"Prohibition was the period in United States history in which the manufacture, sale, transportation and distribution of alcohol was outlawed. It was a time characterized by speakeasies, glamor, and gangsters; of the rise of American organized crime and the fundamentalist notion that morals should be legislated. It was a period of time in which even the average citizen broke the law.”

Historical Context
Alcohol and alcoholism have been a contentious topic in America since the colonial period. As early as May 1657 – when the General Court of Massachusetts banned the sale of strong liquor – occasional efforts to make it illegal have occurred. When informal controls failed, there were always legal ones. One of the foremost physicians of the late 18th century, Benjamin Rush, argued in 1784 that the excessive use of alcohol was injurious to physical and psychological health and went so far as to label drunkenness as a disease (he believed in moderation rather than prohibition). Apparently influenced by Rush's widely discussed belief, about 200 farmers in a Connecticut community formed a temperance association in 1789; “temperance” referred to groups which sought to reduce or prohibit the use of alcohol. Similar associations were formed in Virginia in 1800 and New York in 1808. Within the next decade, other temperance organizations were formed in eight states. The words of Rush and other early temperance reformers served to dichotomize the use of alcohol for men and women. While men enjoyed drinking and often considered it vital to their health, women who began to embrace the ideology of ‘true motherhood' refrained from consumption of alcohol. Middle-class women were considered the moral authorities of their households and consequently rejected the drinking of alcohol, which was considered a threat to the home. In 1830, on average, Americans consumed 1.7 bottles of hard liquor per week (three times the amount consumed in 2010).

The American Temperance Society (ATS), in 1826, helped to initiate the first national temperance movement. By 1835, the ATS had reached 1.5 million members, with women constituting 35-60% of individual chapters. The prohibition, or "dry", movement continued in the 1840s, spearheaded by religious denominations, especially the Methodists. The late 19th century saw the temperance movement broaden its focus from abstinence to all behavior and institutions related to alcohol consumption. Preachers linked liquor consumption with prostitution. Some successes were registered in the 1850s, including Maine's total ban on the manufacture and sale of liquor, adopted in 1851. However, the ban in Maine was repealed in 1856. The movement soon lost strength, and was marginalized during the American Civil War (1861–1865).

The issue was revived by the Prohibition Party, founded in 1869, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in 1873. The WCTU advocated the prohibition of alcohol as a method for preventing possible abuses from the alcoholic husbands. One of its methods to achieve that goal was education. It was believed that if it could "get to the children" it could create a "dry" sentiment leading to prohibition. While still denied universal voting privileges, women in the WCTU followed Frances Willard's "Do Everything" doctrine and used temperance as a method of entering into politics and furthering other progressive issues such as prison reform and labor laws. In 1881, Kansas became the first state to outlaw alcoholic beverages in its State Constitution, with Carrie Nation gaining notoriety for enforcing the provision herself by walking into saloons, scolding customers, and using her hatchet to destroy bottles of liquor. While her vigilante techniques were rare, other activists enforced the cause by entering saloons, singing, praying, and urging saloon keepers to stop selling alcohol. Many other states, especially in the South, also enacted prohibition, along with many individual counties.

The proliferation of neighborhood saloons in the post-Civil War era was a phenomenon of an increasingly industrialized, urban workforce. “Workingmen” bars were popular social gathering places of respite from both the workplace and the domesticity of home and family life. The brewing industry itself was actively involved in establishing a lucrative consumer base in the business chain. The saloons were more often than not “tie-ins” where the saloon keeper’s operation was financed by a brewer and was contractually obligated to sell the brewer’s product to the exclusion of any and all other competing brands. The business model often included the concept of the “free lunch” – a bill of fare commonly consisting of heavily salted food meant to induce thirst and the purchase of drink.

Prohibition was an important force in state and local politics from the 1840s through the 1930s. The political forces involved were ethno-religious in character; Prohibition was demanded by the "dries" – primarily pietistic Protestant denominations, especially the Methodists, Northern Baptists, Southern Baptists, New School Presbyterians, Disciples of Christ, Congregationalists, Quakers and Scandinavian Lutherans. They identified saloons as politically corrupt and
drinking as a personal sin. Other active organizations included the Women's Church Federation, the Women's Temperance Crusade, and the Department of Scientific Temperance Instruction. They were opposed by the "wets" – primarily liturgical Protestants (Episcopalians, German Lutherans) and Roman Catholics, who denounced the idea that the government should define morality. Even in the wet stronghold of New York City there was an active prohibition movement, led by Norwegian church groups and African-American labor activists who believed that Prohibition would benefit workers, especially African-Americans. Tea merchants and soda fountain manufacturers generally supported Prohibition, thinking a ban on alcohol would increase sales of their products. Prohibition was widely supported by other diverse groups and for different reasons. Progressives believed that it would improve society; women believed it would prevent the scourge of spousal issues (wife-abuse, waste of money on drink, drink driving); African Americans, including Booker T. Washington, thought alcohol stymied their progress; southerners feared when their black population were drinking; socialist groups believed that alcohol was part of a capitalistic plot to weaken the working man, and; industrialists like Andrew Carnegie and Henry Ford believed alcohol undercut the output and productivity of their workers. There were a few exceptions such as the Woman’s Organization for Prohibition Reform who fought against it.

The idea of Prohibition represented a conflict between urban and rural values emerging in the United States. Given the mass influx of immigrants to the urban dwellings of the United States, many individuals within the prohibition movement associated the crime and morally corrupt behavior of the cities of America with their large immigrant populations. In a backlash to the new emerging realities of the American demographic, many prohibitionists subscribed to the doctrine of “nativism” in which they endorsed the notion that America was made great as a result of its white Anglo-Saxon ancestry. This fostered xenophobic [fear of strangers] sentiments toward urban immigrant communities who typically argued in favor of abolishing prohibition. Additionally, these nativist sentiments were a part of a larger process of Americanization taking place during the same time period.

The politics of passing Prohibition

Two other amendments to the constitution were championed by "dries" to help their cause. The Federal income tax was to replace the alcohol taxes that funded the federal government. Also, since women tended to support prohibition, temperance organizations supported women suffrage. In the 1916 presidential election, both Democratic incumbent Woodrow Wilson and Republican candidate Charles Evans Hughes ignored the Prohibition issue. Democrats and Republicans had strong wet and dry factions, and the election was expected to be close, with neither candidate wanting to alienate any part of his political base. In January 1917, the 65th Congress convened, in which the drys outnumbered the wets by 140 to 64 in the Democratic Party and 138 to 62 among Republicans. During World War I, with America's declaration of war against Germany in April, German-Americans – a major force against prohibition – were sidelined and their protests subsequently ignored. In addition, a new justification for prohibition arose: prohibiting the production of alcoholic beverages would allow more resources – especially the grain that would otherwise be used to make alcohol – to be devoted to the war effort.

A resolution calling for a Constitutional amendment to accomplish nationwide Prohibition was introduced in Congress and passed by both houses in December 1917. There was reason to rush in the eyes of its dry supporters: 1920 would witnesses a federal census, and the prior decade of immigration and migration translated to a large growth of the cities,
which were wet; if the vote could not happen before the census, then the resulting increased representation due to the wet urban cities would prevent the passage of prohibition. By 16th January 1919, the Amendment had been ratified by thirty-six of the existing forty-eight states. On 28th October 1919, the amendment was implemented by the Volstead Act. Prohibition began on 17th January 1920, when the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect.

**Life under Prohibition**

Prohibition outlawed the manufacture, sale, distribution and transportation of alcohol. While the law was clear enough, there were many matters unresolved, and unintended consequences.

The issue of Prohibition became a highly controversial one among medical professionals, because alcohol was widely prescribed by many physicians for therapeutic purposes. While the American Medical Association ceased to recognize alcohol as a legitimate medicinal cure a decade earlier, Congress nonetheless held hearings on the medicinal value of beer as late as 1921, since several physicians from across the country continued to lobby for the repeal of Prohibition as it applied to medicinal liquors.

There were only two legal ways in which citizens could acquire alcohol: through a medical prescription, and for religious purposes. Of the former, physicians could prescribe limited amounts of alcohol to patients, and hospitals could order products which had large amounts of alcohol per volume; some of this made its way into the hands of citizens who tried to make it drinkable, in spite of the dangers; of the latter, people associated with synagogues or churches could receive authorization from the government to sell a limited amount of sacramental wine for religious reasons, such as for Passover (Jewish faith) or Communion (Bible-based faiths).

Chicago became a haven for Prohibition-dodgers during the Roaring Twenties. Many of Chicago's most notorious gangsters, including Al Capone and his rival, Bugs Moran, made millions of dollars through illegal alcohol sales. They came to control all the speakeasies [secret locations where alcohol was available] and orchestrated complex bootlegging [those who illegally transport alcohol] operations from Canada to Florida. Their crimes also included tax evasion, theft and murder.

Rather than reducing crime, Prohibition had transformed the cities into battlegrounds between opposing bootlegging gangs. In a study of over 30 major US cities during the prohibition years of 1920 and 1921, the number of crimes increased by 24%. Additionally, theft and burglaries increased by 9%, homicide by 12.7%, assaults and battery rose by 13%, drug addiction by 44.6% and police department costs rose by 11.4%. This was largely the result of “black-market violence” as well as the diverting of law enforcement resources elsewhere. Furthermore, violent crime skyrocketed during this era. The pre-Prohibition murder rate of 5.6 per 100,000 population nearly doubled to 10 per 100,000 population. In fact, the only category of crime which saw a decrease during the Prohibition era were in minor crimes such as swearing and vagrancy. Despite the hope of the prohibitionist movement that the outlawing of alcohol would reduce crime, the reality was that the Volstead Act led to higher crime rates than were experienced prior to prohibition and the establishment of a black market dominated by criminal organizations.

Furthermore, stronger liquor surged in availability (and, consequentially, popularity) because its potency made it more profitable to smuggle. The government deliberated in how to address this. To prevent bootleggers from using industrial ethyl alcohol to produce illegal beverages, the government ordered the poisoning of industrial alcohols. In response, bootleggers hired chemists who successfully re-natured the alcohol to make it drinkable. As a response, the Treasury Department required
manufacturers to add more deadly poisons, including the particularly deadly methyl alcohol. New York City medical examiners prominently opposed these policies because of the danger to human life. As many as 10,000 people died from drinking de-natured alcohol before Prohibition ended. In this "Chemist’s War" it does not appear that the government intended to kill Americans with these poisons. They wrongly assumed that people would stop drinking due to fear.

Making alcohol at home was very common during Prohibition. Stores sold grape concentrate with warning labels that listed the steps that should be avoided to prevent the juice from fermenting into wine. As well, some drug stores would sell a "medical wine" with possessed a 22% alcohol content; in order to justify the sale, the wine was given a medicinal taste. Home-distilled hard liquor was referred to as “bathtub gin” in northern cities, and moonshine in the rural areas of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. Homebrewing good hard liquor was easier than brewing good beer. Since selling privately distilled alcohol was illegal and bypassed taxation by the government, the law relentlessly pursued manufacturers. In response, the bootleggers in southern states started creating their own souped-up, stock-looking cars by enhancing their cars’ engines and suspensions to create a faster vehicle. Having a faster vehicle during Prohibition, they presumed, would improve their chances of outrunning and escaping agents of the Bureau of Prohibition, commonly called "revenue agents" or "revenuers." These cars became known as “moonshine runners” or "shine runners". Shops were also known to participate in the underground liquor market, by loading their stocks with ingredients for liquors, which anyone could legally purchase.

Prohibition also had a large effect on the music industry in the United States, specifically with jazz. Speakeasies became far more popular during that time, and the effects of the Great Depression caused a migration that led to a greater dispersal of jazz music. Movement began from New Orleans and went north through Chicago and to New York. This led to the development of different styles in different cities. Because of its popularity in speakeasies and the development of more advanced recording devices, jazz became very popular very quickly. It was also at the forefront of the minimal integration efforts going on at the time, as it united mostly black musicians with mostly white audiences.

Alcoholic drinks were not always illegal in all neighboring countries. Distilleries and breweries in Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean flourished as their products were either consumed by visiting Americans or smuggled to the US by criminal gangs. The Detroit River, which forms part of the border with Canada, was notoriously difficult to control.

As the saloon began to die out and the Flapper movement found expression, public drinking lost much of its macho connotation, resulting in increased social acceptance of women drinking in the semi-public environment of the speakeasies. This new norm established women as a notable new target demographic for alcohol marketers, who sought to expand their clientele.

As the prohibition years continued, more of the country’s populace came to see Prohibition as illustrative of class distinctions, a law unfairly biased in its administration favoring social elites. Historian Lizabeth Cohen writes: “A rich family could have a cellar-full of liquor, but if a poor family had a bottle of home-brew, there would be trouble.” Working-class people were inflamed by the fact that their employers could dip into a cache of private stock while they, the employees, were denied a similar indulgences. Indeed, before the date that the Eighteenth Amendment became national law, many of the upper classes stockpied alcohol for home consumption. They bought out the inventories of warehouses, saloons, club store rooms, they emptied out liquor retailers and wholesalers. American lawmakers themselves followed these practices at the highest levels of government. President Woodrow Wilson moved his own supply of alcoholic beverages to his Washington residence after his term of office ended. His successor, Warren G. Harding relocated his own large supply into the White House after inauguration. In October 1930, just two weeks before the Congressional midterm elections, bootlegger George Cassiday, came forward and told how he had bootlegged for ten years for Congress. One of the few bootleggers ever to tell his story, he wrote five front page articles in The Washington Post. He estimated that eighty percent of congressmen and senators drank, even though these same people were the ones passing dry laws. This had a significant impact on the midterm election, which saw Congress shift from a dry Republican majority to a wet Democratic majority. The Democrats understood that Prohibition was unpopular and called for its repeal.
Did Prohibition really bring to an end peoples drinking? Evidence suggests that initially with the passage of Prohibition alcohol consumption did decrease by 30%. However, in the next half dozen years it had increased 60%-7% of its pre-Prohibition levels. Prohibition proved to be counterproductive in that it promoted the heavy and rapid consumption of alcohol in secretive, non-socially regulated and controlled ways. "People did not take the trouble to go to a speakeasy, present the password, and pay high prices for very poor quality alcohol simply to have a beer. When people went to speakeasies, they went to get drunk.

One of the main reasons why enforcement of Prohibition did not proceed smoothly was the inefficient means of enforcing the laws set forth by the 18th amendment. From its very inception, the law lacked legitimacy in the eyes of the public who had previously been drinkers and yet completely law-abiding citizens. Consequently, law enforcement agents who had not been bribed to turn a blind eye found themselves overwhelmed by the dramatic rise in the illegal distribution of alcohol on such a wide scale due to the Volstead Act. The scale of the task was not anticipated and consequently the necessary resources to pursue it were not allocated. Additionally, enforcement of the 18th Amendment lacked centralized authority and many attempts to impose prohibitionist laws were deterred due to the lack of transparency between federal and state authorities. Furthermore, the reality of American geography contributed significantly to the difficulties in enforcing prohibition. The terrain of valleys, mountains, lakes and swamps as well as the extensive seaways, ports and massive borders running along Canada and Mexico made it exceedingly difficult for prohibition agents to stop bootleggers given their lack of resources.

**Repeal of Prohibition**

As Prohibition became increasingly unpopular, especially in the big cities, "Repeal" was eagerly anticipated. Both the Republican and Democratic political platforms called for repeal. The popular vote for repeal was 74% in favor and 26% in opposition. So by a three-to-one vote, the American people rejected prohibition.

Economic urgency played no small part in accelerating the advocacy for repeal. Prior to 1920, and the institution of the Volstead Act, approximately 14% of federal, state and local tax revenue was derived from alcohol commerce. The government badly needed income and further felt that reinstating the manufacture and sale of alcohol would create desperately needed jobs for the unemployed. Prohibition created a black market that competed with the formal economy, which already was under pressure. Roosevelt was elected based on the New Deal, which promised improvement to the economy that was only possible if the formal economy competed successfully against various economic forces, including the effects of prohibition's black market. This influenced his support for ratifying the 21st amendment, which repealed the 18th amendment that had established prohibition.

On 22nd March 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an amendment to the Volstead Act known as the Cullen-Harrison Act, allowing the manufacture and sale of "3.2 beer" (3.2% alcohol by weight, approximately 4% alcohol by volume) and light wines. The original Volstead Act had defined "intoxicating beverage" as one with greater than 0.5% alcohol. This allows for some alcohol to legally circulate while the effort to repeal the entire law gained strength. The 18th Amendment was repealed on 5th December 1933 with ratification of the 21st Amendment. The leader of the Mormon Church made strenuous efforts to prevent repeal.

Prohibition was a major blow for the alcohol industry and repeal was therefore a step toward the recovery of one sector of the economy. The restart of beer production allowed thousands of workers to find jobs again.

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While the 21st Amendment removed Prohibition as a national law, it did not prevent states from restricting or banning alcohol. This led to a patchwork of laws in which alcohol may be legally sold in some but not all towns or counties within a particular state. After repeal of the 18th Amendment, some states continued to enforce prohibition laws. Mississippi, for instance, which had made alcohol illegal in 1907, was the last state to repeal Prohibition in 1966. Kansas did not allow sale of liquor on-premises until 1987. To the present day, there are still numerous "dry" counties and towns in America that restrict or prohibit liquor sales. Additionally, many tribal governments prohibit alcohol on Indian reservations. Federal law also prohibits alcohol on Indian reservations, although this law is currently only enforced if there is also a violation of local tribal liquor laws. The federal law prohibiting alcohol in Indian country pre-dates the 18th Amendment. No constitutional changes were necessary prior to the passage of this law, as Native American Reservations and federal territories have always been considered areas of direct federal jurisdiction.
**Prohibition Inquiry**

Please answer the following questions about the Prohibition era of US History as thoroughly and completely as possible. If you need more room, feel free to answer on a separate piece of paper and attach this as your cover page to your answers when you turn it in.

1. To what does “Temperance” refer?
2. What evidence is there that individual states sought to ban alcohol in the 19th Century?
3. Many of the early advocates for Prohibition were women. What did Carrie Nation do?
4. Why did Prohibition supporters also support a Constitutional Amendment to start a Federal Income Tax?
5. Why did Prohibition supporters also support women’s suffrage?
6. In the 1916 Presidential Election, what was the position of the Democrats and Republicans on Prohibition?
7. Once World War I started, a new reason emerged to support Prohibition. What was it?
8. Circa.1918, identify several groups who supported Prohibition.
9. In the eyes of dry supporters, why did they feel the vote had to happen before 1920?
10. Precisely what did Prohibition do? (summarize on one sentence)
11. The AMA did not recognize alcohol as having any medical cure value, yet in 1921 Congress held a hearing on the medical value of beer. Why?
12. There were two legal ways to get alcohol in the Prohibition era. What were they?
13. To what does “speakeasies” refer?
14. To what does “bootlegging” refer?
15. What evidence is there that Prohibition actually increased crime?
16. In an effort to prevent the peoples use of ethyl alcohol in their production of illegal drinks, what did the government do?
17. Some people made illegal alcohol in their homes. In addition to this, what was the more common way in which alcohol was introduced into the country?
18. “…The countries populace came to see Prohibition as illustrative of class distinctions…” Clarify which is meant by this observation.
19. What evidence is there to suggest that alcohol did or did not actually end peoples drinking?
20. In the context of repeal of the law, what as the position of the Republicans and Democrats?
21. “Economic urgency played no small part in accelerating the advocacy for repeal.” Clarify and explain this statement.
22. When the 21st Amendment removed the national ban on alcohol, what happened at the state level?