presidential election of 1920?

HISTORY Online Study Central

For help with the concepts in this section of *American Vision: Modern Times* go to tav.mt.glencoe.com and click on **Study Central**.

SECTION 4 ASSESSMENT

Checking for Understanding

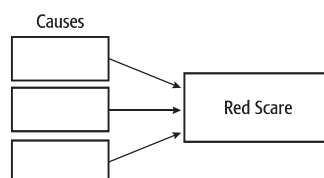
- Vocabulary** Define: cost of living, general strike, widespread, authorities, deport, restoration.
- People and Terms** Identify: Red Scare, A. Mitchell Palmer, J. Edgar Hoover.
- Describe** the conditions that African Americans faced after the end of World War I.

Reviewing Big Ideas

- Summarizing** Why did Republican Warren G. Harding win the election of 1920?

Critical Thinking

- Analyzing** Provide evidence to explain how the Palmer raids deprived some citizens of their civil and political rights?
- Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list the causes of the Red Scare in the United States.



Analyzing Visuals

- Analyzing Photographs** Study the photograph on page 392. How might parades such as this one mobilize African Americans to work for an end to discrimination?

Writing About History

- Descriptive Writing** Imagine that you are a European immigrant working in a factory in the United States in 1919. Write a letter to a relative in Europe explaining economic conditions in America and why workers are striking.

CA 11WS1.2; 11WA2.1C