

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

Summer Fellowship Lesson 2008

Jacob Bretz

Champaign County Historical Archives

**Lesson 3:** Does the presence of laws incite deviance?

**Abstract:** In this lesson students will examine newspaper editorials in order to critically examine the relationship between laws and deviance. The editorials that students will examine claim that the problem of drinking in America during the 1920s was made worse by the presence of Prohibition laws while other editorials claim that prohibition laws are necessary because society must have laws to function properly.

**Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings:**

- Does the presence of rules/laws incite or hinder deviant behavior?
- Is deviant behavior more acceptable when it is modeled by the majority of society?
- What inferences can be drawn about society and its viewpoints regarding Prohibition by examining local newspapers?
- Everyone has different views and justifications for their views regarding certain topics and just because people differ in opinion does not make one person right and one wrong.

**Assessment:** Students will be writing three of their own editorials. For the first editorial students will pretend that they lived during the Prohibition Era and write about their own opinion regarding the illegality of liquor. The second editorial will be written regarding their opinion on a current national law, local ordinance, school rule, or even one of their parent's home rules. The third editorial will be based on the student's opinion regarding the relationship between the presence of laws and deviant behavior in school or society as a whole.

**Setting the Purpose:** In this lesson students will use a historical event to critically examine a societal issue, deviance, which spans time, race, and gender.

**Duration:** Three days

**Procedure:**

**Day 1**

- Break the class into groups of 3-4 students and pass out the Deviance Warm-Up Activity
- Give students 10-15 minutes to complete the activity.
- After students complete the activity allow time for groups to act out their deviance skits.

- When skits are done reconvene as a class and discuss student responses to the questions on the warm-up activity focusing on the following two questions.
  - Does the presence of laws incite deviant behavior and why?
  - Does the idea of “everyone else is doing it” make people more prone to break certain rules?
  - How much does the punishment for a crime steer people away from breaking certain laws/rules?
- After the discussion about the Deviance Warm-Up Activity pass out the Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer along with each of the following articles
  - *So We May Cheer Up* from the Daily Illini May 6, 1930
  - *Saving the Youth Of The Nation* from the Daily Illini February 5, 1926
  - *Prohibitions* from the Daily Illini October 17, 1926
  - *Prohibition-A Joke* from the Daily Illini January 25, 1921
- Go over the direction to the Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer as a class and begin the assignment together.
- With the remaining time in class read each article and complete the corresponding section of the Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer together while discussing the points each editorial makes about the issue of Prohibition.
  - Read the articles together as a class but have students write their summaries individually.
- Most likely you will not finish each of the four articles so at the end of class collect articles and student work to be continued the following day.

## Day 2

- Pass student’s Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer and the articles that remain to be finished.
- Continue reading the editorials and completing the Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer in the same fashion as the preceding day.
  - Remember to discuss the points made in each editorial regarding prohibition and get student’s opinions about those points.
  - This is important because it leads into the next activity.
- When all four editorials have been read and the Prohibition Deviance Graphic Organizer completed pass out the Prohibition Editorial Directions and go over them together as class answering any questions students may have.
- Give students the remaining class time to begin writing their three newspaper editorials and inform them that they will not finish during class and the remaining work is to be completed for homework due the next day.

## Day 3

- Have students place their three finished editorials on their desks and go around checking that each student is completely done. If they are not finished they will not be able to participate in the day’s activity.
- However you choose divide the class into three groups. Students should not move their desks; the grouping is only to be used for the purpose of assigning each student an editorial that they will read to the class.
- Assign each of the three groups one of the three editorial topics.

- Students will then come up to the front of the class and read their editorial to the class.
- After each student is finished reading their editorial quickly discuss the student's opinion and move on the next student.
- After all students have read collect all three editorials from each student to be graded.