

Fashion, Fashion and Fun in the 1920's

Cut and past each information strip below into the correct space on your graphic organizer for this station.

By the 1920s, the **crossword puzzles** were beginning to become popular. In 1921, the New York Public Library reported that "The latest craze to strike libraries is the crossword puzzle," and complained that when "the puzzle 'fans' swarm to the dictionaries and encyclopedias so as to drive away readers and students who need these books in their daily work..."
The first book of crossword puzzles appeared in 1924. It was an instant hit, and crossword puzzles became the craze of 1924. This fad continued throughout the 1920's.

Marathon dancing is a dance activity that became a popular fad in the 1920s and 1930s. Many people competed in the contests in order to achieve fame or win prizes. Dance marathons originated as part of an early-1920s jazz-age fad for human-endurance competitions. Couples would dance together for sometimes hundreds of hours. The last couple standing was the winner!

Flagpole-sitting was a fad from 1924 to 1929. The fad began when a friend dared stunt actor Alvin "Shipwreck" Kelly to sit on a flagpole. Shipwreck's initial 1924 sit lasted 13 hours and 13 minutes. It soon became a fad with other contestants setting records of 12, 17 and 21 days. "Shipwreck" regained his record in 1929 by sitting on a flagpole for 49 days in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

A **rumble seat** was an exterior seat that opened on hinges from the rear of some early automobiles, in the space where the "trunk" is on today's cars. These were very popular with young people of the 1920's. The fad for rumble seats died out by the mid-1930s, when cars became too fast for it to be comfortable for passengers riding on the outside of the car!

"**Flapper**" was the name given to "liberated" young women of the 1920's. Having finally won the right vote and proven themselves in the work force during World War I, American women of the 1920's expected and had more freedom than their mothers and grandmothers had been given. Flappers smoked, drank, danced, went to parties, and wore make-up. They cut their hair short and wore short, tight-fitting dresses. They took risks and enjoyed being "shocking" to the older generation.

The **Charleston** is a dance named for the city of Charleston, South Carolina. The rhythm was popularized in mainstream dance music in the United States by a 1923 tune called *The Charleston*. The song and the dance became two of the most popular hits of the decade.

The dance developed in African-American communities in the USA, but is most frequently associated with white flappers. These young women would dance alone or together as a way of mocking more conservative Americans, as the Charleston was then considered quite immoral and provocative.

Mah-Jongg (*Ma-jhong*) is a game that was originally created in China. It is played with tiles about the size and shape of dominoes. The game was introduced into the United States in the early 1920's and became enormously popular.

The first mahjong sets sold in the U.S. were sold by Abercrombie & Fitch starting in 1920. Also in 1920, Joseph Park Babcock published his book *Rules of Mah-Jongg*, also known as the "red book". This was the earliest version of mahjong known in America. Mahjong nights in America often involved dressing and decorating rooms in Chinese style. Several hit songs were also recorded during the mahjong fad, most notably "Since Ma is Playing Mah Jong" by Eddie Cantor.

Listening to the radio became a way of life for most Americans in the 1920's. On November 22, 1920, Pittsburgh radio station KDKA broadcast the results of the 1920 presidential race between Warren G. Harding and James M. Cox. This was the first significant public radio news broadcast. The following year, Americans spent \$10 million on radios. By 1922, some 500 radio stations were broadcasting programs, and the era of electronic entertainment had begun.

The first home radios were powered by batteries, but by 1928, as more and more homes had electricity, the first electric sets appeared on the market.

By the end of the decade there were 618 stations were in business, and networks were regularly broadcasting from coast to coast.

Going to the movies was a popular pastime of the 1920's. In the early years of the decade the business of making **movies** had already become America's fifth largest industry. Hollywood became the center of the movie industry.

Most of the movies in this decade were black and white and had no sound. In 1927, the first "talking picture" appeared. That movie was called *The Jazz Singer*. Millions of Americans poured into movie theaters to see – and hear – *The Jazz Singer*. Within a few years all movies were "talkies" and the era of the "silent" movie was over.

Raccoon coats were a fad in the United States during the 1920s, particularly with (male) college students in the mid- and later years of the decade. The ukulele-strumming college students of the 1920s made the garb a fashion craze on campuses from coast to coast. The craze reached its peak in 1928, when George Olsen and his band recorded the lyrics to a peppy dance tune called *Doin' the Raccoon*.

In the Twenties, modern young men who listened to jazz music, used modern slang, and wore raccoon coats with straw hats called boaters and white spats (a cloth or leather covering) on their shoes, were nicknamed "collegiates" or "sheiks."