

**Dear Editor: What Do Local Editorials Reveal About Public Opinion On Prohibition?**

Summer Fellowship Lesson 2008

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**Lesson 1:** Champaign-Urbana before the Prohibition Era

**Abstract:** In this lesson, students will study society's view on alcohol, governmental decisions regarding alcohol, as well as the impact these governmental decisions had on society as a whole.

**Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings:**

- What was life like in Champaign-Urbana before the passage of the Volstead Act?
- How did Champaign-Urbana's attempt to be a Prohibition forerunner impact the local community?

**Assessment:** Students will answer questions about the Illinois State Local Option Bill regarding alcohol prohibition. After the individual assessment student groups will pretend they are a committee serving for the Illinois State Legislature and create a Local Option Bill regarding a law they think needs to be put into effect for the betterment of society.

**Setting the Purpose:** Students will use this lesson to realize that Champaign and Urbana were forerunners when it came to banning the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol, and understand why and how both cities went about being the first cities in the state to ban liquor. This lesson will also get students thinking about ways to further improve their own local communities.

**Duration:** Two class periods. If time constraints are pressing the group activity can be removed to shorten the lesson to one day.

**Procedure:**

**Day1**

- Break students into pairs and give them 5 minutes to brainstorm as many reasons as they can in response to the following question. *Why would citizens or Champaign-Urbana or any city/town support the prohibition of alcohol?*
  - If students are struggling give them some or all of the following things to think about.
    - Women
    - Family Structure
    - Morality
    - Finances
- Reconvene as a class and let students share their answers. Ask students to explain their answers and their rationale behind them.

- Pass out the newspaper article C-U was 'dry'-sort of- long before Prohibition by *Champaign News-Gazette* columnist Tom Kacich for students to read silently.
- Before students begin reading put some or all of the following questions on the board to guide student's focus and to be used as discussion points.
  - Would you characterize Champaign-Urbana as a 'dry' town in the early 1900s? Why?
  - Explain the role of morality, the media, the University of Illinois, and community organizations in regards to the 'dry' decision.
  - How did people attempt to get around the prohibition of alcohol?
- After students have read the article discuss it (5-10 minutes) based on the above questions and explain to students that Champaign and Urbana chose to outlaw alcohol long before Congress decided to make it a Constitutional Amendment.
- Break students back into partners and pass out the *Champaign Daily News* article that outlines the state of Illinois' Local Option Bill regarding alcohol along with the Local Option Bill Worksheet and go over instructions together.
- Student groups should use the newspaper article to complete the worksheet and bring it in completed the following day. Even though students are in partners each of them should complete a worksheet on their own.

## Day 2

- Ask students to place their completed Local Option Bill Worksheet on their desks.
- Go around the room and check student work giving them credit for completeness.
- Lead a discussion of the Local Option Bill by asking students for their answers. While students are sharing their answers also ask them to evaluate and share their own opinions regarding the local option bill.
- Let students partner up and pass out the Create Your Own Local Option Bill Worksheet and go over the instructions as a class.
- Student partners will identify something they think should be put into law in order the benefit society and create their own Local Option Bill in reference to their own topic.
  - Students should use the actual article to model their responses after.
  - Since high school courses are usually taught at a more strenuous pace I will only have limited sharing of student's own Local Option Bills if any. If using in a setting where time is not such a pressing issue I think it would be both beneficial and enjoyable for students to share their assignments with the class.