

**DBQ ACTIVITY: CP**

**Prohibition: What Led to the Ban on Alcohol and Why Did America Change Its Mind?**

*Read the following background essay and documents carefully. When you have finished examining and taking notes on the documents, discuss the document-based question with a partner or small group. Finally, write a persuasive paper that responds directly to the prompt. This reflection paper is due on Friday January 18 at the end of class. Please note, the "email by midnight" rule does not apply to this assignment. Only students who were absent during Friday's class may submit this assignment by email without academic penalty. Remember to examine the attached rubric carefully to see how you will be graded.*

**Criteria:**

- Your essay must be 2 – 3 pages long
- You must use ALL of the documents as evidence for your argument
- A bibliography is not required but you must use a simple citation in brackets every time you refer to evidence from one of the documents. For example: (Doc A), (Doc B)
- You should treat this as a formal, persuasive essay and include an introduction, focused and organized body paragraphs, and a conclusion
- Your introduction must feature a clear thesis that responds directly to the prompt

**Contents:**

- Background Essay
- Document A: Depression Dance
- Document B: Homicide Rates: 1900 – 1953
- Document C: Prohibition Enforcement
- Document D: Respect for the Law/Two-Tiered Justice
- Document E: Lost Taxes
- Document F: The Time When Americans Drank All Day Long
- Document G: Anonymous 18<sup>th</sup> century quote
- Document H: Annual Consumption of Alcohol: 1720 - 1970

## Prohibition: Why Did America Change Its Mind?

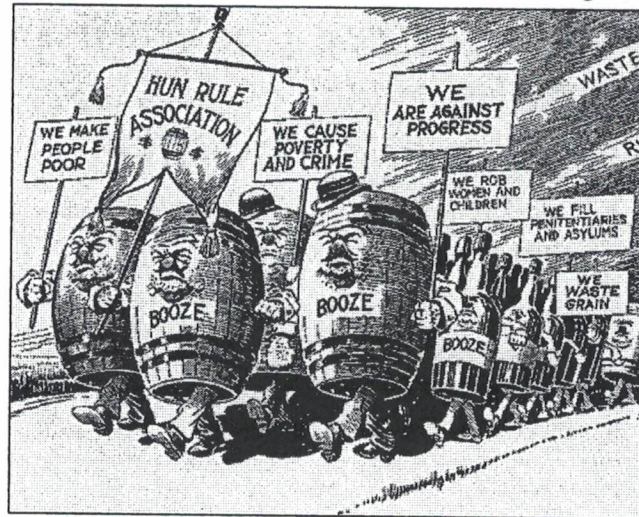
On December 17, 1917, the House of Representatives voted 282 to 128 to approve the 18th Amendment and prohibit the manufacture, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. One day later, by a 47 to 8 vote, the US Senate agreed. During the next year, more than three-quarters of the states ratified, and in early 1920, the 18th Amendment went into effect. The country was now officially **dry**.

Prohibition passed for several reasons. For one thing, it rode the coattails of the **Progressive Movement**. That is, a number of states decided that drinking was behind some of America's most serious problems – problems like corruption, child abuse, crime, unemployment, and worker safety. Also, John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford saw drinking as a huge drag on the economy. Drunken workers and absentee workers were not good for American business. For these reasons, individual states took action. By the time America entered World War I in 1917, twenty-six states had voted themselves dry.

World War I overwhelmed the **wets** as they tried to oppose the push for Prohibition. Many Americans believed that spending money on beer, wine, and whiskey when the nation needed all its resources to fight in Europe was unpatriotic. Others went further. Germany was the main enemy in the war. Wasn't it true that many of America's major breweries – Pabst, Blatz, Schlitz, Budweiser – had German names? German-Americans and their breweries were an easy target. Also there were the Jews and their Sabbath wine, and those hard-drinking, slum-dwelling Irishmen, Italians, and Greeks.

Prohibition was a way to clean up the cities and the people in them.

Once the 18th Amendment passed Congress, it was then necessary to create legislation to carry it out. This took the form of the famous **Volstead Act**. Among other provisions, the Volstead Act defined a drink as intoxicating if it contained more than 1% alcohol. This made beer and wine illegal, which came as a surprise



to many. Workers who supported the 18th Amendment had been assured that it would only apply to hard liquor. When wine and beer were outlawed there was immediate criticism. In fact, President Woodrow Wilson vetoed the Volstead Act because he thought it was too

strict. Congress quickly overrode the veto not daring to appear soft to their dry supporters.

Beginning in 1922 and continuing for the next ten years, *Literary Digest* magazine conducted annual polls to measure how Americans felt about Prohibition. In 1922, nearly 80% of Americans were in general support; only about 20% were against Prohibition. Ten years later those numbers were turned upside-down. In 1932, three out of every four Americans wanted **repeal**.

Congressmen read the polls. In 1933 by a huge majority, both the Senate and the House voted to remove the 18th Amendment. It was the first and only time in American history that an amendment to the Constitution has been repealed.

Document A

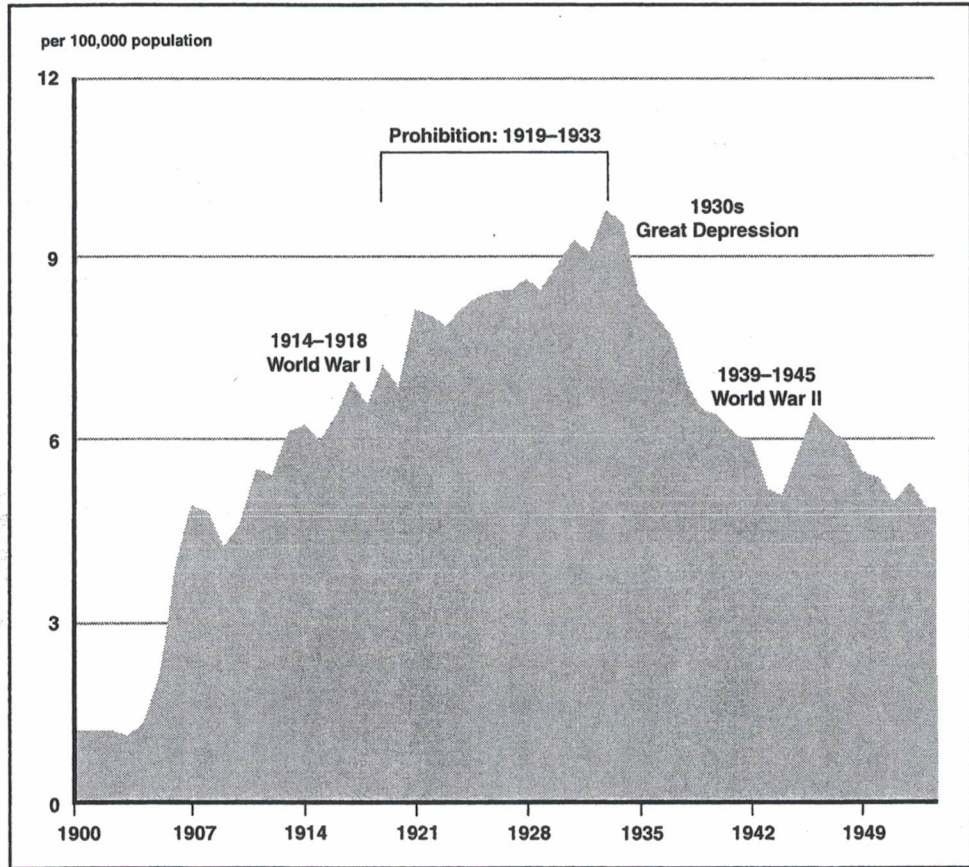
Source: Cartoon by Winsor McCay, early 1930s.



# Document B

Source: Chart compiled from U.S. Census and *FBI Uniform Crime Reports in Drug War Facts*, 6th Edition, 2008.

## Homicides per 100,000 population 1900 - 1953



## Document C

Source: Frederic J. Haskin, *The American Government*, 1923.

The Prohibition Unit of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, which is charged with enforcing prohibition ... is an organization headed by a commissioner established in Washington, with State and regional directors, State agents and flying squadrons [quick strike enforcement units] stationed throughout the country. This force numbers from 3,000 to 3,500....

The stories of prohibition enforcement are more absorbing than detective tales.... One still operated successfully for months in a house adjacent to a police station. The moonshiners had cut through the wall ... so that the smoke and fumes of the still escaped up the chimney of the station house....

Smuggling from Mexico and Canada has been successful on a large scale because it is an utter impossibility to patrol

the thousands of miles of border.... [B]ootleggers ... maintain large fleets of trucks and automobiles running on regular schedules between Mexican and Canadian points and cities such as St. Louis, Kansas City, and Denver.

On the Atlantic Coast the smugglers are so numerous and so active that there is at all times ... a rum fleet standing off or anchored outside the 3-mile limit near New York and New Jersey. The fleet consists of vessels of all kinds and sizes that bring their ... cargoes from the Bermudas or the West Indies, or even from across the Atlantic. As long as they remain outside the 3-mile limit this Government cannot interfere with them and they are able to make their deliveries to bootleggers that slip out to them under cover of darkness in motor speed boats.

## Document D

**Source:** *The Inside of Prohibition* by Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Deputy U.S. Attorney General for Prohibition Enforcement, 1929.

(T)he very men who made the Prohibition law are violating it.... How can you have the heart to prosecute a bootlegger, send a man to jail for six months or a year for selling a pint or a quart of whiskey, when you know for a fact that the men who make the laws ... are themselves patronizing bootleggers?

I have not lived in Washington all these years without becoming well acquainted with the fact that many Congressmen and Senators ... are persistent violators of the Volstead Act. Senators and Congressmen have appeared on the floors in a drunken condition. Bootleggers infest the halls and corridors of Congress and ply their trade there.

## Document E

Source: Leslie Gordon, *The New Crusade*, 1932.

(B)efore prosperity can return in this country the budgets of local and national governments must be balanced. If the liquor now sold by bootleggers was legally sold, regulated, and taxed, the (tax) income would pay the interest on the entire local and national (debt) and leave more than \$200,000,000 for ... urgently needed purposes.

## Document F

### **The time when Americans drank all day long**

By Jane O'Brien  
BBC News, Washington  
9 March 2015

The Puritans get a bad rap in America - especially when it comes to alcohol. They are generally blamed for putting the dampeners on any form of fun, and many people assume that it was the nation's puritanical roots coming to the surface when Prohibition was introduced in 1917. But while they weren't exactly party animals, a new exhibition at the US National Archives reveals that the Puritans actually approved of drink. "One of the things we understand now is that the initial ship that came over from England to Massachusetts Bay actually carried more beer than water," says Bruce Bustard, senior curator of the new exhibition - Spirited Republic: Alcohol in American History.

In fact, Increase Mather, a prominent Puritan minister of the period, delivered a sermon in which he described alcohol as being "a good creature of God" - although the drunkard was "of the devil." Even the Founding Fathers liked a drink - Samuel Adams was a partner in his father's malt house, Thomas Jefferson was famed for importing European wines, and a large part of George Washington's income came from his whiskey distillery at his Mount Vernon estate.

Early Americans even took a healthful "dram" for breakfast. Whiskey was a typical lunchtime tippie, ale accompanied supper, and the day ended with a nightcap. Continuous imbibing clearly built up a tolerance as most Americans in 1790 consumed an average 5.8 gallons of pure alcohol a year.

"We think of that as an astounding amount - you would think people would be staggering around drunk, but most people were able to handle their alcohol because it was integrated into daily life," says Bustard. This was also a period when most people were working in the fields, which presumably didn't require much focus. And



living in a tight knit community meant people could keep an eye on each other and intervene if somebody was thought to be overdoing it. Even so, modern Americans look quite abstemious by comparison, consuming only 2.3 gallons of pure alcohol per year.

In 1830, consumption peaked at 7.1 gallons a year and drinking became a moral issue. "This was a time of great reform fervor," says Bustard. "Think of the women's rights movement and anti-slavery movement. Another very popular and powerful movement was the temperance and ultimately, the Prohibition movement." Alcoholism - also known as dipsomania - was starting to have a serious impact on communities. Women and children might be in physical danger if the man of the house began drinking. If he became ill or lost his job through drink, there was no social safety net to support or protect his family.

In 1862 the US Navy abolished the traditional half-pint daily rum ration for sailors, and by the late 19th century, support for the ban, manufacture, and sale of alcohol was overwhelming. On January 16, 1919, the 18th Amendment became part of the Constitution.

Many famous figures emerged from the era - the Chicago gangster boss Al Capone being the most notorious. But the National Archives exhibition reveals details of some lesser-known heroes who fought on the side of the law. Isidor "Izzy" Einstein was an immigrant from Austria-Hungary who had no experience in law enforcement. Nevertheless, he made his name arresting almost 5,000 people accused of bootlegging and enjoyed a 95% conviction rate. He and his partner Moe Smith often worked in disguise but also tipped off reporters in order to get favorable news coverage. That publicity and their lack of professional experience eventually led to both being dismissed.

But prohibition did not eliminate alcohol consumption and many Americans found legal and not so legal ways to carry on drinking. Alcohol could still be purchased

legally for medicinal or religious purposes, but for the large majority of the population, the speakeasy was the place they went to drink. Organized crime partnered with speakeasies and alcohol became big business. The cost of enforcing prohibition itself became prohibitive.

By the 1930s it was widely believed that making alcohol legal again would provide much needed jobs and taxes during the Great Depression. On February 16, 1933, the 21st Amendment ended Prohibition. "America now has a mishmash of local, state and federal controls of alcohol and part of that is a legacy of Prohibition," says Bustard. "The Prohibition movement was still quite strong after Prohibition ended and it led to a lot of local prohibition on alcohol and state level probation."

The American presidency has done a lot to rehabilitate alcohol and make it respectable again. Betty, the wife of Gerald Ford may have given her name to an alcoholic treatment centre, but Presidents Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton, Ronald Reagan, and Barack Obama have all be seen on film drinking socially and making official toasts with international dignitaries. Another interesting exhibition highlight is the silver cocktail set once owned by President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

"He had a tradition of having a small cocktail party with his most immediate staff and there were only two rules; FDR would make the drinks - and apparently he made very strong cocktails - and the other rule was that there would be no business discussed. It was a time for him and his staff to relax at the end of the day, so for him, this cocktail set had a very positive association," says Bustard.

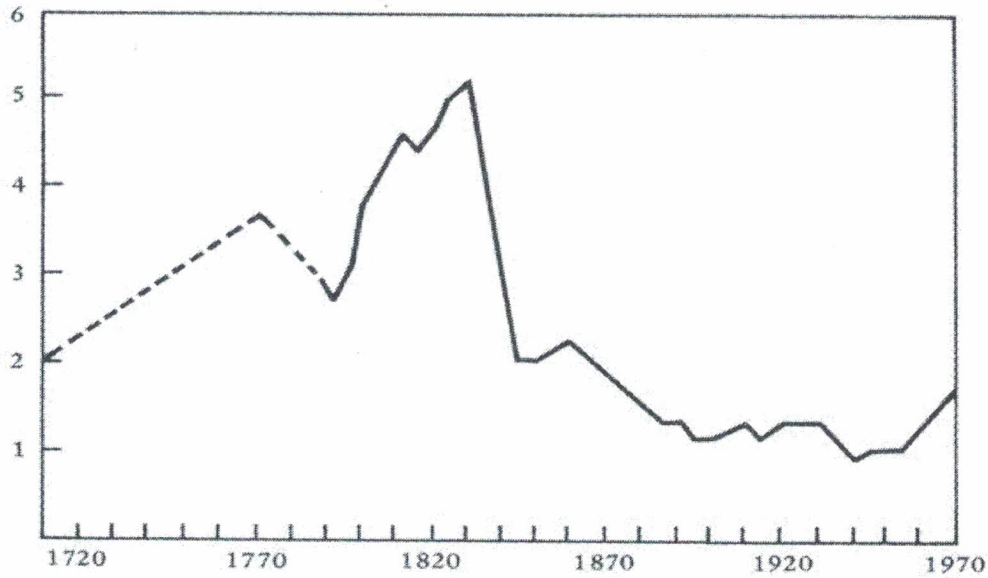
## **Document G**

Source: *Anonymous 18<sup>th</sup> century quote.*

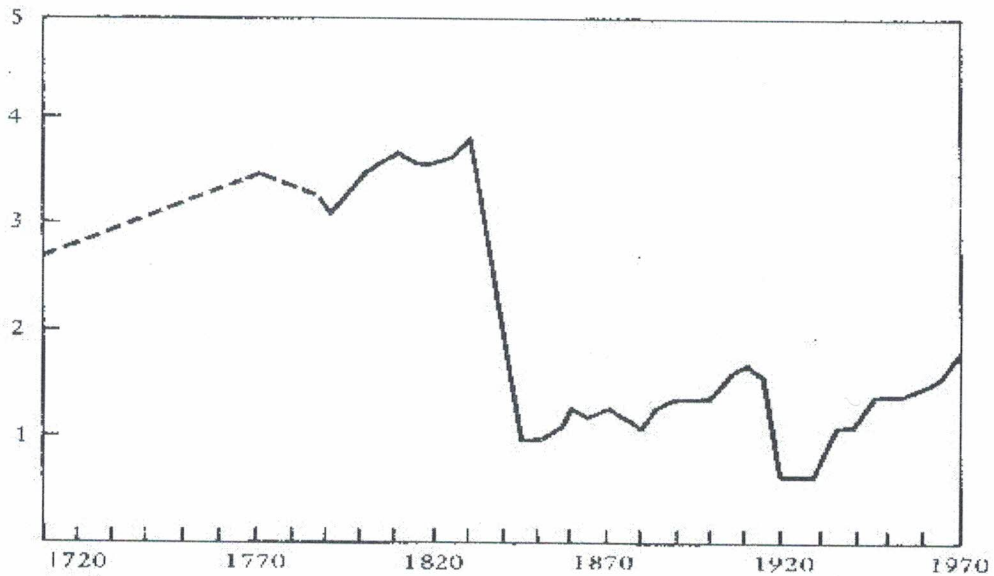
“If I take a settler after my coffee, a cooler at nine, a bracer at ten, a whetter at eleven, and two or three stiffeners during the forenoon, who has right to complain?”

## Document H

**Source:** W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*. Cambridge: Oxford University Press. 1979.



**Chart 1.1. ANNUAL CONSUMPTION of DISTILLED SPIRITS (i.e., Rum, Whiskey, Gin, Brandy) per CAPITA, in U.S. GALLONS.**



**Chart 1.2. ANNUAL CONSUMPTION of ALCOHOL CONTAINED in ALL ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES per CAPITA, in U.S. GALLONS.**

History DBQ Rubric  
New West Charter School

	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Thesis</b> Addresses the prompt and maps out the argument to be made.	Contains a clearly stated thesis that identifies the major reasons used to answer the question.	Contains a general stated thesis that identifies/maps out the major reasons used to answer the question.	Contains a thesis that begins to identify the major reasons used to answer the question.	Contains a thesis that only repeats or rephrases the question	Contains no thesis
<b>Use of Documents:</b> Effectively uses documents to support arguments	Skillfully uses all or most of the documents/artifacts and:  Contains no significant factual errors or misrepresentation of documents. Recognizes point of view where applicable. Draws inferences and conclusion	Skillfully uses most of the documents/artifacts and:  Contains a few factual errors or misrepresentations of documents Recognizes point of view where applicable. Formulates generally accurate conclusions	Uses some of the documents/artifacts and:  Contains little supplementary information Attempts to formulate some conclusions: may contain some factual errors. Does not recognize point of view	Uses little information from the documents and:  Merely quotes or briefly cites documents or misunderstands documents. Draws vague conclusions Does not recognize point of view	No use of documents in essay.
<b>Analysis:</b> Makes plausible inferences and a rational argument	Incorporates accurate and relevant background knowledge. Presents analysis which reflects understanding of complex issues.	Incorporates accurate and relevant background knowledge. Presents analysis which reflects some understanding/analysis of complex issues.	Attempts rational argument and attempts to connect outside knowledge and/or evidence from documents to the thesis.	Uses minimal information from documents or copies from documents and uses minimal outside information. Analysis, although attempted is not accurate.	Uses unclear or inaccurate information for documents. Includes no outside information. Fails to provide analysis.
<b>Organization and Clarity:</b> A coherent essay with thesis, topic sentence, analysis, and conclusion	Writes a well developed essay consistently demonstrating clear and logical organization including a strong introductory paragraph that includes a clear thesis and a conclusion that effectively summarizes the argument.	Introductory paragraph includes a clear thesis. Body paragraphs contain topic sentences and substantial supporting evidence. Fluid writing and organization move the argument forward. Student provides basic conclusion.	Unevenly developed with a general plan of organization. Introductory paragraph contains a weak thesis or thesis is misplaced. Some body paragraphs lack cohesion. Describes documents more often than draws conclusion.	Essay is poorly organized. Vague or missing introduction and/or a conclusion.	Organization is not evident. Does not include an introduction or conclusion
<b>Mechanics:</b> The paper is free of mechanical errors in grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary usage, spelling, and punctuation.	Sentences are effective and coherent. Vocabulary is broad, and word choice shows attention to the audience, purpose, and context for writing. Word choice, sentence structure, and tone	The document gives an overall impression of sentence-level coherence but may include occasional lapses. Word choice, sentence structure, and tone are generally appropriate for grade-level writing. Errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word choice may be present but are not intrusive.	The document is understandable but contains many confusing or ineffective sentences, shows frequent lapses of tone, or is written in an overly simplistic or overly elaborate style. Vocabulary is narrow, or	Large portions of the essay fail to convey their point due to sentence structure issues. Vocabulary is frequently inappropriate and/or suggests that the writer is using words s/he does not	The essay as a whole is virtually unreadable due to mechanical issues.

	are appropriate for the context. The paper is nearly free of errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and word choice.		often improperly used. Errors of spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word choice, are frequent, noticeable, and/or intrusive.	understand. The writing shows seriously deficient control of grammar, spelling, and punctuation conventions.	
Total Score _____ and Comments:					