

How far do these accounts agree about prohibition history essay



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Sources A and B were both written in the same time period, well after the prohibition years and this contributes to what they may include. Both sources are also from history books so the purpose of them is to inform people about prohibition, not to argue whether it was right or wrong.

Source A offers more of an explanation about prohibition than source B.

Source B provides more information and is more factual about the prohibition years. Source A gives 5 reasons why prohibition was introduced in 1919, " bad influence of saloons...preserving grain for food...feelings against the German-Americans...Anti-Saloon League...moral fervour". Source A says that women controlled the Anti-Saloon League because the men were at war and that was one of the main reasons why prohibition came about, because no one could stop the women.

Source A does not provide evidence for its sensational claims, only offering an interpretation. For example it states that prohibition brought about " the greatest criminal boom... perhaps in all modern history" but does not back up this statement. Whereas Source B is very specific and goes into more detail about the effects of prohibition, as it says, " by 1928 there were more than 30, 000 ' speakeasies' in New York" it gives facts and a quotation from the time of the prohibition years.

The sources differ in the amount of detail they provide on the reasons for which prohibition was introduced- Source A offers a number of " possible explanations" as to the popularity of the pro-prohibition groups. Source A acknowledges the fact that most people had stopped drinking during the war because grain was needed for food, and the breweries were mainly owned

by German-American immigrants, so most people. Source B states only that it was a nationwide ' crusade' led by the Anti-Saloon League that brought about the " amendment to the Constitution".

Source B does not dispute against alcohol being " one of the greatest evils of the time". Also it does not include any information on the after effects of this law. There is a lack of detail and explanation about it.

However the sources do agree on the amount violence that was eventually caused by prohibition: source A states that prohibition caused " the greatest criminal boom in American history" while source B states that one of the eventual problems of prohibition was the " violent business" that came from gangsters out to make a profit of prohibition.

(B). Study Sources C and D. Were the artists of these two posters for or against Prohibition?

Source C shows a man handing his " Weeks Wages" to a posh looking barman, in the so-called " The Poor Man's Club" which is described as ' the most expensive in the world to belong to'. A circle in the bottom right corner shows presumably the man's wife crying because there is an eviction notice on the floor and little boy staring at an empty saucepan. The woman is saying ' The saloon is well named " The poor mans club" as it keeps its members and their families poor'. The caption below the drawing compares a member of the club to a slave, so the Temperance and Anti- Saloon Movements suggest that members of saloons and their families are slaves needing to be rescued by the nationwide introduction of prohibition.

Similarly source D shows a shabbily dressed girl; holding a little boy's hand, both gazing regretfully into the saloon. The caption is divided into two parts; at the top it says "Daddy's in There" and at the bottom it continues saying 'And our shoes and stockings and food are in the saloon too, and they'll never come out.'

Both sources pull at the emotions of the reader using woeful cartoons of children. They portray sad pictures of what happens to families when the males get addicted to the 'demon drink'. The extremist views expressed by the cartoonists hope to sway public opinion towards the bringing in of a national ban on alcohol. The two artists are definitely increasing support and awareness of the Prohibition movements for the banning of alcohol.

(C). Study Sources E and F. Which of these two sources is the more reliable as evidence about Prohibition?

Source E is a letter by a wealthy businessman, John D. Rockefeller, written after the Wall Street crash in 1930. He starts by saying that he had been optimistic about the ruling when it had been introduced. However he had "slowly and reluctantly" realized that the result was not what he had hoped for. He realises the result of the prohibition law: "drinking has generally increased" this would be because of even America's "best citizens" have gone against the ruling, and produced alcohol illegally and sold or consumed it at speakeasies. This blatant ignoring has "greatly lessened" overall respect for the law and that would probably be related to the amount of crime, in the letter Rockefeller say that crime was at "a level never seen before." This is a very reliable source, as it is primary, and written by a well-off American. He is disappointed at the failure of the law, which failed to stop

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the “evil effects” of alcohol. So this could be a typical view, of the law abiding Americans, who disagreed with alcohol and as a result wanted prohibition to succeed and so they were both annoyed and disappointed when it eventually failed. Overall, the source shows the optimistic view at the beginning of the period, then the annoyance of the failure.

Source F is part of a speech made by the first Prohibition Commissioner, John F. Kramer, in 1920; who states, “The law will be obeyed”. This statement shows the optimism people felt shortly after the introduction of prohibition and the determination of the enforcers that they were going to be successful in ending the production, transportation and selling of alcohol and spirits, as Kramer declared-“The law says that liquor must not be manufactured. We shall see that it is not.” This source may be biased – this was the leader of the enforcement of the law, so it may not be reliable. The source speaks from a pre prohibition perspective, and it shows the hope that prohibition will succeed, but the source is proved wrong by history. He knows what a challenge lies ahead of him as he says: “Where it is not obeyed” so although he is optimistic he knows what a challenge he has. Kramer is optimistic because he has been commissioned to enforce a new law. 1920 was right at the beginning of the prohibition years and Kramer is relishing his opportunity.

Source F may not be reliable as evidence because it may be biased because the speaker was part of the enforcement branch for the law so the source may not be reliable. The author of source E although for prohibition Rockefeller, a wealthy industrialist, is a neutral party in the argument so source will be reliable as evidence on prohibition. Ultimately all of source E shows the <https://assignbuster.com/how-far-do-these-accounts-agree-about-prohibition-history-essay/>

modern world evidence for the optimism people had that the law was going to succeed, shortly after its introduction by Congress. However it is a valid source showing the determination and optimism of the pro-prohibitionists.

(D). Study Sources G and H. Do these two sources prove that Prohibition was successful?

Sources G & H are both tables with data from the twenties. If prohibition had been a success, then theoretically, all of the figures for source H should be 0 or decrease to around there. Because prohibition agents would have stopped the production of any alcohol so there would be none available for retail of any spirits or beer, and ultimately no drunk related offences (source H). So the success of prohibition rested on one item- the enforcers. Source G should have some low figures- prohibition agents finding illegal stills and ending production.

Source G show the number of illegal stills and the number of gallons of alcohol captured by prohibition agents, the figures could be high- the enforcers stopping the production. It has information for 1921, 1925, 1929. This however was not the case the- number of gallons of alcohol seized increases dramatically (just of 26 times) to a shocking figure of 11 030 000 gallons. This should not be the case as all production should have been stopped, and there should be nothing left to produce it with. Although it could be argued that the agents were just doing their jobs, there should not be such an increase. The figure still increases before 1929 but not as much but still an alarming figure 11 850 000 gallons! The bootleggers carried on to as the number of illegal stills increases over the time period too.

Source H is a table too, showing the number of arrests for drunk-related offences. It is over a 6-year period (1920, 1923 & 1926). These numbers should be zero as there would be no alcohol consumed, as the prohibition agents would have stopped all the production. This is not what happens though- the number of drunk increases by 37 000 over the 6-year period! This shows that prohibition not a success as the number of people drinking increased. Drunk and disorderly conduct decreases by 3 000 between 23 & 29 so there is still an overall decrease of 3 000 over the whole 6 years. So the figures contrast. Drunk driving starts off as zero but increases to 820 by 1925 this could have been due to the low number of cars owned. Prohibition could not have been a success if the numbers had increased from zero.

As we know now with hindsight prohibition was a failure, because of the twisted agents and gangsters. If the figures from source G are the total of what was seized, what was the total- what was not found? Source H is just for the city of Philadelphia so what would the total for the whole country be? And it was only the number of arrests it does not say how many of those people went on to get convicted. These sources do not prove that prohibition was successful, rather the opposite- it was a failure because the average Americans drinking increased as they openly disobeyed the law.

(E). Study Sources I and J. How far does Source I prove that the policeman in Source J is telling the truth?

Source I is a cartoon entitled ' The National Gesture'. A line of bureaucrats are shown, with their hands behind their back, effectively receiving a ' backhander' or a " bribe", the officials silence is effectively bought. The cartoon suggests that the officers are appearing to be enforcing Prohibition

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however are being offered bribes from criminals to stay quiet, therefore they are not carry out their job effectively, as they are not doing what they have been tasked to do. Furthermore, my knowledge tells me that the production of alcohol still continued as politicians were receiving backhanders which allowed the production to continue with ease. All levels of bureaucracy were involved, from politicians to ordinary police officers, from Prohibition agent to magistrate, and the title, ' The National Gesture' suggests that these activities were occurring throughout America. My own knowledge supports this as in some cities in America police officers were quite prepared to even direct people to speakeasies and this willingness to disobey the law is shown in the source because the officials are willingly asking for a bribe without needing to be persuaded. The fact that my own knowledge supports this improves the reliability of the source and its message. The message of the source is that Prohibition was not successful, as officials are not carrying out their job, and the title is showing this is being done throughout the country.

Source J is a quote from a policeman talking about Chicago during the time of Prohibition. The source suggests that Prohibition was not successful, this is shown by the quote that superior officers were involved in corruption and were being bribed to ignore their duties, ' He handed me an envelope and I took it and he was gone. I opened it and there was \$75 in it'. We can make the assumption that if corruption was present in Chicago then it was also present in every state. The source also gives the message that the consumption of alcohol was still ever present during Prohibition and this is shown by the quote, ' The bottle was there and you were supposed to drink'. The author of the source is also of interest as he is a policeman. My own

understanding tells me that policemen were often corrupt and therefore the policeman's words may not be reliable, and this destroys the reliability of the whole source as there is a strong likelihood that he was corrupt and therefore his comments cannot be relied upon as being 100% reliable.

In conclusion, source I proves that the policeman in source J is telling the truth. In the cartoon they are all using bribery to turn their heads at the situation, as if the drinking is not happening and in source J the policemen says the same thing as shown in the cartoon.

(F). Study all the sources. Do these sources support the view that the failure of Prohibition was inevitable?

Many historians' believe that the failure of prohibition was inevitable, and there is a lot of evidence to endorse this opinion. It was clear from the day the law was passed that many American citizens were against the Volstead act and this is obvious because of the amount of Americans who enjoyed alcohol prior to the act, and were willing to break the law during the act to acquire it. Other evidence includes the rise of gangsters and organised crime. The consumption of alcohol was still taking place; it needed to be in hiding from fundamentalists such as the Anti-saloon league and thus widespread crime showed the biggest increase in American history.

Not all the sources show that the failure of the Prohibition was inevitable. Source A states the factors which caused the Prohibition, although it does not suggest that the failure of prohibition was inevitable. It suggests a view that people thought that in the beginning everyone believed that prohibition would work, but this was before it started. It also states that there was

indeed a criminal boom because of the ban of alcohol. Unfortunately for the source though, it doesn't give any reason as to why this happened. Plus it doesn't even suggest any doubt that the Prohibition itself was bound to fail. Source B has a similar view to source A, yet it does not suggest prohibition was bound to fail before it started; but it does touch on the public demand for alcohol, it also includes an Al Capone quote, "all I do is supply a public demand". Source E is like Source A. It shows an optimistic viewpoint that prohibition would work; it suggests that the people of the USA were all law breakers. This also suggests that the people opposed the idea of prohibition and supports that the failure of the Prohibition was yet again a failure.

Source's C and D show alcohol as a bad thing but clearly give a view which suggests that prohibition itself was bound to fail. If a man was willing to waste his money which could have been used to spend on clothing and food for his family then he would most definitely break the law for one. Source F is an account from a Prohibition officer; this view is biased but shows that he believes in the Prohibition and he believes he can uphold the law. Sources G and H are statistics which were taken after the Prohibition had been introduced to the USA. The figures show that the persistence of offenders. This supports the fact that prohibition was bound to fail. If you look at it the way they were intended when published, you could say that the prohibition officers were cracking down on alcohol and upholding the law. It also shows that there is a general increase of offenders in later years which is making the crime rate go up, which is the main reason that prohibition failed. Source I also agrees that Prohibition was bound to fail, it shows people who were meant to upholding this law of no alcohol taking bribes and keeping their

backs turned. Source J also agrees that the prohibition would fail, the policeman in the source had probably taken bribes himself. But this is obviously something he may not have admitted to.

In conclusion, 60% of these sources suggest that prohibition was bound to fail. These sources show that Prohibition itself was inevitable due to the amount of corruption and the fact that the society itself was willing to risk their own families to pay for alcohol, they would not care for what the law says if they want a drink that badly.