**The Mob: Original Gangsters!**

**The American Dream: The Rise of the Criminal Businessman**

With the passage of prohibition in 1919, the 1920’s marked a huge shift in the way gangsters went about their everyday business. No longer was it good business sense to beat someone over the head with a pipe to rob them of their pocket watch and loose change. Instead, the mob organized and integrated (combined) itself throughout the neighborhoods of Chicago, Detroit, and the boroughs of New York City.

**Bootlegging became huge business for the most successful gangster of the era.**

Some of them make millions of dollars a year supplying beer and liquor to the speakeasies around the country.

By becoming feared and respected within their neighborhood the 1920’s gangsters could earn a good living from the public: forcing their neighborhoods for small, but widespread price increases for groceries and services, then skimming their profits from the providers of these goods. This way the criminal businessman was born.

The Godfather trilogy is the cinematic (movie) expressions of the “American Dream” come true: Vito Corleone comes to America with nothing. He struggled to make ends meet through legitimate (legal) employment, pulled himself up by their bootstraps, organized a criminal mob of loyal followers, and became wealthy and powerful through is daring, cunning (sly), organization, and hard work.

**The Corleone family is the poster-child for success outside the box.**

In the 1920’s, gangsters became the American icons of the self-made-man. Expanding their organizations into illegitimate markets, namely racketeering (illegal selling), bootlegging (stealing and selling), and prostitution, these gangsters live life by their own shady, but strict code of ethics, but outside of the law.

The 1920’s gangsters fashion owes much of its rise in the public’s consciousness to the prohibition and the newspaper media’s love affair with these criminal media darlings.

The modern “gangster” remains the ultimate consumer (buyer) of everything luxurious (comfortable) and expensive. For the criminal businessman: jewelry, suits, cars, and house are the spoils of his lifestyle.

**Al Capone**

Capone was “Public Enemy Number 1”. He moved to Chicago in 1920 where he worked for Johnny Torrio, the city’s leading figure in the underworld. Capone was given the task of intimidating Torrio’s rivals with the city so that they would give up and hand over to Torrio their territory. Capone also had to convince speakeasy operators to buy illegal alcohol from Torrio.

Capone was very good at what he did. In 1925, Torrio was nearly killed by a rival gang and he decided to get out of the criminal world while he was still alive. Torrio handed over to Capone his ‘business’.

Within two years, Capone was earning $60 million a year from alcohol sale alone. Other rackets earned him an extra $45 million a year. He also bribed both the police and politicians at Chicago.

For all his power, Capone still had enemies from other surviving gangs in the city. He drove everywhere in and limousine and wherever he went, so did his armed bodyguards. Violence was a daily occurrence in Chicago.

In 1931, the law finally caught up with Capone and he was charged with avoiding paying taxes. He got eleven years in jail. In prison, his health went and he was released. He retired to his Florida mansion no longer the feared man he war from 1925 to 1931.

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| **The Mobsters of the 1920’s** | |
| **Define the following key words:** | **Organized Crime:**  **Bootlegging:**  **Racketeering:** |
| **Three Facts about the Mob:** | **1.**  **2.**  **3.** |