

Prohibition: Correction or Corruption of America
8th to 11th Grade
Melissa Robertson
Daniel Jenkins Middle Academy

Directions:

The following documents show different aspects of U.S. Prohibition from 1919 to 1933. You are to read/analyze each of the following documents then answer the corresponding questions that follow each one in the order they are given. Finally, you will utilize the documents, your answers and background knowledge of the time period to respond to the following essay prompt.

Your essay should include an introductory paragraph followed by a body that makes specific reference to the documents that have been provided for your use. You should end the essay with a strong paragraph tying all the information together.

Essay Prompt:

Using the visual and literary documents, write an essay stating whether Prohibition in the United States from 1919-1933 corrected or corrupted society. You must be able to support your decision with evidence from the sources that follow.

Document A: The 18th amendment of the United States Constitution that started National Prohibition in 1920. Retrieved from National Archives, June 19, 2008.

AMENDMENT XVIII

Passed by Congress December 18, 1917. Ratified January 16, 1919. Repealed by amendment 21.

Section 1.

After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

Section 2.

The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Section 3.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

1. What limitations does this amendment place on liquor? Does it include consumption?
2. Who is in charge of enforcing this amendment?

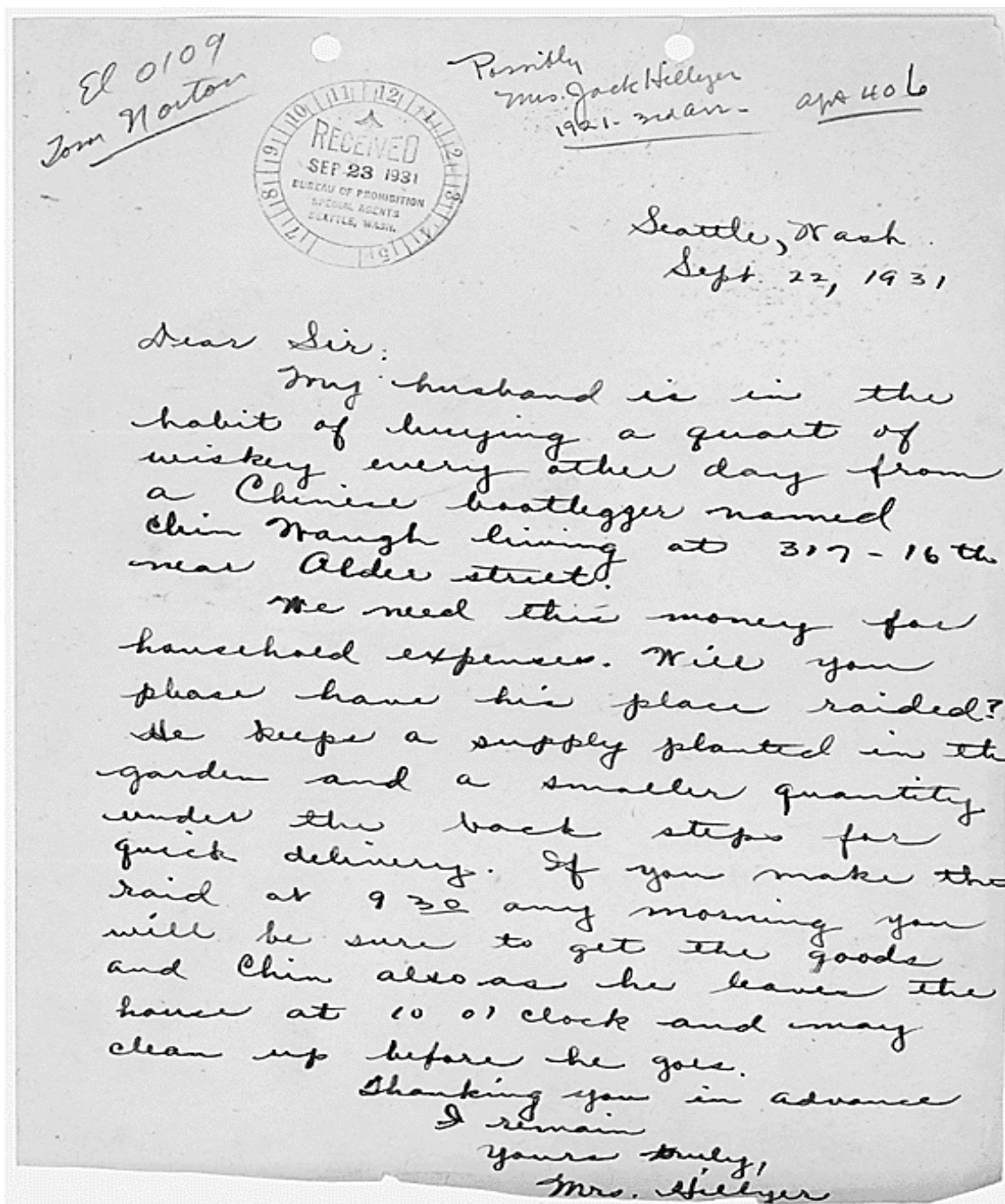
Document B: An excerpt from "The Rumrunners, a prohibition scrapbook" by C.H. (Marty) Gervais, published 1980, Firefly Books Ltd., Scarborough, Ontario

"Prohibition failed. At least, it fell short for the temperance societies, churches and fanatic evangelists who authored the legislation. But for the owners of blind pigs, the bootleggers, the rumrunners and gangsters, the roadhouse proprietors, the police, the magistrates, the spotters, the boaters and armies of others, it was a roaring success. It meant work. Employment. Easy money. Cash in the pocket. Good times. Shiny new cars. New suits.

... Little did enemies of moonshine and saloons realize that upon creating prohibition and putting liquor out of the reach of the general population, they had in effect created a monster."

1. Who was prohibition a failure for? Why?
2. Who was prohibition successful for? Why?
3. What is the significance of the word "monster" used in the last sentence of the excerpt?

Document C: A letter from Mrs. Hillyer to the Bureau of Prohibition concerning her husband's drinking activities dated 9/22/1931. Retrieved from National Archives, June 19, 2008.



1. To who is Mrs. Hillyer writing and why?
2. Based on her tone in the letter, is she a supporter of prohibition? What evidence supports your answer?
3. What problems is she having with her husband and how are they significant to prohibition?

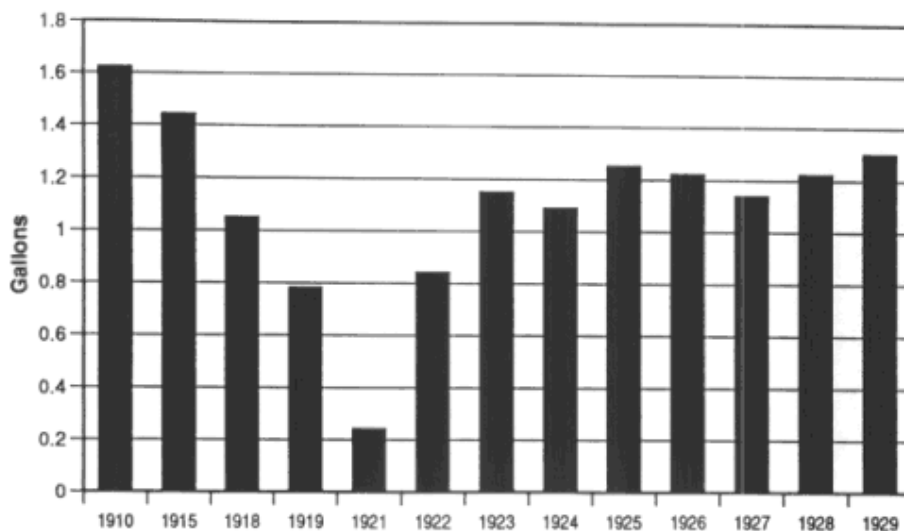
Document D: Prohibition seemed to be changing the whole family. Before prohibition, most men drank in saloons. After Prohibition, they began drinking in the home, which exposed the family to the "evils" of alcohol even more so than before. The following poem from prohibition reveals family life for some families during the time:

Mother's in the kitchen
 Washing out the jugs;
 Sister's in the pantry
 Bottling the suds;
 Father's in the cellar
 Mixing up the hops;
 Johnny's on the front porch
 Watching for the cops.

Source: "Life For the Average American During Prohibition ." University of Albany. 19 Jun 2008 <http://www.albany.edu/~wm731882/life_for_the_average_american_final.html>.

1. Does this family support prohibition?
2. What evidence in the poem led you to the above answer?
3. What is the significance of Johnny sitting on the porch looking for the cops?

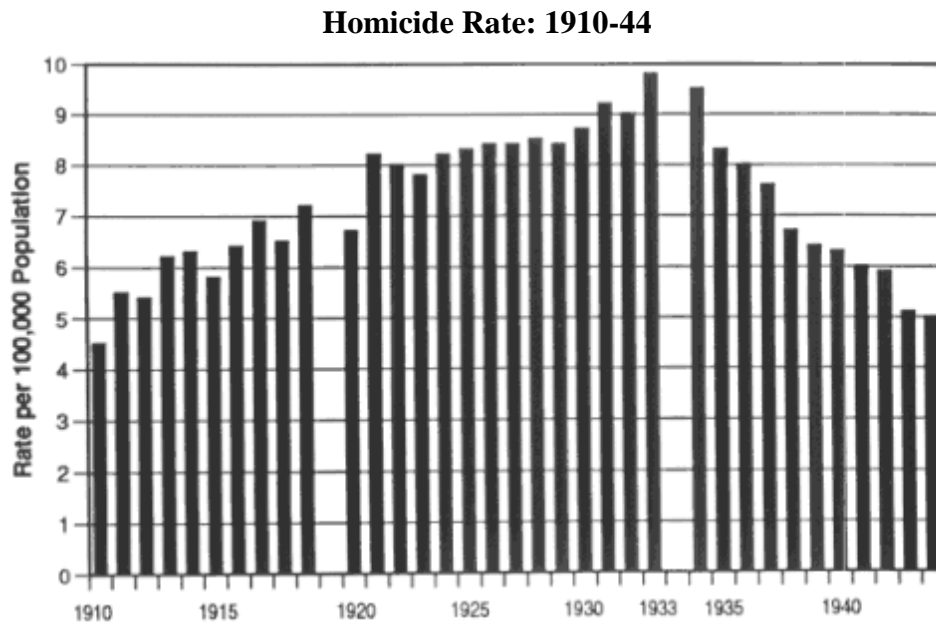
Document E: Per Capita Consumption of Alcoholic Beverages (Gallons of Pure Alcohol) 1910-1929.



Source: Clark Warburton, *The Economic Results of Prohibition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), pp. 23-26, 72.

1. What is the per capita consumption of alcohol in 1921?
2. What is the per capita consumption of alcohol in 1929?
3. Describe the trend of alcohol consumption between 1921 and 1929 as shown on the chart above?

Document F: The number of violations of Prohibition laws and violent crimes against persons and property continued to increase throughout Prohibition. The chart below shows an undeniable relationship between Prohibition and an increase in the homicide rate. That rising trend was reversed by the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, and the rate continued to decline throughout the 1930s and early 1940s.



Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975), part 1, p. 414.

1. What is the Homicide Rate in 1920?
2. What is the Homicide Rate in 1933?
3. Overall, what trend is occurring in the Homicide Rate from 1920 to 1933?
4. What conclusions can be made about social morals during the years of 1920 to 1933 based on the graph above?

Document G: *Bootleggers* by Ben Shahn in 1934 is a painting that shows three ways to hide alcohol. In the back you see two men making whiskey in a homemade still.



Source: "Painting the Town -- Museum of the City of New York." 21 Jun 2008 <www.mcny.org/collections/painting/Cat078.JPG>.

1. What are the three ways to hide alcohol based on this painting's depiction?
2. Does this painting show support for prohibition? Support your answer.
3. What do the two men in the upper left side of the painting appear to be doing? Why is this important?

Directions for the essay portion:

- Your essay should include at least four paragraphs; an introductory, two to three body paragraphs and a conclusion.
- Be sure to incorporate supporting details from the documents given to you to support your position in the essay.

Essay Prompt:

Using the visual and literary documents, write an essay stating whether Prohibition in the United States from 1919-1933 corrected or corrupted society. You must be able to support your decision with evidence from the sources that follow.