

## Title of Lesson: Reading Political Cartoons: Prohibition in Alabama

(Suggested grade level: 6)

This lesson was created as a part of the Alabama History Education Initiative, funded by a generous grant from the Malone Family Foundation in 2009.

**Author Information:** Lesa H. Roberts, Ph.D. (Cohort 1: 2009-2010)

Hampton Cove Middle School

Huntsville City Schools

Huntsville, AL

### Background Information:

The movement against the consumption of alcohol grew during the early 1900s. Progressive reformers who wanted to ban alcohol for social reasons were joined by Americans who opposed alcohol for religious or moral reasons. In 1917 they persuaded Congress to pass a constitutional amendment making it illegal to make, transport, or sell alcohol in the United States. The [Eighteenth Amendment](#), known as the Prohibition Law, was ratified in 1919.

Prohibition was a major issue in Alabama. The prohibition forces controlled the legislature which passed a bill to institute prohibition, submitting it to the governor, [Emmet O'Neal](#), on his last day in office. O'Neal ignored it and the legislation was submitted to [Governor Charles Henderson](#) after his inauguration in January 1915. Henderson promptly vetoed it, stating that local governments should determine their own rules. The legislature, however, succeeded in passing the bill over his veto, killing his amendment for a popular referendum and establishing prohibition in Alabama under what became known as the "bone dry" law. Consequently, Alabama was a dry state before the federal prohibition amendment was ratified during the [Kilby administration](#) (1919-1923). The state remained dry from 1915 to 1933 when the [Twenty-First Amendment](#) to the Constitution, repealing prohibition, was ratified. (Information available at: [www.archives.state.al.us/govs\\_list/g\\_hender.html](http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/g_hender.html))

### Overview of Lesson:

Students will analyze a primary document: a postcard from 1909. It depicts strong prohibition sentiment in Alabama prior to the national ban on alcohol. Students will complete a political cartoon graphic organizer to help them understand the subject, symbols, exaggerations, and opinion of the illustrator.

This cartoon depicts two vultures labeled "Brewers" and "Distillers" around a skeleton that represents Alabama. In the background, an army is advancing, carrying the state flag and a banner labeled "People of Alabama." Several people on the left, who are labeled with the names of newspapers in the state ("Age Herald," "Adv.," and "Mobile Register"), are reprimanding the soldiers: "Go on back! You will ruin business"; "Halt there you fools will scare the birds"; "O! If I only knew which would whip"; "It's time to stop all this agitation."

### Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Grade 6: Content Standard 6

Describe changing social conditions during the Progressive Period

- Identifying political and social leaders of the Progressive Movement

- Analyzing the impact of early civil rights movements on the lives of Americans
- Identifying cultural changes from 1900-1920 resulting from religious beliefs, industrialization, urbanization, and changes in communication and technology

**[National Standards for History, 1996](#)**

Era 7 Standard 1A-Evaluate Progressive attempts at social and moral reform.

Era 7 Standard 1B-Describe how the 16th, 17th, 18th, and 19th amendments reflected the ideals and goals of Progressivism and the continuing attempt to adapt the founding ideals to a modernized society.

Era 7, Standard 3A- Examine the rise of religious fundamentalism and the clash between traditional moral values and changing ideas as exemplified in the controversy over Prohibition and the Scopes trial.

**[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), (Bulletin 111, 2010)**

*Standard 2: Time, Continuity, and Change*

*Standard 6: Power, Authority, and Governance*

*Standard 10: Civic Ideals and Practices*

**Primary Learning Objective(s):**

The students will analyze a primary document and be able to explain the intent of the illustrator.

**Additional Learning Objective(s):**

The students will learn the opposing viewpoints in Alabama concerning Prohibition.

**Time allotted:** One class period

**Materials and Equipment:**

- Background information about the [Women’s Christian Temperance Union](#)
- Pictures of leaders of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union ([Frances Willard](#); [Carrie Nation](#))
- [Photograph of Women’s Christian Temperance Union](#) taken outside of a Birmingham company on November 29, 1909
- [Political cartoon postcard](#) handout (with graphic organizer) for each student

**Background/Preparation:**

The student should know the following:

- Background information about the Progressive era at the turn of the century (The Library of Congress has an excellent website with information regarding the [Progressive Era](#).)
- Background information about leaders of the Progressive era
- Background information about the [Women’s Christian Temperance Union](#) and its leaders

**Procedures/Activities:**

**Engagement/Motivation Activity:**

Display pictures of Women’s Christian Temperance Union leaders and discuss their role in the passage of the Prohibition Law. Remind the students that Prohibition was passed in Alabama ten (10) years before it became a Federal law. Ask the students if they have ever seen a political cartoon, maybe in the

newspaper or magazines. Ask if they always understand them. Many people do not understand political cartoons because they do not analyze specific parts of the cartoon; they are looking at the whole cartoon instead of analyzing specific aspects or symbols. The 5-word outline activity is easy to use and remember when analyzing a political cartoon: E- event; S- subject; S- symbols; E- exaggeration; O- opinion of illustrator (ESSEO).

<b>Step 1</b>	Pass out handout with political cartoon. You may need to tell the students what statements are in the bubbles and on the people's labels (see <i>Overview of lesson</i> ). Read the directions to the students and answer questions. Discuss the difference between the Event (Alabama Prohibition) and the Subject (Brewers and Distillers having a great deal of power in Alabama for a long time).
<b>Step 2</b>	Allow them several minutes to individually complete the handout.
<b>Step 3</b>	After most students have finished the handout, allow students to work in pairs to compare answers. Allow them to adjust their answers as needed.
<b>Step 4</b>	Ask for volunteers to share answers as you display the handout on the display camera. Fill out the handout as you discuss the symbols and exaggerations.
<b>Step 5</b>	There are no wrong answers if students can justify their responses. You may have to explain some items or point some out if they go unnoticed.
<b>Step 6</b>	When the first four headings are complete, discuss how the symbols and exaggerations could give the reader an idea of the illustrator's opinion about the event and subject.
<b>Step 7</b>	Ask students to write a sentence or two about the illustrator's opinion. Do you think the illustrator agrees or disagrees with the event and/or subject? Why?
<b>Step 8</b>	Allow the students to share their responses.

**Assessment Strategies:**

- Monitor student involvement during class discussions. Encourage students that are usually reserved to offer answers for symbols and exaggerations while more outgoing students may volunteer to give their meanings.
- Handout may be graded for completion if the activity is completed as a whole group project. Once this outline has been modeled, students can utilize the 5 steps on any political cartoon without assistance.

**Extension:**

- Give the students another political cartoon from the time period to analyze on their own using the 5-word outline.
- Allow students to create their own political cartoons incorporating the 5-word outline as they are drawing so that they select an event and subject and include symbols and exaggerations. The opinion of the illustrator should be evident to the reader.

**Remediation:**

- Introduce the students to the 5- word outline with a very simple political cartoon, then allow students to work with a partner to complete the Prohibition activity.

**Accommodation:**

- Allow students to write fewer symbols and exaggerations in their lists.
- Allow students to list examples of symbols and exaggerations in the cartoon without offering explanations.

# Women's Christian Temperance Union



**Carry Nation**



**Frances Willard**



**WTCU at Birmingham, AL**

**November 29, 1909**



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Prohibition in Alabama - 1909



Study the political cartoon. Make a list of items that are illustrated in the cartoon. If possible, explain what the symbols stand for (example: Uncle Sam stands for the United States)

**E – Event**

**S – Subject**

**S – Symbols**

**E – Exaggerations**

**O – Opinion of illustrator**

## Possible Answers

Event – Prohibition in Alabama

Subject – Brewers and Distillers have had a lot of power in Alabama for 90 years

Symbols – Vultures -----brewers and distillers

Baby vultures ----- future brewers and distillers

People ----- state newspapers – *Advertiser; Mobile Register; Age Herald*

Skeleton ----- State of Alabama

Soldiers ----- People of Alabama

Exaggerations – Vultures are large, fat, healthy birds (profitable businesses in Alabama); they

are really scavengers; ugly, filthy birds

Skeleton (Alabama) has been picked clean and left dead by the vultures for  
over 90 years (from statehood till 1909)

Baby vultures – there are future brewers and distillers that will also take  
advantage of the state and its people

Lines of Soldiers – the people against the brewers and distillers are numerous

People (newspapers) – are supporting the brewers and distillers

Opinion of Illustrator – possible answers

The illustrator is trying to make the newspapers look as if they are supporting the brewers and distillers because they are in partnership with them. They are possibly making money on advertising the sale of alcohol. The illustrator makes it look like there are many supporters of prohibition, all marching under the state flag. The cartoon depicts Alabama as picked clean by the vultures - nothing but a skeleton left as the brewers and distillers get fatter and richer. The brewers and distillers of alcohol have been making money since Alabama became a state – long enough.