

SSUSH16 – Investigate how political, economic, and cultural developments after WWI led to a shared national identity.

d. Describe the impact of radio and movies as a unifying force in the national culture.

The period after World War I marked the beginning of mass media, especially commercial radio and movies. Although hobby radio had existed since the early years of the Twentieth Century, the development of the vacuum tube, a type of amplifier, in the mid-1920s accelerated the development of commercial radio.

The first **radio** broadcasts were used to relate the election results of the 1920 Presidential Election. By 1925, there were 600 radio stations across the United States. By 1923, nearly three million Americans had radios. Music, stories, sporting events, and news were soon being broadcast nationwide. A stronger national, rather than regional, identity emerged in the United States.

Radio helped to create a common cultural experience for thousands of Americans. Advertisers were quick to realize the marketing potential of radio. They began using radio to mass market the multitude of consumer goods that were developed in the period, such as washing machines, electric toasters, and laundry soap. Products and brands were becoming more widespread due to the vast market radio offered.

Movies had a similar beginning. The first movies were silent films but by the late 1920s, the first movies with sound were available to audiences. During this era, the movies became big business as studios churned out an average of 800 feature films annually. Conservatives of the time often disapproved of what they viewed as movies' immoral influences.

However, the popularity of movies was so widespread that the conservative moral opposition was unable to challenge the entertainment's growing influence on American culture. Radio and movies were a unifying force on **national culture** because the styles actors and actresses wore, activities they were engaged in, and products they were using was all being watched and listened to by Americans from all parts of the country simultaneously.

Define

Impact on Radio and Television

1. **What were the first radio broadcasts used for?**
2. **How did advertisers use the radio?**
3. **How did radio and movies act as a unifying force in the national culture?**