**Learning Objective:**

Explain the causes and effects of the innovations in communication and technology in the United States over time.

**Thematic Focus:**

*The interplay between markets, private enterprise, labor, technology, and government policy shape the American economy. In turn, economic activity shapes society and government policy and drives technological innovation.*

1. The United States continued its transition from a rural, agricultural economy to an urban, industrial economy led by large companies.
2. New technologies and manufacturing techniques helped focus the U.S. economy on the production of consumer goods, contributing to improved standards of living, greater personal mobility, and better communications systems.
   1. The principle driving force of the economy was the automobile. The ease of making and affordability of the Model T (due to the assembly line) helped increase automobile ownership nearly fourfold.
   2. Consumer interest and demand was spurred by the great increase in professional advertising using newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards, and other media.
   3. There was a trend toward corporate consolidation during the 1920s. The top 5% of the corporations in the nation received 85% of corporate income.
3. Popular culture grew in influence in U.S. society, even as debates increased over the effects of culture on public values, morals, and American national identity.
4. New forms of mass media, such as radio and cinema, contributed to the spread of national culture as well as greater awareness of regional cultures.
   1. Papers and magazines shaped cultural norms and sparked fads.
   2. Led by baseball, sports became a big business. Baseball attendance increased by 50% during the decade. Boxing and college football were also big sports.