

# Dynamic Decades

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An Exploration of America in the  
20th Century



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## Welcome to ***Dynamic Decades!***

Meet Emily Granger and George Reynolds.

These fictional characters, whose lives exactly span the 20th century, will accompany your students as they explore the century's *Dynamic Decades*. They will share bits of their stories and offer personal perspective on events and issues of the period. You'll find brief biographies of them, and letters written by them in each decade, in the reproducible Student Guides.

Designed for students in grades 7–12, *Dynamic Decades* is a creative, hands-on, small-group research and report approach to studying life in 20th century America, with a personal twist. Use this unit to explore parts or all of the 1900s.

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## Purpose and Overview

### What is *Dynamic Decades*?

*Dynamic Decades: An Exploration of America in the 20th Century* is an instructional research and report approach to small group study of American history and culture in the 1900s, decade by decade, for grades 7–12. It accommodates different learning styles and emphasizes critical thinking and hands-on involvement with information and issues of the time. Materials for each decade follow the same format to facilitate concurrent study of multiple decades by different student groups in the same classroom. This unit uses a jigsaw technique to expose an entire class to key features of American life, in each decade of the 20th century, in a 2–4 week period.

Students will employ standard research processes (Big6 or another process preferred by your school) and complete a Research Worksheet to learn about significant events and trends in these content areas:

- America and the world
- Family life, work, and school
- Science and technology
- Key social issues
- Arts, sports, and culture

Working in small groups, students will use critical thinking skills to pursue and process the results of their research, and to demonstrate comprehension and evaluation of events and trends, through one of these presentation projects:

- Write, stage, costume, rehearse, and present an original “American Life” skit
- Create, explain, read excerpts from, and display a “Decade(s) in Review” newspaper
- Create, explain, and demonstrate a “Fascinating Facts” quiz game
- Create and show a Media Presentation that reflects media developments during the decade(s) studied

With your guidance, student groups will choose a presentation project that interests them and leverages the specific mix of learning styles and talents (Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences) in the group. In an optional phase of the project, each student will be required to form, express, and defend a personal position on a key historical event or social issue from the decade(s) he or she studied.

A “personal twist” is provided in the form of the two fictional characters—a white woman from the rural South and a black man from the urban North—

whose lives exactly span the 20th century. Students will “meet” Emily Granger and George Reynolds, will read letters written by each that reflect events and issues of the decade(s), and will be invited to view the decade(s) from the perspectives of these characters. Part of each student’s task is to imagine how Emily and George might have experienced those years and to build their points of view into his or her group’s presentation project. This feature is designed to maximize learning by engaging students’ emotions in the subject matter, exercising their growing powers of reflection and empathy, and encouraging them to anticipate and consider different perspectives on history.

### What do students learn?

The activities within this unit are correlated to national and state education standards. To obtain specific standards information for this title, go to <http://www.teachinteract.com> or contact us at 1-800-359-0961.

In this unit, your students will gain and experience the following:

#### **Knowledge:**

- Recognize America’s changing role in the world in each decade and throughout the century
- Recognize how advances in science and technology affected life during their assigned decade(s)
- Recognize the gap between social ideals and practical reality in their assigned decade(s)
- Recognize ways in which family life, work, and school are similar and different now compared to their assigned decade(s)
- Recognize key features of the social movements for rights and freedoms during their decade(s) and throughout the century
- Recognize the impact of an evolving mass media on people’s attitudes and social change
- Recognize key features of intergenerational tensions during their decade(s) and throughout the century
- Recognize key individual and organizational leaders of social change during their assigned decade(s), and the nature of their efforts
- Understand major legislation of their decade(s) designed to protect individual rights and address changing social needs
- Recognize how different factors of inheritance, experience, and learning create individual perspective and point of view
- Recognize that social change creates tension because it impacts

different groups of people differently

- Recognize different ways of approaching conflict and seeking social change
- Understand different points of view about social issues of the decade
- Understand how past decisions affect the present and present decisions may affect the future

### ***Skills:***

#### • ***Read nonfiction literature with understanding***

- Practice research skills
- Practice teaching while learning content information
- Complete writing activities based on the chosen presentation project
- Work cooperatively to share resources and gain support to complete activities
- Practice communicating effectively, both orally and in writing
- Practice using information technology to collect, analyze, organize, and evaluate information
- Practice critical thinking skills of knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation
- Practice effective shaping and presentation of an opinion or position

### ***Attitudes:***

#### • ***Recognize the importance of information to a democratic society***

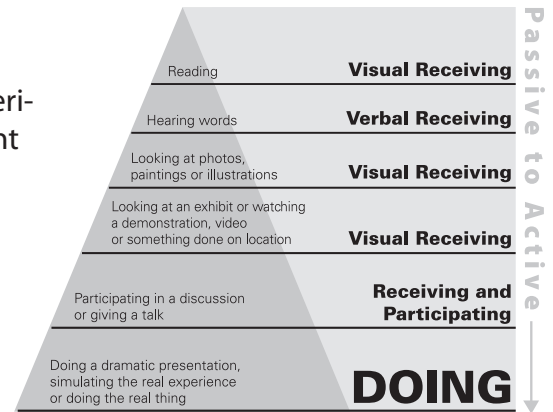
- Appreciate the impact of events of their decade(s), and the century as a whole, on our lives today
- Recognize the importance of considering differing points of view
- Appreciate the complexity and interconnectedness of different aspects of American society
- Appreciate the responsibilities involved in America's emergence as a superpower in the world
- Appreciate the need to protect minority rights while respecting majority rule
- Appreciate the inevitable tension between generations, and between traditionalists and progressives, as society evolves
- Appreciate the power of citizen groups to create social change



## Purpose and Overview

### Experiential Learning

Students learn best through experience. Research shows that student retention and understanding increase as students become more involved and engaged in the learning process, regardless of whether they are high achievers, reluctant learners, or second language learners. Based on that premise, this unit offers student groups a variety of choices of presentation projects, each of which involves diverse roles and modes of participation. Students will combine individual research with cooperative planning, production, and presentation tasks.

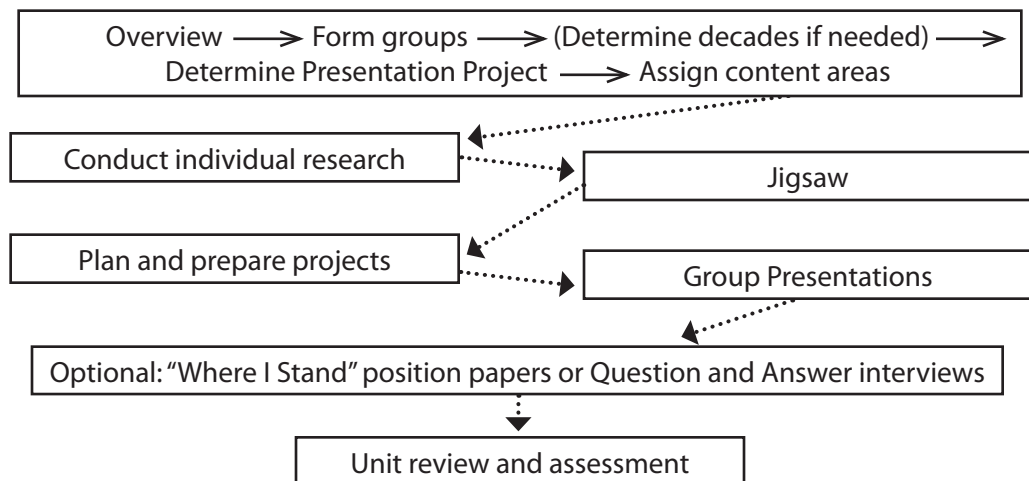


### Level of Involvement

How are students organized?

*Dynamic Decades* involves a balance of individual research and small group study. Ideally, each group will have five students, so that each student can specialize in one subject content area, in jigsaw mode. Each group might choose its presentation project, or you might assign projects based on the make-up of each group, making sure that at least one student group works with each of the project options. Students might dole out project tasks among themselves, or you might assign subject matter or roles to suit your educational goals. If you wish to cover several or all decades of the 20th century during your unit, you might assign each group a different decade or pair of consecutive decades (e.g., 1900s–1910s, 1960s–1970s). Students can then use jigsaw strategies, in which each researches a specific content area and brings his or her knowledge back to the group, and each group brings its decade expertise to the class as a whole.

Students will use their Student Guides to work through each step of the project:



## How much time is required?

This unit is designed to be completed in two to four weeks of daily class periods and out-of-class time as needed. Three lesson plans are provided for teaching one decade in two weeks, the whole century in four weeks, and the whole century in two weeks. Covering the whole century in two weeks requires more out-of-class research and preparation time, and eliminates the “Where I Stand” personal positions assignment.

## How is learning assessed?

The process for assessing student work is flexible, as the range of activities lends itself to a variety of evaluation methods. All students will turn in Research Worksheets complete with research notes and a bibliography of sources. Other activities allow students opportunities to demonstrate learning and competency through different modes and intelligences. We have included three standard rubrics so your assessment can address not only written work but also evaluation of demonstrated design and presentation skills, group participation, evidence of empathy with varied viewpoints, and solid evaluative thinking in reaching and defending personal opinions. The Presentation Rubric may be used to evaluate the work of a group as a whole, or completed separately for each student to reflect his or her contribution to the presentation project.

Another option for assessing learning is to compile a student-constructed quiz on the decade(s) studied, with each group contributing five questions and an answer key.

## Why use *Dynamic Decades*?

Like all Interact units, *Dynamic Decades* provides differentiated instruction through a broad range of activities and assessment options. Students learn and use knowledge, skills, and attitudes covering standards for U.S. History and touching on standards in Arts, Behavioral Studies, Civics, Language Arts, and Life Skills. Activities offer students opportunities to gain and demonstrate knowledge through several of Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences, including Interpersonal, Visual, Verbal/Linguistic, Bodily/Kinesthetic, and Logical/Mathematical.

### Specific ways to differentiate:

- Adjust the level and specific nature of challenge by controlling group size and make-up, scope of research (one decade or more), or presentation project.
- Assist special-needs students by assigning them roles and tasks that leverage their interests and strengths and allow them

to succeed.

- Work with your Media Specialist, Resource Specialist, Gifted and Talented Coordinator, Journalism teacher, or drama coach to coordinate instruction.

### **Motivation**

- Use of fictional characters encourages students to relate abstract historical facts and figures to human experience—to “make it personal.”
- A choice of presentation projects that provide creative opportunities for personal expression, and demonstrating knowledge invites students to get involved in ways that are personally stimulating and motivating.
- Students with widely varying skills and talents have opportunities to succeed and “shine” as they demonstrate learning.
- The “Where I Stand” optional activity invites students to get personally involved as they form, express, and defend opinions on important issues that interest them and affect their lives.

### **Flexibility**

- *Dynamic Decades* can be used to explore one decade in detail, or survey the entire century through small group research and sharing.
- Single decades can be explored in detail, multiple decades sampled, or the entire century reviewed using various combinations or adaptations of the detailed lesson plans provided.
- Groups can be assigned to maximize interaction of students with diverse backgrounds, skills, and interests, or to bring together students with like abilities or interests related to a particular presentation project.

### **Ease of Use**

- The basic process of research, group interaction, presentation, and expression of personal opinion is straightforward and easy to grasp.
- The Events and Issues Timelines help students orient themselves to their decade(s) and select specific items or events to research, and assist you to assess student work by identifying important events and issues of the decade.

# The 1900s

- Student Guide
- Suggested Resources
- Events and Issues Timeline: America and the World
- Events and Issues Timeline: Family Life, Work, and School
- Events and Issues Timeline: Science and Technology
- Events and Issues Timeline: Key Social Issues
- Events and Issues Timeline: Arts, Sports, and Culture
- Supplemental Resources

# Dynamic Decades: America in the 1900s

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## Student Guide

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### Dear Student,

Meet Emily Granger and George Reynolds. These fictional characters, whose lives exactly spanned the 20th century, will accompany you as you explore life in America in the first decade of the 1900s. Emily is a woman of European ancestry, who grew up in a rural Alabama town. George is African American, and lived his life in the Chicago area. Born in 1900, both are children in this decade. Through letters, which you find later in this Student Guide, they will share bits of their stories and offer personal perspectives on events and issues of the period. As you study the 1900s, keep in mind how Emily and George might have felt about or been involved in the events and issues you encounter. Try to see things through their eyes so that in your unit project you can reflect their experiences and perspectives.

In this unit, you will be part of a group, researching a particular aspect of the decade from 1900–1909, sharing your findings with your group, and working cooperatively to plan and present a project that demonstrates in a creative way what you’ve learned. You may be asked to form, and defend, a personal position on a key event or issue of the decade.

### The 1900s

Remember all the excitement surrounding the start of the new millennium? Some of the same kind of excitement was in the air as the 20th century dawned. A new century! Think of the possibilities!

The decade from 1900–1909 was dramatic and exciting. It has been described as “the decade age of extremes” and “the American decade.” It was a time of unprecedented opportunities. The nation was emerging from isolation and rapidly becoming a major world power, both economically and militarily. Immigrants poured into the United States in record numbers, looking for freedom or opportunity, and bringing their varied beliefs and customs with them. Charismatic young President Teddy Roosevelt dominated the decade with his boundless energy and progressive ideas. As always, progressive thought produced a vigorous reaction of provincialism, controversy, and protest. Global empires, like the British Empire, were both flourishing and stimulating strong nationalistic movements for independence in occupied countries. America, during this decade, aggressively pursued its own interests in Hawaii, Cuba, Panama, Guam, the Philippines, and Puerto Rico.

Thanks to the Industrial Revolution and the harnessing of electricity, new inventions were popping up every day. A spirit of modernity was in the air. Local and regional customs made way for a truly nationwide popular culture, made possible as railroads, telephones, automobiles, and radio transported people and ideas rapidly from coast to coast. Groups of people, notably women and laborers, actively campaigned for social influence and improved conditions. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) formed to try to improve conditions for America’s blacks, who were suffering under Jim Crow laws and ongoing violence. And, for the first time, the federal government got involved in protecting and controlling natural resources,

“reclaiming” western lands through irrigation and creating the Forest Service and the first national wildlife refuge.

Now let’s see what our two fictional characters have to say about life in the first decade of a brand new century.



### Emily Granger

Emily Maude (Grantham) Granger, born January 1, 1900; died December 31, 1999. Emily’s grandparents came to America from Germany in the 1880s. Her father was a U.S. Army Lieutenant and her mother a homemaker; Emily was the youngest of five children. Her family lived in the small coal mining town of Blocton, Alabama. Emily’s father died in France in 1918, fighting for the Allies in World War I. Emily graduated from the local high school and married her high school sweetheart, Joseph Granger, in 1919. The Grangers had four daughters. Emily was a homemaker until her husband died in 1942 while serving as a soldier in World War II. She went to work at a factory in Birmingham to support the war effort. Emily lost her job when the soldiers returned after the War. She lived out her life in

Birmingham with her oldest daughter, enjoying a large family of children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.

### George Reynolds

George Abraham Reynolds, born January 1, 1900; died December 31, 1999. George was African American, the son of a Pullman porter and a seamstress; the grandson of slaves. He had an older brother and a younger sister. George was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. He graduated from the University of Chicago in 1922, and pursued a career as a newspaper reporter for a publication written for African Americans. George married Francine Norris in 1926. He and his wife had a son and two daughters. He retired in 1972; his wife died in 1978.





December 12, 1908

Dear Cousin Rachel,

I hope this letter reaches you in time for Christmas. I made the bookmark just for you. I hope you like it! I put Dorothy and Toto on it because I know you love The Wonderful Wizard of Oz too. I'm so excited about Christmas this year. I've been hinting about a Teddy Bear. I'm wild about them, and it seems like a patriotic gift too, in honor of our President. Don't you think they're precious? What do you want for Christmas? I wish we could spend the holiday with you all and Grandfather Grantham, but Papa says it's too expensive to travel, with all of us. I'm so sad! I'm dying to go to the nickelodeon and see a real motion picture. The closest one here is in Birmingham, and we never get to go there. Don't tell, but Papa said maybe we could go into town and call you on the telephone from the general store on Christmas day! I've never talked on a telephone. Isn't it just a marvel? But please don't tell—you have to act surprised!

Our Christmas program is coming up. I get to be an angel! The school looks so pretty, with a little tree full of popcorn and berry garlands and artwork everywhere. After the play, everyone will sing Christmas carols and we'll serve hot cider and cookies. Even the mayor will be there. This is just my favorite time of the year.

Our teacher told us that Mr. William Taft, who will be our new President, weighs over 300 pounds! She used me as an example, and said that it would take five of me to balance him on a teeter-totter! Can you imagine!

I'm the best in my class at spelling, but I'm not so good at arithmetic. There's a new girl in my class. She's from Italy. That's in Europe; our teacher showed us on a globe. Her father came to work in the mines. She seems nice, I guess, but she can't talk English. She's the opposite of me. She's good at arithmetic and bad at reading and spelling. Mrs. Tufte says we can help each other. But how can we do that when we don't talk the same language? How are you doing in school this year?

My brothers send their best regards to Tom and Tim, and say they have big plans for your visit next summer. I can't wait. I know you're only a little younger than me, but it will be nice to not be "baby Emily" for a little while.

Happy Christmas to you, Uncle Fred, Aunt Sally, and even Tom and Tim! Write me back and tell me all about your Christmas, if I haven't already heard about it on the telephone!

Love and kisses,  
Emily

January 5, 1909

Dear Grandma Reynolds,

Thank you for the book you sent for my birthday. I heard that Peter Pan is a great story. Daddy says he'll read it out loud to all of us, so it will be a family adventure. I had a good birthday. My friend Barton came for supper and Mama made us hamburgers and Coca-Cola, cake and ice cream. Daddy loves ice cream cones! He says he didn't have them when he was a boy because they hadn't been invented yet.

It seems a lot of things weren't invented when Daddy was a boy. In school, we just learned about Mr. Thomas Alva Edison, and all the things we have now because of inventors like him. I might want to be an inventor when I grow up. Isn't that a good ambition? Mama says I should invent a way for clothes to stretch to fit children as they grow! I've been growing quite a lot lately, and she has trouble keeping up. But I reminded her that, if clothes grew with children, she might be out of business. She tells me not to be so sassy!

What do you think of Jack Johnson, Grandma? I think he's the best! But Daddy says he'd do more good if he saved his wildness for the boxing ring and behaved himself better the rest of the time. I don't know about you, but I don't think any black man gets to be heavyweight champion of the world by behaving himself!

But here's something Daddy and I agree on. Daddy wants to get us a Model T automobile! Mama says why would we want one of those noisy, smelly things when we can ride the street car or the "L" anywhere we need to go, but I'm all for it. Can't you just see us, Grandma, flying down the street in our own Model T? Daddy might even let me drive it. I'd give you a ride, for sure, when you come to visit.

I got a cold right after my birthday. Mama says it's too many sweets, but I think it's from the snowball fight Barton and I had before supper. But don't worry, Grandma. I've been taking aspirin, and I feel just fine.

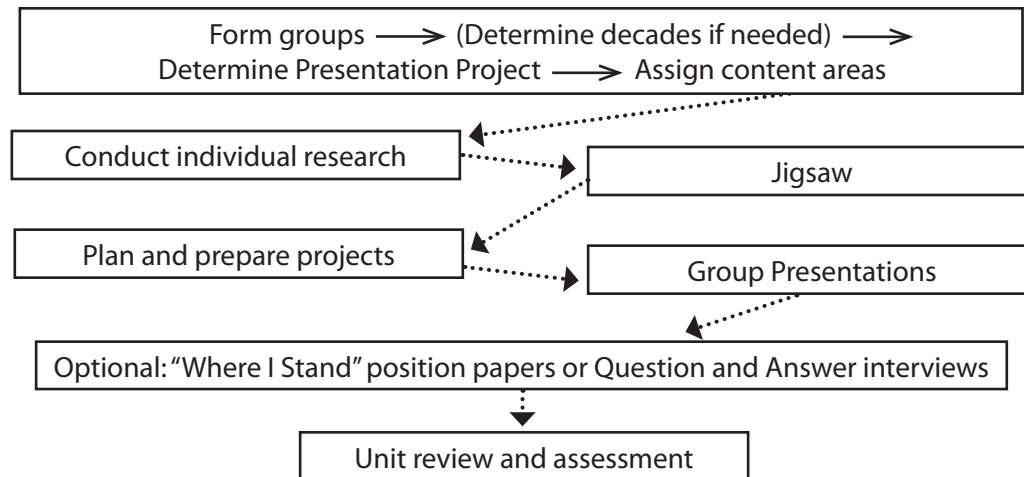
Thanks again for the book. I'll write and tell you how it was after we finish reading it.

Your loving grandson,  
George



Now that you've been introduced to Emily, George, and the 1900s, you're ready to begin. This section will take you through the project, step by step. Enjoy your exploration of this *Dynamic Decade*!

Here's an overview.



Steps to follow:

1. Form your group. Write the names of your group members here.

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2. Will you study one or more than one decade? Write your group's decade(s) here.

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3. Which project will your group prepare and present? Circle one.

- Write, stage, costume, rehearse, and present an original "American Life in the 1900s" skit
- Create, explain, read excerpts from, and display a "Decade in Review" newspaper
- Create, explain, and demonstrate a "Fascinating Facts" quiz game

4. Which content area(s) will you research for your group? Circle it or them.

- America and the world
- Family life, work, and school
- Science and technology
- Key social issues
- Arts, sports, and culture

5. Use resources from the Suggested Resources list or others recommended by your teacher to research your content area(s). Follow the Big6 research process or another process explained by your teacher. Use the Research Worksheet to help you find, record, and organize information. NOTE: You will turn in your Research Worksheet and your notes, so keep them neat and readable!

6. Meet in Jigsaw groups with other specialists in your content area. Exchange ideas and take notes on your Research Worksheet or additional paper.
7. Check out new sources or ideas from your content specialist meeting.
8. Report on your content area to your original group.
9. Plan and prepare your presentation project, fine tuning and supplementing your individual research as needed for the project. Be sure to build all the requirements from your Project Guidelines sheet into your project.
10. Present your group's project to the class.
11. (Prepare and present your "Where I Stand" position paper or Question & Answer interview, if assigned.)
12. Participate in the unit review and turn in your worksheet and notes.

# Dynamic Decades: 1900s

## America and the World

1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
World's Fair in Paris	President McKinley assassinated	Roosevelt threatens intervention, ends international debt crisis	Wright Brothers take their famous flight	Japan and Russia at war	Roosevelt mediates end to Japan/Russia war	President Roosevelt wins Nobel peace prize	Baden-Powell founds the Boy Scouts	Olympics in London	Peary and Henson reach North Pole
Hawaii becomes U.S. territory	Teddy Roosevelt becomes president		Panama gains independence with U.S. support	World's Fair, St. Louis, MO	Industrial Workers of the World union created	First official presidential trip abroad: Roosevelt to Panama Canal	Roosevelt sends "Great White Fleet" to show off naval power	William Taft elected president	World's Fair in Seattle, WA
	Marconi completes first transatlantic radio transmission			Summer Olympics in St. Louis, MO	World's Fair in Portland, OR	U.S. occupies Cuba	Immigration peaks at 1.2 million		
	Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, NY			Roosevelt reelected					
	U.S. takes control of the Philippines								
	U.S. Steel becomes the world's largest industrial company								

### KEY ISSUES

- Massive immigration brings almost nine million new, mainly European, residents to the U.S.
- The U.S. transforms from an agricultural to an industrial economy.
- Advances in science and technology improve international communications.
- America emerges from isolation as a major industrial and military power, with President Roosevelt leading.
- Worldwide earthquakes and volcanoes result in devastating loss of life and destruction of property.
- Global imperialism is ongoing; the U.S. pursues interests in the Philippines, Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico, Panama, and Hawaii.
- Empire building generates a backlash of nationalism around the world.
- American democracy stimulates political reform around the world.
- World's fairs and expositions and the modern Olympic games bring the world together.

# Dynamic Decades: 1900s

## Family Life, Work, and School

1900	1901	1902	1903	1904	1905	1906	1907	1908	1909
Gold Standard Act stabilizes U.S. currency	Men wear frock coat, waistcoat, and striped slacks to the office	National Education Association is formed	NYC public school #1 students represent 25 nationalities	"Campbell Kids" are introduced to promote canned soup	Sears & Roebuck catalog offers ready-made clothes	Kellogg's Corn Flakes are first sold	Hoover vacuum cleaner is invented	First "Model T" Ford is produced	Electric toaster is introduced
Average pay is 22 cents per hour; average workweek is 59 hours	Women's dresses are restrictive, padded, leaving only faces and hands uncovered			Paper cups are invented to avoid the spread of disease	Rotary Club is founded	Coca-Cola company replaces cocaine with caffeine in their soft drink	Stock market panic occurs, many banks fail	Electric iron is introduced	
8000 cars in U.S., 10 million bicycles, 200,000 miles of railroad track	First College Board entrance exams are held				Almost all school principals and district superintendents are men		Alain Locke is the first African American to win the Rhodes Scholarship		
1.3 million telephones in the U.S.	Safety razor invented in WI						Washing machines on sale		
Electric range is introduced							Suffragettes rally in NY		

### KEY ISSUES

- The Industrial Revolution and electricity bring labor-saving advances to the public.
- Automobiles create new jobs and leisure opportunities.
- Americans embrace modern ideas and new inventions.
- Education becomes increasingly systematized and regulated.
- Discrimination against women, immigrants, and minorities is ongoing.
- Women seek expanded rights, including the right to vote.
- Urban schools struggle to integrate many immigrant students.
- Advertising increasingly impacts consumer choices.