

**Nov 25  
thru Dec 23,  
2017**

# Cocos Diary

**A CHRISTMAS GIFT  
TO REMEMBER**

**h**istory theatre

## **Play Guide**

**Adapted for the stage by  
Ron Peluso and Bob Beverage**



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## Peg Meier Author of *Through No Fault of My Own*

One of the biggest joys of my work life was finding Coco's diary. It wasn't in a garbage dump or in a moldy old attic. It was right where it should have been –safely in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul.

Coco Irvine was a 13-year-old St. Paul girl in 1927 when she kept her diary. She was funny, spunky and often in trouble, "through no fault of my own," as she put it. A delightful, colorful writer, she recorded every "disaster" in her life. Such as: She repeatedly bounced a basketball against a fire alarm in Summit School until it rang. The school was evacuated. "It wasn't my fault that the ball inadvertently hit the alarm and caused all the rumpus," she wrote.

How about this one: Years before she was old enough to drive, Coco took her sister's car for a spin and rammed it into their mother's car headed the other direction. Mom was not pleased.

I had no idea who this kid was when I opened the diary and read the first page:

NO ONE MUST READ A WORD FURTHER UNDER PAIN OF DEATH. A CURSE SHALL BEFALL ANY WHO DISREGARD THIS WARNING.

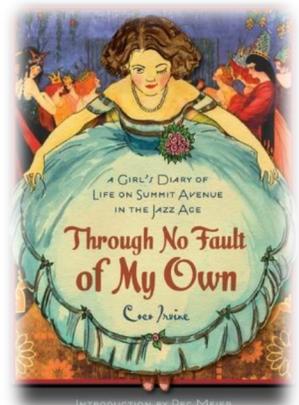
I kept reading, of course. So would you, I'll bet.

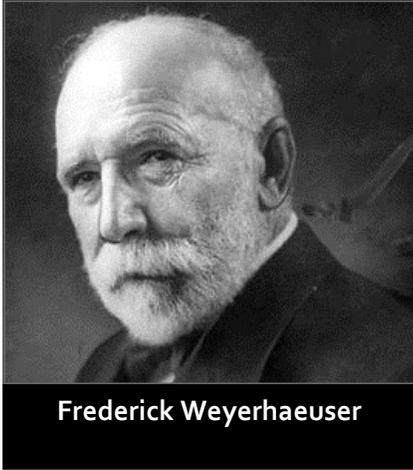
Who was she? I had to find out. Using my training as a newspaper reporter, I found out Coco was special in more ways than keeping a hilarious diary. She was the daughter and granddaughter of wealthy lumbermen, back when Midwest forests were harvested for the nation's westward expansion. Her father, Horace Irvine (pronounced ER-vin), built a 20-room mansion on St. Paul's luxurious Summit Avenue in 1910, when the neighborhood was still considered a distant prairie. Today it's in the heart of St. Paul, three miles from the Capitol and Cathedral.

Perhaps you have been in Coco's childhood house. As older adults, she and her younger sister, Olivia Irvine Dodge, donated their deceased parents' home at 1006 Summit Avenue to the state of Minnesota. The home is now the governor's residence, sometimes open for tours. It's fun to see where many of Coco's adventures took place.

Decades passed. When Coco was a grandmother, she reread her handwritten diary. She thought her family might get a kick out of reading it and set about to have it printed as a little book. She wanted to give copies as Christmas gifts. But ill with cancer, she was not able to finish the project. She died in the summer of 1975 at the age of 61. Her sister Olivia carried on the task and hired a printer to make about 100 copies. Coco's family donated some of her possessions to the Minnesota Historical Society. That gift included a printed copy of the diary, for all of us to enjoy reading and seeing presented on stage.

Here's to Coco!





## The Weyerhaeuser Lumber Business

The lumber industry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was one of the greatest social and economic influences on the development of the Great Lake states. Appetite for lumber by a fast growing country to build homes, churches and commercial buildings bound the region together.

Large cities began to spring up where lumber was made. The business experience and riches which went into the building of other industries brought in a new man of destiny to Minnesota. In the life of any industry one man often overshadows all the rest. That man in the lumber business was Frederick Weyerhaeuser.

Frederick Weyerhaeuser, was born in 1834 in Niedersaulheim, Germany. He came to America in 1852 to Erie, PA where he worked in a brewery. He met and married Elisabeth Bladel and soon moved to Rock Island, Illinois.

In Rock Island, he was put in charge of a sawmill and then a timber yard. After the panic of 1857, he was able to buy both with money he had saved. Soon afterwards, he bought logs from the shores of the Mississippi and acquired additional sawmills. In the year 1881, Weyerhaeuser began to buy up pine tracts around Shell Lake, Wisconsin, giving him control of all stages of the lumber business.

In 1891, he moved to St. Paul where he became friends and neighbors with James J. Hill, the operator of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Hill had acquired millions of acres of the best timber forests cheaply from the government for his railroad. Hill sold more than three million acres of forests to Weyerhaeuser at bargain rates, which contributed to the wealth of Weyerhaeuser's company. This made his interests so heavy that St. Paul became the center of his operations and made Minnesota become the undisputed leader in the lumber business.

Frederick Weyerhaeuser made his fortune from foresight and judgment, careful management in private and business and an amazing understanding of men. Most of the leading lumber men on the Mississippi were part of his empire, believed in him and shared in his results.

Thomas Irvine was born on July 2, 1841 in Western Ontario, Canada. When he turned 26, he moved to Iowa and began to work in the sawmill business. He moved to Chippewa Falls to run the lumber firm of McDonell and Irvine Lumber Company from 1880– 1894. When the forests began to deplete in Wisconsin, he moved his lumber interest to St. Paul. He founded the timber firm of Thomas Irvine and Sons in 1899 and the next year helped found the Weyerhaeuser Timber Company. He married Emily Hills of Connecticut in 1875 and had one son Horace Hills on January 12, 1878 in Alma, Wisconsin.

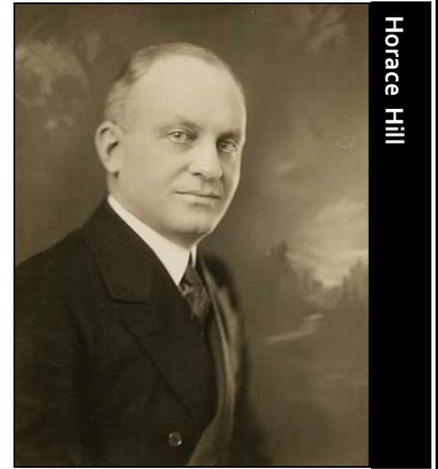
Following his graduation from the St. Paul Academy, Horace Hills Irvine joined his father in the lumber business and familiarized himself with the various phases of the lumber industry, including timber holdings, logging, manufacturing, reforestation research, timber by-products and banking.

He married Clothilde McCullough on October 3, 1907 and had four children: Elizabeth Hills, Thomas Edward, Clothilde(Coco) Emily and Olivia Anne.

He was elected director of Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. in June, 1902. He was also elected treasurer of the company in May 1929 and its president in May of 1946.

Horace Hills Irvine, who died February 26, 1947, left an estate valued at \$3,937,000.

Horace had been one of the outstanding business leaders of the Northwest. At the time of his death he was president and a director of Insurance Co. and First Trust Co.



Clothilde (Coco) Emily Irvine was born on January 27, 1914. She was the third child of Horace and Clothilde and named after her mother and grandmother. She spent her teenage years in the Jazz Age: a time of great change for the youth of America. She spent it listening to music on the new invention of the radio. She loved to read the funnies, skate, go to dances and the movies. She spent her time between their home on Summit Avenue, their Cloverdale Farm in Stillwater and their summer cottage in White Bear Lake.



After graduating from Summit High School, she went to Saint Lawrence College in New York, where she studied writing and child development. In the winter of 1936, she married Creighton Churchill and moved into her own home on Goodrich Ave. in Saint Paul. They had one daughter Olivia (Vicki) Churchill. In 1940, tragedy struck the young family. While hunting in South Dakota, Creighton died of a sudden heart attack at the age of 33.

In 1947, Coco married Ted Moles, an executive with the Archer Daniels Midland Company. She rebuilt her parents' home on Manitou Island on White Bear Lake for year round living in 1965, which is used to this day by the extended family. She began to transcribe her diary from 1927 to give to her family as a present. She passed away on July 12, 1975 at age 61 from cancer before she could finish. Her younger sister Olivia finished the project and gave it out as a Christmas present.

Coco and her sister Olivia; in memory of their parents, Horace and Clothilde, donated their Summit home to the State of Minnesota in 1965. It is now used as the State of Minnesota Governor's residence.



## Horace Hill Irvine Residence



Irvine home in 1912

The Horace Irvine Residence, located at 1006 Summit Avenue, started construction in 1910, and was completed in 1912. The 1.5 acres of land was purchased for \$7,000 and was one of the last desirable lots available at the time on Summit Avenue. Built at an estimated cost of \$50,000, the original house was 14,706 square feet in size with twenty rooms, nine fireplaces, nine bedrooms, ten bathrooms and two porches. It has since been

enlarged to slightly over 16,000 square feet in 1922 when they doubled the size of the Solarium .

The stone and brick house was designed by William Channing Whitney, a prominent Minneapolis architect of the time. Whitney designed many homes in Saint Paul and Minneapolis including the Alden Smith house, the William Hinkle house along with buildings like the Minneapolis Club. The architectural style of the Irvine house is an interpretation of an English Tudor country manor in the Beaux Arts style. Beaux Arts architecture is characterized by ornate ornamentation that is based off of the classical elements of Greek and Roman architecture made popular in Europe in the mid to late 19th century.



Front entry 1920



Solarium 1920

The family lived in the home from 1912 until 1965. In memory of their parents, Horace and Clotilde, the two youngest Irvine daughters, Clotilde and Olivia, donated the home to the State of Minnesota in 1965. The same year, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law accepting the donation and designating the house as the "State Ceremonial Building" for official public use for state functions and as a governor's residence (Laws 1965 c684). The law placed the house and its management under the jurisdiction of the Minnesota Department of Administration.

The house was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in December 1974 and on the St. Paul Historic Sites Register in July 1978. With this designation, any renovation of the exterior of the residence must be reviewed and approved by the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society.



Parlour 1920

## SUMMIT SCHOOL IN THE JAZZ AGE



Coco with her daughter  
Vicki 1941

A young girl's diary from the 1920's privately published by family in the 1970's lay unnoticed in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society for almost 40 years. Written by Summit School alumna Clotilde "Coco" Irvine (32) in 1927 when she was twelve and thirteen years old, the diary is a lively chronicle of the life of a wealthy St. Paul girl (the daughter of lumber baron Horace Irvine) on the brink of womanhood.

In 2010, Coco's diary fell in the hands of Peg Meier, a Twin Cities journalist and author well-known for her books on Minnesota's history. The diary was part of a stack of books and materials requested by Meier during a research project. "I remember sitting in the somber library, trying not to guffaw as I read about Coco's exploits," Meier writes in the introduction to the new issue of the diary, entitled *Through No Fault of My Own* and published by the University of Minnesota Press in 2011. *Through No Fault of My Own* is a lively portrait of a mischievous and self-assured girl, with as much energy and wit as her family had wealth. The Irvine's were among the Midwest's wealthiest families, and the twenty room Summit Avenue mansion in which Coco grew up is now familiar to Minnesotans as the Governor's Residence, Coco and her sister, Olivia Irvine Dodge, donated the house to the state in 1965.

As a student at the Summit School, Coco often got into scrapes with the head mistress, the formidable Sarah Converse. Coco complains frequently in her diary about unfair treatment at the hands of Miss Converse because of her escapes, writing that events would go awry "through no fault of my own". Coco's adventures at Summit included setting off the school's fire alarm and stealing silverware from the dining hall in protest of what she thought was awful food.

Meier says that as soon as she read the diary she knew she wanted to see it republished. She contacted Coco's daughter, Vicki Churchill Ford (Class of 1956), to inquire about the possibility of a reissue. With Ford's blessing, photos were gathered, an inviting cover was designed, and the book hit bookshelves and online retailers in 2011. In addition, Meier contacted Ron Peluso and persuaded him to read the book. As a result, a play, *Coco's Diary*, written by Peluso and Bob Beverage, will premiere at the History Theatre in St. Paul on March 3, 2012, which just happens to be Vicki Churchill Ford's birthday.

"My mother was an amazing woman," says Vicki Ford, who now lives in New York with her husband Sy. "I remember her telling me some of the stories from the diary as I was growing up when we were driving in the car. I was only later that I discovered that they had been documented in that 13-year-old girl's diary". Mrs. Ford says she was a much more sedate student than her mother had been, but it took a while for Sarah Converse – still headmistress during Vicki's first few years at Summit – and some of those teachers to be convinced. "I think they were all waiting to see if I would turn out like my mother," Vicki says with a laugh.

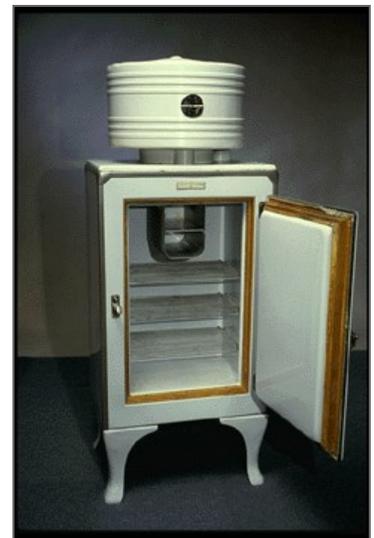
Vicki and Sy Ford have sat in some of the rehearsals of *Coco's Diary* during her visits back to St. Paul and accompanied Peg Meier to a reading at an area bookstore when the book was first published. "My cousin Clover's daughter, Karen Reis (86) and her daughter, Ellie– who is Coco's great-great niece and now 13 – came to hear us read," Mrs. Ford says. "It was so wonderful to feel the generations coming together through the book."

# 1920's and The Emergence of the Teenager

The 1920s era went by such names as the Jazz Age, the Age of Intolerance, and the Age of Wonderful Nonsense. Under any moniker, the era embodied the beginning of modern America. The 1920s was a decade of increasing conveniences for the middle class. New products made household chores easier and led to more leisure time. Products previously too expensive became affordable.

At the beginning of the roaring twenties, the United States was converting from a wartime to peacetime economy. When weapons for World War I were no longer needed, there was a temporary stall in the economy. After a few years, the country prospered. In this decade, America became the richest nation on Earth and a culture of consumerism was born. Technology played a vital part in delivering the economic and cultural good times that most of America enjoyed during the 1920s.

Inventions of the 1920's profoundly affected the way Americans live today. A typical work week for a housewife before the twenties involved many tedious chores. All the furniture was moved off the carpets, which were rolled up and dragged outside to beat out the week's dirt and dust. The ice in the icebox was replaced and the water pan that lay beneath was repeatedly changed. The clothes were scrubbed in a washing tub on a washboard. An iron was heated on the stove to smooth out the wrinkles. Women typically spent the summer months canning food for the long winter. Vacuum cleaners displaced the carpet beater. Electric refrigerators, washing machines, and irons saved hours of extra work. New methods of canning and freezing made store-bought food inexpensive.



The growing prosperity of the 1920's gave Americans more money to spend and more time to spend it. The number of people who read newspapers increased sharply and the national magazine flourished. The most popular and most powerful mass media, however, was the radio. Entertainment and news programming was offered to many millions on a national level.

Sporting events, especially baseball and the great Babe Ruth enjoyed massive fame. Non sporting heroes like the pilot Charles Lindbergh began to emerge. Americans by the thousands found entertainment in the movie theaters. Most of the decade, the movies were silent. In 1927, Hollywood released **The Jazz Singer**, the first major talking picture. Movies, magazines and the radio helped create a national culture.



Henry Ford blazed the way with his Model T; he sold more 15 million of them by 1927. Ford's assembly line means of production was the key. The automobile's popularity, and construction of roads and highways — pouring fresh public funds into the economy — brought tremendous economic prosperity during the roaring twenties.

Before the 1920's, the long-established belief had been that people remained children until they suddenly became adults; this conviction lost its hold partly because of social changes, partly as a result of flourishing postwar consumer

economy. Although child labor practices still existed, states were passing restrictions against such exploitation. In the 1920's children stayed in school longer because many parents no longer depended upon their wages. By 1930, 51% of all high school age youths were in school, compared with less than 6% in 1890.

Most Americans tried their best to allow their children to enjoy their youth while they were slowly prepared for the trials and tribulations of adulthood. Parents were waiting longer to goad their youngsters into marriage rather than pairing them off at the tender age of sixteen or seventeen. It soon became apparent that a new stage of life was becoming a reality. Adolescents were displaying traits unknown among children and adults. In short, it soon became apparent that a new stage of life — the **TEENAGE** phase — was becoming a reality in America.

The single greatest factor that led to the emergence of the independent young adult was the automobile. They enjoyed a freedom from parental supervision unknown to previous generations. The courtship process rapidly evolved into dating. In the 19th century, girls spent their first dates at home. They would sit with the boy in the parlor and meet her parents, followed by dinner. Later in the evening, the couple might enjoy a few moments alone on the front porch. After several meetings, they might be allowed to go unchaperoned for a walk around town. The automobile simply shattered these old-fashioned traditions. Dating was removed from the watchful eyes of anxious parents. Young Americans were now able to look beyond their own small towns at an enlarged dating pool.

A flamboyant youth subculture with its own ways of speaking, dressing, and acting flourished. Although the word teenager did not come into use until decades later, the teenage mindset dawned in the 1920s.



# Flappers

Before the start of World War I, the Gibson Girl was the rage. The Gibson Girl wore her long hair loosely on top of her head with long straight skirt and a shirt with a high collar. In the 1920s, flappers broke away from the Victorian image of womanhood. They dropped the corset, chopped their hair, dropped layers of clothing to increase ease of movement, The Gibson Girl, who prided herself on her long, beautiful, lush hair, was shocked when the flapper cut hers off, wore make-up, and created the concept of dating. . The short haircut was called the "bob" which was later replaced by an even shorter haircut, the "shingle" or "Eton" cut. The shingle cut was slicked down and had a curl on each side of the face that covered the woman's ears. Flappers often finished the ensemble with a felt, bell-shaped hat called a cloche. They created what many consider the modern woman



The term "flapper" originated in England, where it was used simply to describe girls of an awkward age. American authors like Fitzgerald transformed the term into an iconic phrase that glorified the fun loving youthful spirit of the post-war decade. The flapper ideal, along with the look, became popular, first with chic young moderns, then with a larger body of American women. The flapper was remarkably identifiable. With her bobbed hair, short skirts, and penchant for lipstick, the starlet who had "it," Clara Bow, embodied the look. America's young women rushed to emulate the flapper aesthetic. They flattened their chests with tight bands of cloth in order to look as young and boyish as possible. They shortened the skirts on their increasingly plain frocks, and they bought more cosmetics than American women ever had before.

But flapperhood was more than mere fashion. To an older generation of Americans the flapper symbolized a "revolution in manners and morals." Flappers did not just look daring, they were daring. In the 1920s growing numbers of young American women began to smoke, drink, and talk slang. And they danced. Not in the old style, but in the new mode inspired by jazz music. Flappers presented themselves as sexual creatures, radically different to the stable maternal women who epitomized the ideal of the previous generation. As F. Scott Fitzgerald claimed, "none of the Victorian mothers had any idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to being kissed."



And yet the popularity of the flapper did not, as one might suppose, signal the triumph of feminism in the early twentieth century. For the flapper, for all her sexual sophistication and her rejection of her mother's Victorian values, did not pose any real threat to the gender status quo. Indeed, it was precisely the flapper's combination of daring spirit and youthful innocence that made her attractive to men. The flapper was a highly sexualized creature, but that sexuality retained an innocent, youthful, romantic quality. Ultimately, flappers married and became the mothers of the 1930s.

Although flappers presented a new model of single womanhood that would have positive ramifications because it gave license to women to work and play alongside men, that model had its limits. The transformative cultural promise of the flapper moment would recede just like the fashion for short skirts and short hair. In the long years of the Depression the desire to emulate reckless rich girls faded along with the working girl's ability to afford even the cheapest imitation of flapper chic.

Remnants of the flapper lifestyle, however, remained popular—a youthful taste for music and dancing, smoking and sexiness. And the market for goods that had emerged to meet the consuming passions of flapper women gained in strength and power. Even after the flapper disappeared from the American scene the feminine ideal that she had popularized lingered—along with a culture of consumption designed to help women pursue that impossibly impermanent idea. For the ideal modern woman of America's imagination, although no longer officially a "flapper," was to remain infuriatingly "lovely ... and about nineteen."



# Slang of the 1920's

Slang did not become an important element of American speech until the 1920's. The twenties was the first decade to emphasize youth culture over the tastes of the older generation. The flapper culture had a tremendous influence on main stream America. New words and phrases were coined at a rapid pace, many which are still used today. Here is a sample from that era.



## A

ab-so-lute-ly: affirmative  
Abe's Cabe: five-dollar bill  
ace: one-dollar bill  
all wet: incorrect  
And how!: I strongly agree!  
ankle: to walk, i.e.. *"Let's ankle!"*  
apple sauce: flattery, nonsense, i.e.. *"Aw, applesauce!"*  
Attaboy!: well done!; also, Attagirl!

## B

baby: sweetheart; also denotes something of high value or respect  
balled up: confused, messed up  
baloney: nonsense  
Bank's closed.: no kissing or making out i.e. *"Sorry, mac, bank's closed."*  
beat it: scam, get lost  
bee's knee's: terrific  
beef: a complaint or to complain  
bell bottom: a sailor  
big cheese: important person  
bug-eyed Betty: an unattractive girl; *student*  
bump off: to kill

## C

caper: a criminal act or robbery  
cat's meow: great  
cash: a kiss  
Cash or check?: Do we kiss now or later?  
celestial: derogatory slang for Chinese or East Asians  
cheaters: eye glasses  
Chicago typewriter: Thompson submachine gun  
clam: a dollar  
copacetic: excellent, all in order  
crush: infatuation



## D

daddy: a young woman's boyfriend or lover, especially if he's rich  
dame: a female; did not gain widespread use until the 1930's  
dewdropper: a young man who sleeps all day and doesn't have a job  
dogs: feet  
doll: an attractive woman  
dolloed up: dressed up  
ducky: very good  
doublecross: to cheat, stab in the back

## E

earful: enough

egg: a person who lives the big life

## F

face stretcher: an old woman trying to look young

fella: fellow. as common in its day as "man," "dude,"

fire extinguisher: a chaperone

flat tire: a bore

## G

gams: legs

gasper: cigarette

get in a lather: get worked up, angry

glad rags: "going out on the town" clothes

go chase yourself: get lost, scam.

gold-digger: a woman who pursues men for their money

## H

handcuff: engagement ring

hard-boiled: a tough person, *i.e.*: "He sure is hard-boiled!"

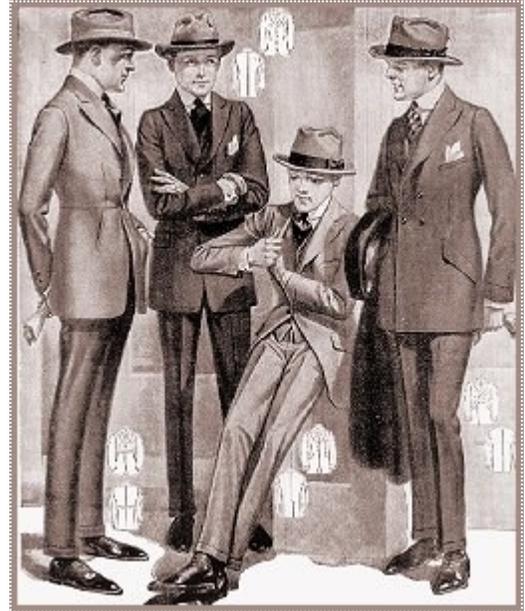
heebie-jeebies: "the shakes," named after a hit song

high hat: a snob

hip to the jive: cool, trendy

hood (late 20s): hoodlum

Hot dawg!: Great!; also: "Hot socks!"



## I

"I have to go see a man about a dog.": "I've got to leave now," often meaning to go buy whiskey

ish kabibble: a retort meaning "I should care,"

## J

Jalopy: a dumpy old car

java: coffee

john: a toilet

joint: establishment

## K

keen: appealing

killjoy: a solemn person

know one's onions: to know one's business or what one is talking about

## L

left holding the bag: (1) to be cheated out of one's fair share (2) to be blamed for something

level with me: be honest

lollygagger: (1) a young man who enjoys making out (2) an idle person

## M

manacle: wedding ring

milquetoast: a very timid person

mop: a handkerchief

**N**

neck: to kiss passionately  
nifty: great, excellent  
noodle juice: tea

**O**

off one's nuts: crazy  
on the lam: fleeing from police  
on the up and up: on the level  
owl: a person who's out late

**P**

phonus balonus: nonsense  
piffle: baloney  
pipe down: stop talking

**R**

rag-a-muffin: a dirty or disheveled individual  
Real McCoy: a genuine item  
regular: normal, typical, average

**S**

sap: a fool, an idiot; very common term in the 20s  
sawbuck: ten-dollar bill  
skirt: an attractive female  
stilts: legs  
swanky: (1) good (2) elegant  
swell: (1) good (2) a high class person

**T**

tasty: appealing  
tomato: a female  
torpedo: a hired thug or hitman



**U**

unreal: special  
upchuck: to vomit  
upstage: snobby

**V**

vamp: (1) a seducer of men, an aggressive flirt (2) to seduce  
voot: money

**W**

water-proof: a face that doesn't require make-up  
wet blanket: see Killjoy  
whoopee: wild fun  
Woof! Woof!: ridicule

**Y**

You slay me!: you're funny

**Z**

zozzled: drunk

# ACTIVITIES



Coco Irvine Age 5

# Journal Writing

Using the published diary *Through No Fault of My Own*, introduce students to journal writing, a form of autobiographical writing in which the writer records personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

The students will write personal journal entries to explore their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. They will edit a personal journal entry to sharpen their grammar and spelling skills and share their entry with peer editors and edit the work of others to build collaboration skills.

Tell the class they are going to be listening to or reading excerpts from *Through No Fault of My Own*, the book based on Coco Irvine's diary. As you read to your students, or as they read to themselves, have them note the personal details that the writer includes in the diary.

Next, have students discuss the following questions about the writer and her work:

1. Why are the writer's details important?
2. How do they help the reader?
3. What do they tell us about the writer?
4. What questions do you have about the writer?
5. What do you and the writer have in common?

Next, tell students they will be writing their own journals as a week-long project. Ask students to think of these journals as a way to freely explore their thoughts and feelings while also creating a source of ideas for their writing. They should also date each journal entry.

To give students ideas for their first journal entries, present the following writing prompts and tell students they will have 5 to 10 minutes to write. Direct them to try to write nonstop and avoid erasing. Some good prompts for beginning journal entries include:

1. What I did last weekend (or hope to do this weekend)
2. My experiences in the school cafeteria this week, for better or worse
3. What really makes me frustrated or mad, and why
4. What really makes me laugh
5. My best memory ever

You can help motivate students to write in their journals by writing in your own journal and sharing your writing.

## ASSESSMENT

- After students have written at least five journal entries, allow them to pick their best entry, revise it, and submit it for peer editing and grading.
- Ask for volunteers to read aloud from their journals and have students give feedback on the writer's use of such devices as sensory details and imagery.

## EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

- Assign students to research different kinds of autobiographical writing and to share good examples of published diaries, journals, letters, travel logs, oral histories, interviews, and autobiographies.

# America: The Years Between the Wars

## Introduction:

This unit will focus not only on historical events of the 1920s, but also on the resulting literature, music, art and social history of this time period. By examining the popular culture of this time period, students can gain insight into what people were interested in at the time and what was important to them.

Students will make their own 1920s scrapbook for this lesson. They will be picking their favorite technology, poems, artwork, music etc. for their scrapbooks. Students will be expected to pick one famous person from the 20s and devote a page to this person. Through their research and examining different documents from the time period, students will gain a broad understanding of many different aspects of the 1920s.

## Objectives:

Students will be able to evaluate the music, poetry and literature of the 1920s

Students will be able to identify important people of the 1920s

Students will be able to compare the accomplishments of important people of the 1920s

## Introduction: Slang of the 1920s.

The following terms will be used in the activity:

- All Wet - Describes an erroneous idea or individual, as in, "he's all wet."
- Bee's Knees - An extraordinary person, thing, idea; the ultimate.
- Big Cheese - The most important or influential person; boss. Same as big shot.
- Darb - An excellent person or thing (as in "the Darb" - a person with money who can be relied on to pay the check).
- Flapper - A stylish, brash, hedonistic young woman with short skirts and shorter hair.
- Giggle Water - An intoxicating beverage; alcohol.
- High-Hat - To snub.
- Hooch - Bootleg liquor
- Jalopy - Old car.
- Keen - Attractive or appealing.
- Speakeasy - An illicit bar selling bootleg liquor.
- Spiffy - An elegant appearance.

Before class, write just the terms on the board or on an overhead, not the definitions. Have students write a paragraph using the slang terms. Tell them that it is okay if they do not know the meanings, just use them in a way that makes sense to them. After they have written their paragraphs, put up the meanings of the words, and then have several students read their paragraphs. Tell them they will use this paragraph and the slang as the first page of a 1920s scrapbook that they are to compile.

Ask students what they already know about the twenties and make a list on the board. Responses that you will probably get are flappers, jazz, automobiles, Henry Ford, The Great Gatsby, etc.

Have the students organize the list by putting them in different categories. These categories should be technology, literature, music, sports, people, events, fashion, entertainment and art. This should take about 5 minutes. If they do not come up with all the categories, add them yourself.

For the next hour of class, students will go to a media center to work on compiling information for their scrapbooks. They will be given the following assignment:

Today we will be going to the computer lab to gather information on a variety of topics to be included in a 1920s scrapbook. Your scrapbook must have 10 pages:

1. The first one we have already started in class. It is a page on slang from the 1920s.
2. Technology
3. Literature
4. Music
5. Sports
6. People
7. Events
8. Fashion
9. Entertainment
10. Art.

Each page will need some kind of visual whether you draw it yourself or print it out from one of your websites. Each page will also need a caption that is at least a paragraph of explanation. On the pages that present your person and event, you will need to have at least a two-paragraph summary of why you picked the person and event. At the bottom of each page, you will need to cite the website from which you got your information. Your task is to gather all your material for your scrapbook.

# 1920'S MAGAZINE

## DIRECTIONS:

**In a group of three people, research and create a 1920's magazine. Each member must write one article and the group is responsible for the complete project**

### 1. Cover Page (visual page)

The cover page must include an illustration and title reflecting the 1920's, an overview of what is in the magazine and the group member's names.

### 2. Lifestyles Article

Write an article on lifestyles of the 1920's. The introduction paragraph should be an overview of fashion, sports, movies, music, literature and art of the 20's. The second paragraph should focus on one aspect in the introduction. Be sure to use slang vocabulary.

### 3. Political Article

Write a report on the politics of the 1920's.

### 4. Interview

Write an interview with an important person from the 1920's. The interview should include an introduction paragraph on background information. Then create a five question and answer dialogue that explains the person's role or significance in the 1920's.

### 5. Advertisement (visual page)

Create an advertisement directed at young people in the 1920's. It could be about music, sports, movies, cars or a new consumer product. The advertisement must include:

- 1) An **original illustration** depicting 1920's people using a 1920's product.
- 2) A **slogan** that reflects the 1920's attitude.
- 3) A **product description** explaining what the product does.

### 6. Political Cartoon (visual)

The cartoon must include an original illustration and caption making fun of **politics** in the 1920's. Presidential scandals are always good to poke fun at. Write a short paragraph explaining the specific, historical significance of the cartoon.

# The Installment Plan in the 1920s

## Brief Description of the Lesson

This lesson will explore the rise in popularity of buying things on credit in the 1920s and ask the students to make a decision as to whether they would have bought things with credit themselves.

## Lesson Plan Objectives

Content Objectives:

1. Students will be able to understand the installment plan
2. Students will be able to understand the risks of buying things with borrowed money
3. Students will be able to understand some of the things people would have purchased on the installment plan in the 1920s

## Day One

The students will be given a copy of "Living and Dying on Installments"

## Day Two

Ask the class what bills need to be paid monthly: rent/mortgage, heat/electricity, etc. Have them break up in groups and look up on the web how much these would have cost in the 1920's. Have each group make out a monthly budget for these items.

Taking that budget, look at the wages people earned during the 1920's. Give each group a different employment. Have them figure out if these jobs cover their monthly expenses and how much they have left over each month.

The teacher should display car ads from the era. Look up how much cars costs during that era.

Knowing how much the two cars cost and how much the average person made in the 1920s, they should answer the following question in an essay format:  
car for your family. Which of the two cars would you buy and why?

Would you buy the more expensive car on the installment plan and have more debt, or would you buy the cheaper car which would not be as impressive? Explain.

## **Salaries in the 1920's - Average 50 hour work week**

<b>JOB</b>	<b>SALARY PER MONTH</b>
Teacher	\$105.00
Clerical	\$100.00
Railroad Worker	\$ 75.00
Factory Worker	\$110.00
Postal Worker	\$170.00
Professional Baseball Player	\$416.00
Salesman	\$ 74.00
Doctor	\$583.00
Farmer	\$ 66.00
Garment Worker	\$ 40.00

# Living and Dying on Installments

Hawthorne Daniel, 1926 edited

So popular has installment buying become, with purchasers as well as with manufacturers and merchants, that it is possible today to buy almost everything from candy to private yachts on the deferred payment plan. Within the last twenty years, and particularly within the last six, installment buying has grown like a mushroom. Installment buying is useful, is often advisable, and is very convenient. No doubt, it is carried too far in some cases. But customers can often get what they want only by this method of buying ... From the point of view of the [seller], the trouble with the installment business had been that he, generally, could not afford to [give credit] to many of his customers.

This situation brought about the development of the finance company. Today, there are about 1,500 of them in the country, although twenty-five years ago they did not exist. And now, when a dealer sells an automobile, or a radio set—part cash and the rest on installments, he takes the first payment and has the customer sign a paper agreeing to make his payments regularly [or give back] the goods.

The finance companies have made possible the rapid and tremendous expansion of installment business. As to the profits they make - it is obvious that, as always, the consumer pays. Furthermore, and this is one of the uneconomic features of the business, he generally pays [a lot]. As a matter of fact, the installment purchaser very often throws away one dollar in every ten by being an installment purchaser. Sometimes, it is true, it costs less than that, but sometimes, again, it costs more.

The installment business has been built up largely by manufacturers [wanting to increase] their output. So far it has worked, but there is an interesting possibility that seems to have been overlooked by many whose sales have been increased by this method.

Let us imagine a person who purchases everything on the installment plan. Let us suppose that, in doing so, he pays on the average 10 percent more for the goods than he buys. It is obvious, then, that 10 percent of his expenditures goes to pay the operating costs and profits of finance companies. Thus the customer can buy only nine-tenths as much as he could if he paid cash, and consequently the manufacturers who serve him, reduce by 10 percent the goods they can produce for him. Carried to extremes, then, the installment plan may end by forcing a reduction in output, which is the exact opposite of what it is supposed to do.

Now, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this method of selling goods? The advantages are as follows: First, it increases sales. Second, it makes possible the purchase of goods that can, by their operation, pay for their own use. Third, it makes possible the purchase of goods out of income instead of out of capital. Fourth, it makes possible the purchase of goods by those who cannot pay cash.

On the other hand, installment buying has these disadvantages: First, the cost to the consumer is always higher. Second, through excessive use of the method, credit is being improperly used. Third, irresponsible buyers buy many things they cannot afford, and in extreme cases buy more than they can pay for. Fourth, because consumers pay more for their goods, they can buy fewer goods, and consequently the factories will ultimately be forced to produce less for them.

# Guided Reading for “Living and Dying on Installments”

Create a list of words that were new to you. Write down what you think each word means.

When did the installment plan begin to gain popularity, according to this article? Do you think this time period is significant?

How did the installment plan lead to the creation of the finance company?

What is a finance company?

What criticism was there of the installment plan?

Why does the author think that buying things on credit is a bad idea for the retailers?

Knowing that there depression will begin in 1929, what is significant about the following quote (keep in mind that this article was written in 1926)?

“Undoubtedly the greater proportion of installment buyers are wage earners, who feel, whether justifiably or not, that their incomes are bound to continue to be regular. Of course, there is no means of telling in advance how regular one's income is going to be.”

# Worksheet: Buying a Car on Installments

1. Calculate annual earnings in 1926 for your job.
2. You need to buy a car for your family. Look at the advertisements on the following pages.
  - a. Which car is the most impressive?
  - b. Which car is the most practical?
3. You need to buy a car to get to and from your job. Assuming that you must pay a financing fee equal to 10% of the purchase price of the car, what is the total cost for the car you have decided to buy?
4. If you were able to pay installments of \$20 each month, how many years/months would it take you to pay for the car?
5. With the budget that you have made out for each month, with the car payment, how much money would you have for left over?

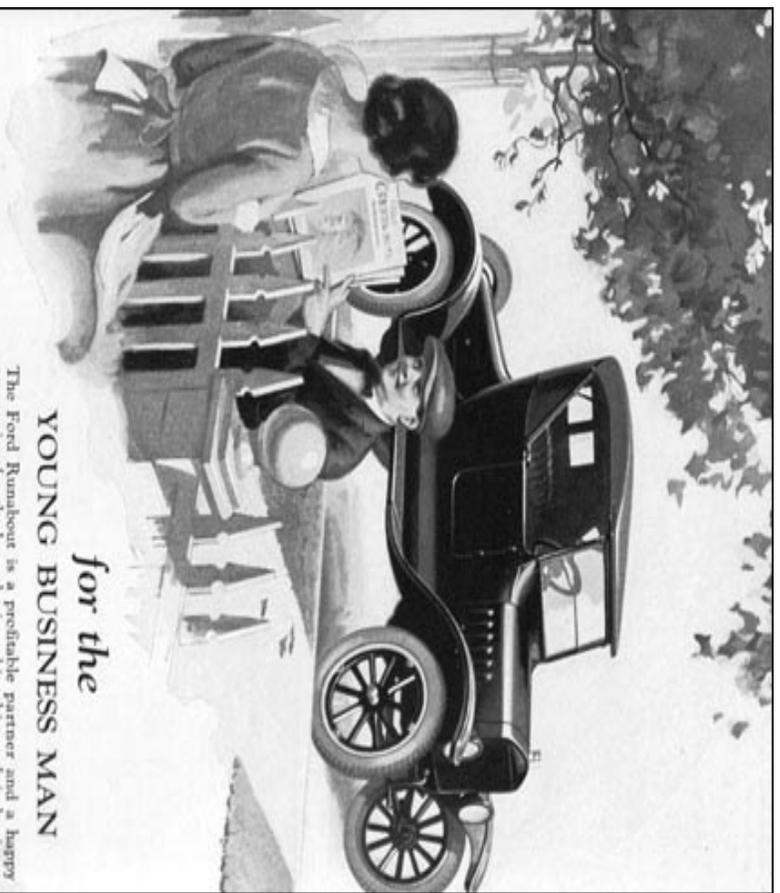
## **WRITE A LETTER.**

- Think about all of the arguments both for and against your decision as well as how much the car will cost relative to your annual income.
- Assume that you have a close friend who is also interested in buying a car. Write a letter to your friend telling him/her what car you have decided to buy.

In your letter, you should:

- fully explain the reasons for your decision.
- explain why you did not choose the other cars
- use information from the 1926 article "Living and Dying on Installments"
- use proper grammar, spelling, punctuation, and format
- add anything else that you would like

*Make the letter interesting. Show your knowledge of the time period!*



*for the*  
**YOUNG BUSINESS MAN**

THE RUNABOUT  
**\$ 265**

F. O. B. Detroit  
Delivered in Run  
and Starter 395.00

The Ford Runabout is a profitable partner and a happy companion for the boy who is making his mark in business and at school. It reduces distance from a matter of miles to a matter of minutes. By saving time and effort, it makes larger earnings possible. And costing little to buy and keep going, it quickly pays for itself. When vacation time rolls round the Runabout enables the young business man to reduce by hours the time between work and play. Let us tell you how easy it is to buy a Ford on the Weekly Purchase Plan. FORD MOTOR COMPANY, DETROIT, MICHIGAN

SERIES 20  
*Studebaker*  
BIG-SIX  
America's Greatest Road Car

**THE performance of the BIG-SIX may be equalled by few cars—it is excelled by none.**

To drive the BIG-SIX is to actually experience a new motoring sensation. And such capabilities as this car possesses can be produced only by the mechanical excellence of the car itself. Ride in the BIG-SIX—and be convinced.

126-inch wheelbase. Seven-passenger, 60-horsepower, 3500-cu.-in. engine, 4-speed intermediate transmission. Cord tires.  
**"This is a Studebaker Year!"**

## Celebrate the Decade—Search the Web for U.S. History of the 1920s

Search the Web to learn more about the stories behind the stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service, commemorating the people, places, events, and trends of the third decade of this century. The activities that follow will engage students in exploring websites as they search for information related to ten of the 1920s stamps.

### RADIO ENTERTAINS AMERICA

By the end of the 1920s, radio had become a national obsession. Families crowded around their sets to listen to newscasts, comedy and children's shows, variety hours, and presidential speeches. The stamp art is based on a photograph of a 1923 Atwater Kent radio.



#### **Question 1:**

In the 1920s, Atwater Kent manufactured radios in many styles, including "breadboard" radios. What was a breadboard radio?



### JAZZ FLOURISHES

Created in the United States, jazz was spread by radio and recordings in the 1920s. Among the leading performers were Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Joe "King" Oliver, Fletcher Henderson, and Bix Beiderbecke.

#### **Question 2:**

When Louis Armstrong was 11 years old, he was sent to live in a waif's home, a sort of juvenile hall. Why was that experience a turning point in young Louis's life?

### 19th AMENDMENT

The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified August 26, 1920. The fight for women's suffrage was over, ending a struggle that had begun in the mid-19th century.

**Question 3:** The 19th Amendment passed in 1920, but it had been introduced many years earlier. In what year was the amendment introduced in Congress and why did it take so long to be ratified?



### BABE RUTH

Babe Ruth hit 54 home runs in 1920. He went on to hit 59 home runs in 1921 and 60 in 1927. Twice he hit three home runs in a single game of the World Series. One of his nicknames was the "Sultan of Swat."

#### **Question 4:**

How did George Herman Ruth get the nickname "Babe"?

### ART DECO STYLE

The Art Deco style in architecture and the decorative arts combines sleek elegance, geometric shapes, and varied materials. One of the finest examples of the style, the Chrysler Building, in New York City, reflects America's exuberance in the 1920s.

#### **Question 5:**

What three buildings are prime examples of the Art Deco style?





### **LINDBERGH FLIES ATLANTIC**

On May 20 and 21, 1927, Charles Lindbergh made the first nonstop, solo, trans-Atlantic flight aboard the *Spirit of St. Louis*. He left from Long Island and flew 3,600 miles to Paris in 33 hours.

#### **Question 6:**

Before gaining fame, Lindbergh worked as an airmail pilot. Which route did he fly in that job?

### **FLAPPERS DO THE CHARLESTON**

Caricaturist John Held Jr. portrayed the fun-loving, escapist lifestyle of the Roaring Twenties. His drawings of young women called "flappers" symbolized the decade.

#### **Question 7:**

The flapper was a "modern" girl in the 1920s. Many older people were shocked by the way flappers looked, dressed, and acted. What two characteristics of a flapper might have upset her parents?



### **MARGARET MEAD, ANTHROPOLOGIST**

Anthropologist Margaret Mead explored the effect of culture on the behavior and personalities of children and adults as well as the differences between men and women.

#### **Question 8:**

In her lifetime, Margaret Mead wrote 26 books. What is the title of her best-known book?

### **STOCK MARKET CRASH 1929**

Stock market prices plummeted on Black Thursday, October 24, 1929, and collapsed on October 29. Banks and businesses closed and the Great Depression soon followed.

#### **Question 9:**

What was the headline in *The New York Times* on the morning after Black Thursday?



# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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