

The Dawn of Mass Culture

BEFORE YOU READ

In this section, you will read about how Americans developed new forms of entertainment and ways to spend their money.

TERMS AND NAMES

Joseph Pulitzer Owner of the *New York World* newspaper

William Randolph Hearst Owner of the *New York Morning Journal* and *San Francisco Examiner*

Ashcan school A school of painting that featured urban life and working people with gritty realism

Mark Twain Pen name of the novelist and humorist Samuel Langhorne Clemens

rural free delivery (RFD) System that brought packages directly to homes

AS YOU READ

Use this diagram to take notes on how these people helped transform American culture.

PEOPLE	ACHIEVEMENTS
<i>Pulitzer/Hearst</i>	<i>Created sensational newspapers</i>
<i>Marshall Field</i>	
<i>F.W. Woolworth</i>	

American Leisure

How did Americans spend their free time?

The use of machines allowed workers at the turn of the century to do their jobs faster. This led to a shorter workweek. As a result, Americans had more leisure time.

Americans found new ways to use that time. Many city dwellers enjoyed trips to amusement parks. There, rides such as the roller coaster and the Ferris wheel thrilled people.

Another recreational activity that became popular at the turn of the century was bicycling. This activity entertained both men and women. Many Americans also grew fond of playing tennis.

Several kinds of snack foods also became popular. Americans turned to brand-name snacks such

as a Hershey chocolate bar and drinks such as a Coca-Cola.

Those Americans who did not wish to exercise watched professional sports. Boxing became popular in the late 1800s. Baseball also became a well-loved spectator sport. The National League was formed in 1876 and the American League in 1901. African-American baseball players were not allowed to play in either league. As a result, they formed their own clubs—the Negro National League and the Negro American League.

1. Name two activities that were popular in the United States at the turn of the century.

The Spread of Mass Culture

How did newspapers attract more readers?

Newspapers also entertained Americans. Many publishers changed their newspapers in order to attract more readers. They filled their pages with *sensational* headlines. They also devised promotional stunts. In 1889, for example, one newspaper introduced its story about the horrors of a flood in Johnstown, Pennsylvania with the headline “THE VALLEY OF DEATH.”

Some publishers used other techniques. **Joseph Pulitzer**, the owner of the *New York World*, introduced a large Sunday edition. It included comics, sports coverage, and women’s news. Pulitzer presented news in a sensational way to beat his main competitor, **William Randolph Hearst**. Hearst owned the *New York Morning Journal* and the *San Francisco Examiner*. Hearst tried to outdo Pulitzer by publishing *exaggerated* and even made-up stories. By 1898, both publishers were selling more than one million copies each day.

By 1900, at least one art gallery could be found in every large city. American artists like Thomas Eakins of Philadelphia used realism to portray life as it was really lived. Eakins was a leader of the **Ashcan School** which painted urban life and working people with gritty realism and no frills.

Light fiction such as “dime novels” was popular as more people read books. **Mark Twain**, the pen name of the humorist and novelist Samuel Langhorne Clemens, wrote realistic portrayals of American life that became popular. His novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* became a classic of American literature. The efforts of American libraries and art galleries to raise public taste were not always successful. Many Americans had no interest in high culture. African Americans and others were denied access to most white-controlled cultural institutions.

2. Name two ways in which publishers tried to sell more newspapers.

New Ways to Sell Goods

How did Americans shop?

Americans at the turn of the century also began to change the way they shopped. As cities grew, shopping centers emerged. These structures made many kinds of stores available in one area.

Another new development was the department store. This type of store offered consumers a wide range of goods to buy. Marshall Field of Chicago was the first department store in America. Chain stores—groups of stores owned by the same person—also started in the late 1800s. F. W. Woolworth’s “five-and-dime store” and other chain grocery stores became popular. These types of stores offered consumers brand names and low-cost sales.

As shopping became more popular, so too did advertising. Companies filled magazines and newspapers with ads for their products. Advertisers also placed their products on barns, houses, and billboards.

In the late 1800s, Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck introduced mail-order catalogs. These books brought department store items to those who lived outside of the cities. Each company’s catalog contained a description of its goods. The company mailed its catalog to farmers and small town residents. These people then could order goods from the catalog. By 1910, about 10 million Americans shopped by mail.

The United States Post Office increased mail-order business by starting a **rural free delivery (RFD)** system. This brought packages directly to every home.

3. Name two developments in the ways goods were sold.
