1920s

Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

Michael Hutchison, Writer

Dr. Aaron Willis, Project Editor
Kerry Gordonson, Editor
Christina Trejo, Editorial Assistant
Shoshana Muhammad, Editorial Assistant

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Primary sources are the building blocks of history. Using these sources to introduce students to historical periods offers students the opportunity to become historians themselves—to analyze the evidence, form hypotheses, and learn how to support arguments based on evidence. They learn what it means to interpret the past in ways that provide meaning for the present. Textual primary sources can often be difficult for students to engage with because they are often couched in unfamiliar language from a different historical era. Visual primary sources can prove more appealing and accessible to students, and they also involve different types of "reading" skills.

How to Use This Product

This PowerPoint® presentation is designed to walk students through the process of primary source interpretation. Slides help to focus students' attention and train them how to "read" visual primary sources. Targeted questions and enlarged insets from images help to train students to see deeper into the historical record, to uncover evidence that, though plainly before their eyes, is not always obvious at first glance.

The posters provide visual reinforcement for the images analyzed in the presentation. Use them before or after the PowerPoint® analysis for either pre- or post-reading activities. In addition, we have provided extra images on each disc so that once the students are trained in the skills of analyzing visual primary sources they can further hone their skills. You can print them out and distribute as handouts for in-class or independent study, or you can import the images into PowerPoint® for students to analyze individually or with the class as a whole.

Let Us Know What You Think

At Social Studies School Service, we always strive to provide the best supplemental curriculum materials at a superior value. If you have feedback that could help us improve this product, requests for other titles in this series, or stories of how it has helped your students, please let us know. You can e-mail us at access@socialstudies.com.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis
Chief Education Officer
Social Studies School Service

Few decades in American history have had the impact on American culture that the 1920s did. After the horrors of World War I, the ensuing struggle over the ratification of the Versailles Peace Treaty, and joining the League of Nations, many Americans were ready to forget the past decade and, in the words of newly-elected president Warren Harding, enjoy a "return to normalcy."

The decade proved to be far from "normal," however. Prohibition, which became law with the enactment of the 18th Amendment in 1920, caused many law-abiding citizens to become lawbreakers by either buying bootleg liquor or by making their own "bathtub gin." Prohibition also contributed to the rise of "gangsters" who smuggled and sold illegal alcohol; the most prominent gangster was Al Capone, who reveled in his notoriety and exercised tremendous influence in Chicago. The Ku Klux Klan also underwent a resurgence during the decade, largely due to a resurgence in anti-immigrant sentiment. America was also gripped by a "Red Scare" in which Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer accused many of having communist leanings.

Preachers such as Billy Sunday and Aimee Semple McPherson became popular as a wave of religious revivalism swept the country. Religion also collided with science in the Scopes "Monkey Trial," in which a young teacher was forced to defend himself for teaching his students about evolution and the writings of Charles Darwin. Many could listen to preachers, music, sports, and other programming on the new invention, the radio. Many also found liberation with the mass availability of the automobile, which gave Americans freedom to travel and youth the ability to go places unchaperoned. Americans also were thrilled from the achievements of sports heroes, including Babe Ruth, Red Grange, and Helen Wills Moody. None of these sports stars, however, could match the popularity of aviator Charles Lindbergh, whose solo flight across the Atlantic fired the nation's imagination.

Some Americans, giddy with "Coolidge Prosperity," invested heavily in the stock market. The "bubble" burst in October of 1929, and the ensuing stock market crash led to the Great Depression.

Table of Contents

2

Prohibition

- The 18th Amendment/The Volstead Act

- Prohibited sale, distribution, and manufacture of "intoxicating liquors"

- Greatly disliked by many Americans

- People found ways around the law by either buying illegal liquor or making their own

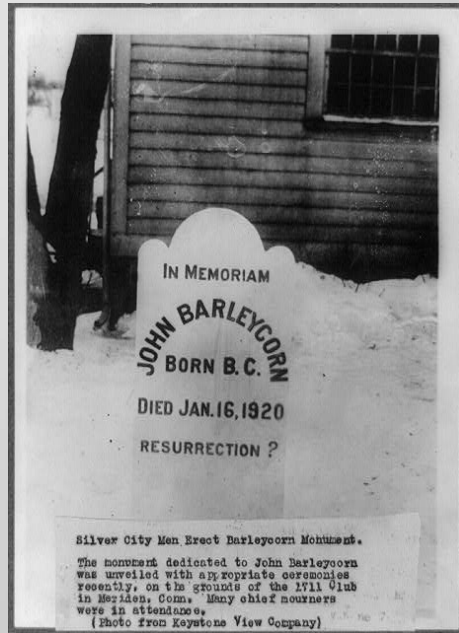- Eventually repealed by the 21st Amendment in 1933

3

Social Studies School Service: www.socialstudies.com

Prohibition, the "noble experiment" of the 1920s, came into effect early in the decade with the ratification of the 18th Amendment. Enforcement of the law was provided by the Volstead Act, which made it a federal offense to manufacture, sell, distribute, or transport alcoholic beverages. Passage of the amendment was a major victory for temperance groups, which had fought hard for laws restricting the use of alcohol. Religious groups also applauded the measure, as did many who believed that alcohol underlay many of the social problems and issues American society faced in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

It soon became obvious, however, that Prohibition would be difficult to enforce. People went around the law by buying illegal "bootleg" whiskey or by trying to make their own liquor. Gangsters made millions selling illegal whiskey to a public only too willing to break the law to buy it. Rival gangs fought for "territory" in cities like Chicago as organized crime increased sharply throughout the decade.

By the end of the decade, Americans had divided into the "wets," who favored repeal of the 18th Amendment, and the "drys," who sought to maintain Prohibition. President Herbert Hoover established the Wickersham Commission to try to find more effective ways to enforce the law, but by the time the Commission concluded its work, the Great Depression had begun and few were interested in sinking money into enforcing Prohibition when so much of the populace was unemployed and the economy was reeling.

Finally, the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and a Democratic majority into Congress in 1933 spelled the end for Prohibition. In 1933, the 21st Amendment repealed Prohibition and alcohol became part of the American culture again. Still, some communities elected for "local option" and remained "dry" counties.
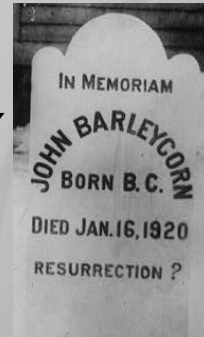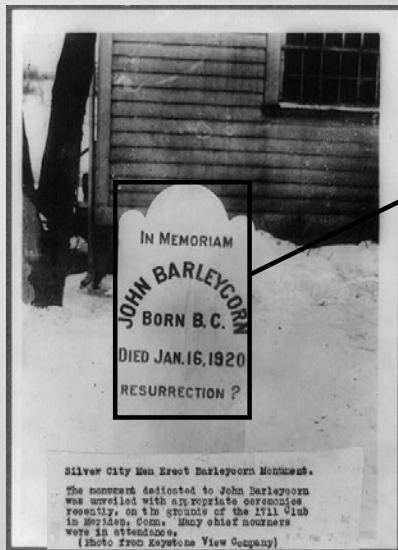
Give students approximately one minute to view the photo, then proceed to the following slides.

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN BARLEYCORN
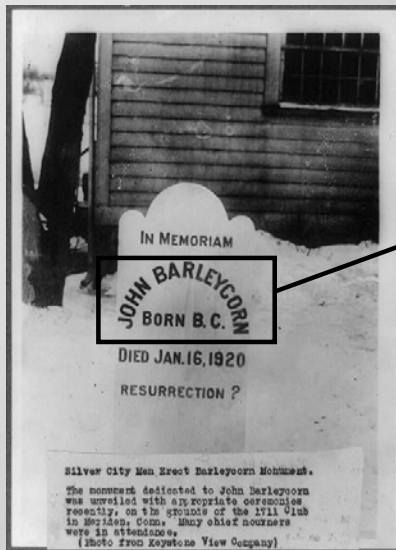
BORN B.C.

DIED JAN.16,1920

RESURRECTION ?

- What is this "monument" supposed to be?
- How can you tell?

5

Social Studies School Service: www.socialstudies.com

Most students should be able to determine that the "monument" is supposed to be a tombstone because of its shape and because it contains the words "In Memoriam."

S5

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN BARLEYCORN

BORN B.C.

DIED JAN.16,1920

RESURRECTION ?

Silver City Men Erect Barleycorn Monument.

The monument dedicated to John Barleycorn was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies recently, on the grounds of the I'll Club in Meriden, Conn. Many chief mourners were in attendance.
(Photo from Keystone View Company)

JOHN BARLEYCORN
BORN B.C.

- What is the significance of the name "John Barleycorn" as posted on the monument?
- What does the use of this name reveal about the monument's purpose?

6

Social Studies School Service: www.socialstudies.com

Some students may know that the name "John Barleycorn" refers to alcohol; you may wish to explain to the class that the name "John Barleycorn" is famous as a character in the old English folk song "John Barleycorn Must Die." The use of the name "John Barleycorn" reveals that the monument is actually a protest against Prohibition.