Section C

Adolescence at the Dawn of the 20th Century
The American Teenager of today is a social invention of the early 20th century—a time very different from the present.
America of the early 20th century created the teenager in its own image: brash, ebullient, idealistic, crude, innocent, greedy (T. Hine)
A Growing Youth Subculture

- The dawn of the 20th century
  - Movies and music 1900-1920s
  - “Flaming youth” of the 1920s
  - College fraternities and the shift of colleges from religious to “rugged” institutions
  - Automobiles
The Invention of 20th Century Adolescence

- Rousseau, Hall, and the invention of 20th century adolescence
The notion of adolescence as a time of storm and stress stems from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *Émile*, which describes the coming of age of a noble boy.
“We are born, sort to speak, twice over ... born into existence and born into life; born as a human being and born as a man” — Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Émile
Hall, like Rousseau, saw adolescent experiences as a dualism: hyperactivity and inertia; social sensibility and self absorption; lofty aspirations and childish behavior. Healthy maturation demanded that youth not experience adult pressure—a moratorium.
Recapitalization

- Hall’s theory of adolescence was based on “recapitalization”
  - Children retraced the developmental course already traversed by humankind. Recapitalization tied in with the Darwin craze.
  - The notion of “fixed stages of development” emerged

- Hall’s values: loyalty, courage, and discipline
G. Stanley Hall expanded Rousseau’s concept of adolescence with the idea of recapitulation: That individual development mirrors the development of the species from primitive to reasoning. Adolescence would be a stage of life through which all must pass.

Piaget’s stages (and those of most other developmentalists) reinforce the construct of adolescence as a passing “stage”
Eric Erikson described adolescence as a moratorium—a time for young people to integrate their skills, their knowledge of themselves, and their judgment of peers and of their elders. It was a time of identity crisis and identity formation.
G. Stanley Hall believed that urban life had a negative effect on youth—it matured them too fast.

His work ...
- Led to the rise of compulsory education laws
- Led to child labor laws
- Created the field of adolescent development and psychology
Hall forced a more candid discussion of sexuality. But to do so, he equated it with a “vital force”: romantic love. The conversion of adolescence resulted from biologic change to a new personality. Religious consciousness occurred at the same time as a shift from ambiguity to certitude. This was the conceptual precursor of Erikson’s “identity formation.”
### Sexually Liberated Attitudes of the 1920s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year born</th>
<th>Percent having pre-marital sex</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1890</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890-1900</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900-1910</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
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In the 1800s social relationships were courtships; dating (without expectations or obligations) started in the 1920s.
By 1920 female sensuality and sexuality were widely displayed

- Movies
- The dance hall
- Ragtime
- The Jazz Age
- Authors like F. Scott Fitzgerald
- The flapper
- Prostitution declined