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WHAT LED TO THE TENSION BETWEEN OLD AND NEW AND  
IN WHAT WAYS WAS THE TENSION MANIFESTED?

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Every generation adds to the culture of the past generation. Many times the past generation disagreed with the new generation, which caused tensions between the two. Different views caused many tensions in the 1920s. These tensions developed by way of the new culture, immorality, and conflicting beliefs.

The new culture of the 1920s deviated much from traditional culture. There were changes in values. In the past, heaven was thought of as a place of salvation. The new culture shaped their own views of heaven as a place of entertainment and good times, which was the way many cities operated. (Document I) The 1920s generation, or the Lost Generation, partied throughout the city having a good time, as if there were no tomorrow. This was the way F. Scott Fitzgerald portrayed the Lost Generation in The Great Gatsby. The older generation did not agree with this wild lifestyle, which even included recreations such as sitting on top of flagpoles. This new culture also spent money for pleasure, creating a whole new consumerism. Refrigerators, cars, and cosmetics were among the many products Americans purchased. Movies and the emergence of radio were consumer items, which also allowed for better forms of communication. Traditionalists disagreed with these ways of making life easier. Finally, old tensions were shown by the creation of another new culture-- Harlem Renaissance. Blacks sought to be different from others. Jazz developed as a form of new music, and poets in the Harlem Renaissance had considerable influence. Poet Langston Hughes

urged blacks to be proud of their own heritage. (Document E)  
This new generation differed much from the older generation.

Morals were another diversity between the two generations. The older generation held the idea that the Lost Generation was very immoral. The conservative, traditional Americans pushed for Prohibition of alcohol. Those Americans resented the Lost Generation's free-spirited use of alcohol. Prohibition became an amendment, but it didn't solve the problem. In fact, Prohibition created even more tensions, because organized crime sold alcohol illegally. For the first seven years of the 1920s, 250 people were killed in Al Capone's protection of his alcohol business. The Prohibition Amendment was eventually repealed. Another example of the older generation's belief that the Lost Generation was immoral was the rise in divorce rates. From 1900 to 1930, the divorce-to-marriage ratio increased from one divorce per twelve marriages to one divorce per five marriages. (Document H) This gave the traditionalists even more reason to resent the Lost Generation. A final tension created among Americans was the increase of smoking, especially among women. The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) wished for women to remain in traditional roles. The WCTU and others believed women smokers were performing badly as mothers. What the WCTU wished was for people to be educated on the bad effects of smoking. People resented these poor mothers, which created more tension. Definitely, the morals between the Lost Generation and the older



generation differ.

Conflicting beliefs among Americans created much tension. The Ku Klux Klan claimed they represented America. (Document D) The KKK believed whites, or the Nordic race, should rule the world. Immigration damaged America, they claimed. The KKK resented all blacks, Catholics, Jews, foreigners, and anyone else different from them. This created race tensions, but the KKK was in the minority, and most Americans didn't agree with the KKK, because America was a conglomerate of people. Many outbreaks of violence involved the KKK. Another difference in beliefs causing tensions, was the Tennessee Evolution Case, or the Scopes Monkey Trial. In Tennessee, a law was adopted to disallow the teaching of anything against the Bible, which was the abolition of teaching evolution. The American Civil Liberties Union got teacher John Scopes to testify against the law at the trial. The conflicting interests were conservatives believing in the Bible and teachers believing in evolution along with the Bible. William Jennings Bryan testified for the fundamentalists, but attorney Clarence Darrow got Bryan to almost admit that he was wrong about the Bible being one hundred percent correct. (Document C) Religious fundamentalists were not in the majority. They differed in belief with other Protestants that joined religion and science together. This created tension between the two sides. Fundamentalists eventually formed independent churches. Differing beliefs certainly caused tension.

Tensions arose through the new culture, immorality, and conflicting beliefs. The Lost Generation was the first to break away much from traditional ways. Future generations would also branch off from the mainstream, but the Lost Generation was the original.