

Name: _____
History Through Film

Date: _____

THE ROARING TWENTIES
STARRING JAMES CAGNEY AND HUMPHREY BOGART

The Roaring Twenties (1939) is action director Raoul Walsh's first gangster film (and first film for Warner Bros.). This newsreel-like, semi-documentary, with both hard-hitting gangster genre action and romantic sentiment, shares a lot of similarities and is reminiscent of the greatest gangster films of the 30s, including *Little Caesar* (1930), *Scarface: The Shame of the Nation* (1932), and *Public Enemy* (1931). All of these films portray bootlegging, numerous murders, gangster life, and the death of the hero at the conclusion.

The protagonist, Eddie, is portrayed as a reluctant victim of social and environmental conditions during the time period - as a returning WWI doughboy to a 1918 America of unemployment, he is lured to a corruptible life as a small-time hood after being denied his old job and after taking advantage of poorly-conceived government laws. Then, as a struggling taxi-cab driver after a change of fortune during the Depression, he becomes a poverty-stricken, alcoholic "forgotten man" in the 30s.

Directions: Answer the questions below ***in phrase form*** as you watch the movie.

1. What war was the U.S. fighting in 1918 in order to “preserve democracy around the world”?

2. What was life like for a soldier during the war? Describe.

3. Why does Eddie have a hard time finding work at the beginning of the movie?

4. What type of work does Eddie resort to when he cannot find another job?

5. What was a “speakeasy”?

- Why did they develop in the 1920’s?

6. How do women of the 1920’s compare to women of previous decades? Give examples.

7. What does Eddie do to stay in business when the price of liquor is raised?

8. Describe the ways in which Eddie’s life has changed as a result of being involved in bootlegging.

9. How did prohibition and bootlegging effect American society by the mid 1920’s? Give examples.

10. How does the repeal of prohibition affect the bootlegging industry by the end of the decade?

11. What event takes place at the end of the film to mark the end of the Roaring Twenties? How do you think this event will affect life in the next decade?

Make some observations about the lifestyle of the 1920's after viewing clips from this movie. In the chart below, write some things that you noticed or observed.

Music	
Fashion	
Roles of Women	
Roles of Men	
Language	
Other?	

CREATIVE WRITING

Directions: What if the events of Eddie's life had happened differently? Choose a scene from the movie and re-write it so that Eddie makes a different choice. Does it affect the outcome of his life? How? Why?
