

**1920s**

*Analyzing Visual Primary Sources*

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## **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.

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We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis  
Chief Education Officer  
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## The 1920s



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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



- Prohibition



- Harlem Renaissance



- Ku Klux Klan



- Automobile/Consumerism



- "The Roaring 20s"

## 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

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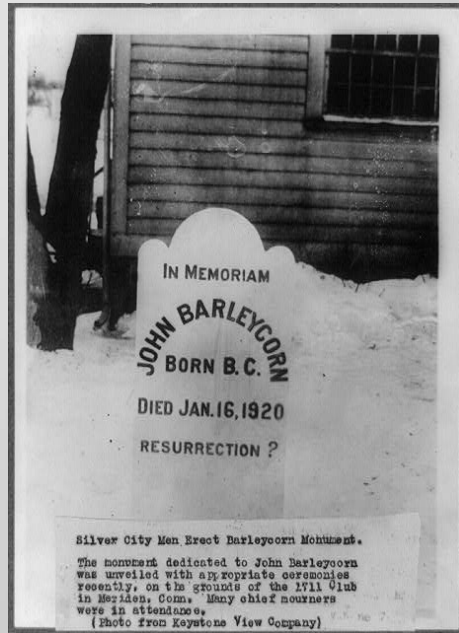
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Prohibition, the “noble experiment” of the 1920s, came into effect early in the decade with the ratification of the 18th Amendment. Enforcement of the law was provided by the Volstead Act, which made it a federal offense to manufacture, sell, distribute, 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.



## Prohibition

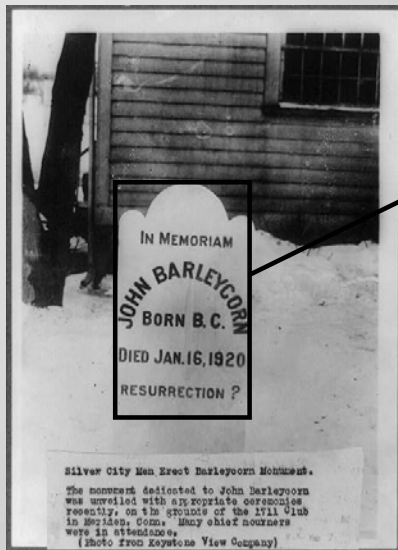
4

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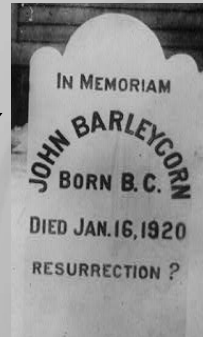
Give students approximately one minute to view the photo, then proceed to the following slides.



## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Silver City Men Erect Barleycorn Monument.  
The monument dedicated to John Barleycorn  
was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies  
recently, on the grounds of the I.V. Club  
in Silver City, N.M. Many chief mourners  
were in attendance.  
(Photo from Keystone View Company)



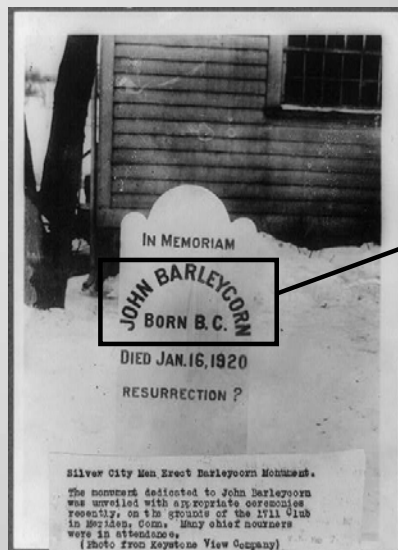
- What is this “monument” supposed to be?
- How can you tell?

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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.”

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



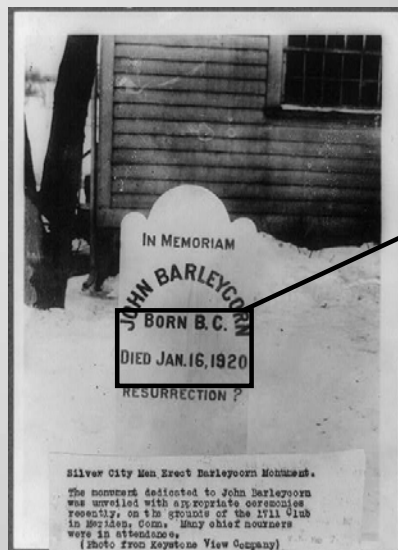
- What is the significance of the name “John Barleycorn” as posted on the monument?
- What does the use of this name reveal about the monument’s purpose?

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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.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



BORN B.C.  
DIED JAN. 16, 1920

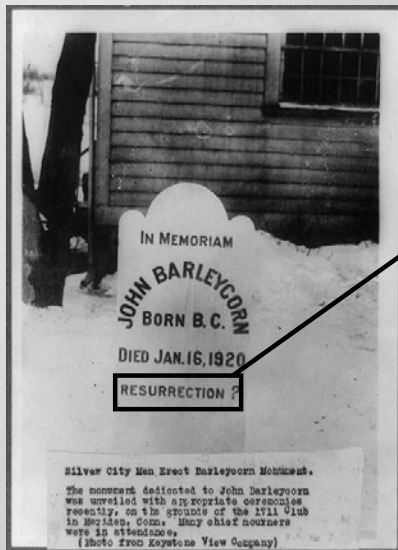
What is the significance of the dates mentioned on the monument?

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“Born B.C.” refers to the fact that alcoholic beverages have been available since the dawn of recorded history. On January 16, 1919, the 18th Amendment making Prohibition the law was ratified by three-fourths of the states. The terms of the amendment called for it to go into effect one year from the ratification date, or January 16, 1920.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

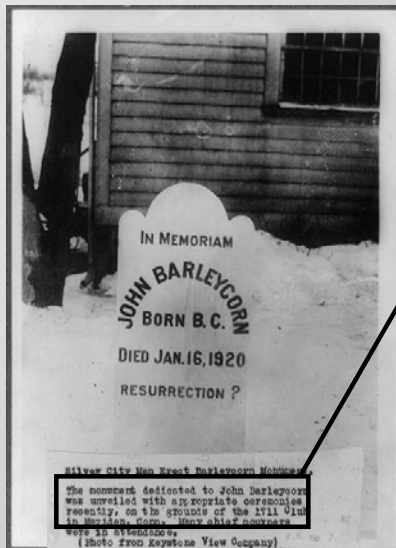


RESURRECTION ?

What is the significance of  
this line on the monument?

This line probably indicates the belief, hope, or possible prediction that Prohibition might not last and could possibly be repealed.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



The monument dedicated to John Barleycorn was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies recently, on the grounds of the 1711 Club in Meriden, Conn. Many chief mourners were in attendance.

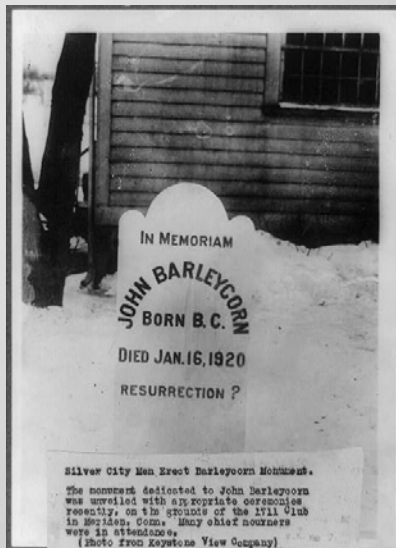
- What might the “1711 Club” have been?
- How might Prohibition have affected the club and its members?

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The 1711 Club was probably social in nature, and its members probably dedicated a fair amount of their time together to drinking. Such clubs were common in American towns during this era, and men often preferred to socialize and drink in such places rather than in bars. For people like this, Prohibition would have probably changed the nature both of their socializing as well as of the clubs to which they belonged.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



This monument was located in the town of Meriden, a Connecticut suburb.

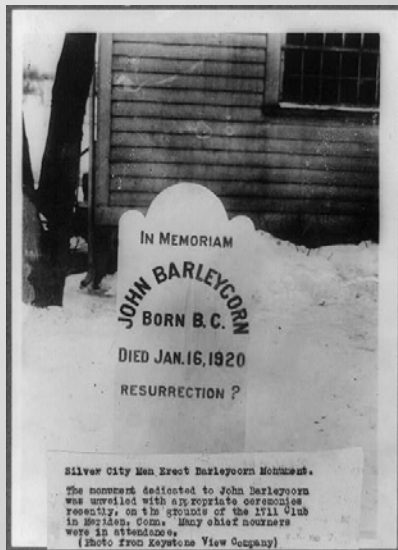
Would you expect that resistance to Prohibition was more common in rural or urban areas? Why?

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The fundamentalist religious views that underlay Prohibition might have been more common in rural areas compared to large cities, and might conclude that most rural people would support Prohibition. Since most major distilleries and breweries were located in larger cities, anti-Prohibition sentiment might have been more common in urban areas. Because grain was used to make alcohol however, many farmers were directly affected by the reduction in alcohol manufacturing, and thus might also have been against Prohibition.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Do you think this monument was a serious protest against Prohibition or a joke?

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The monument was probably a bit of both. It has elements of tongue-in-cheek humor (including referring to the members of the 1711 Club as “chief mourners” at John Barleycorn’s “funeral”), but its mere existence and the fact that it was placed in a public area where many could see it also means that it qualified as a legitimate protest against Prohibition.

## The Harlem Renaissance

- Flourishing of black artistic and literary talent in the 1920s
- Black artists became more accepted in mainstream culture and explored new avenues of artistic expression
- Frequent themes included celebration of African heritage as well as the difficulties of being African American during the early 20th century
- Well-known names in the Harlem Renaissance included Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, and Archibald Motley

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During the 1920s, thousands of African Americans migrated from southern rural areas to Northern cities looking for better opportunities. One area which saw a major influx of African Americans (along with blacks from other cultures) was New York's Harlem. This influx of cultures helped spur a literary and artistic movement called the Harlem Renaissance.

During the Harlem Renaissance, black literary, artistic, and musical talent flourished. Black artists became more accepted in mainstream American culture and explored new avenues of artistic expression, including celebration of their own heritage as well as the struggles many of them faced as black Americans during the early 20th century. Well-known names from the Harlem Renaissance included poets Langston Hughes and Countee Cullen, writer/journalist Alain Locke, and painter Archibald Motley.



## The Harlem Renaissance



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Give students approximately one minute to study the picture, then go on to the following slides. This is a painting by Archibald Motley, a well-known Harlem Renaissance artist. Although the painting itself is from the 1930s, it displays many themes and techniques characteristic of 1920s Harlem Renaissance art.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- What is going on in the scene depicted in this painting?
- Describe the people in the painting—what do they look like?
- How are they dressed?

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This is a nighttime street scene in a city. People fill the street; some are walking, some are dancing, and some are playing musical instruments. Most of the people depicted in the painting are African American, and they appear to be dressed quite nicely in evening wear.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

What type of music do you think is being played by the musicians in the picture?



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The musicians are most likely playing some sort of jazz or blues, which was prominent during the decade; it was also music that was predominantly played by black musicians.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

- How does the character of the policeman in the picture differ from most of the other characters?
- What do you think his expression conveys?



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Students should note that the character of the policeman is white, while the other persons portrayed in the painting are black.

The policeman's expression possibly:

- shows suspicion of the other people in the painting
- reveals how uncomfortable he feels at being surrounded by black people
- betrays a fear that even though he is a cop, he finds the raucous situation beyond his control.

Make sure that students note above all that the policeman in this painting is an outsider. In many areas of American society during the 1920s, African Americans were outsiders; by reversing this, the painting both comments on race relations at the time and celebrates the existence of a vibrant black culture that differed significantly from the dominant white culture.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

What do the expressions of the bystanders in the painting reveal about the scene and the event?



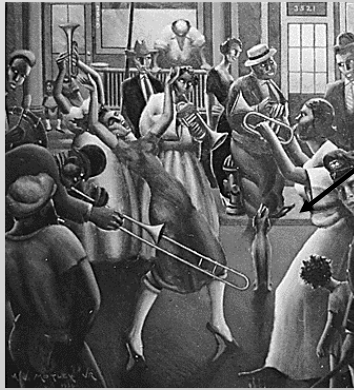
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The people in the background appear to be smiling, and that would indicate that they are pleased and excited about hearing the music or seeing the street parade. The man on the porch (toward the left of the painting) however, has his head bowed either in disgust or frustration. It is difficult to tell whether he is a black or white person, and if he is white, he might be fearful or disturbed about the demonstration in the street, or he might simply be upset about the noise.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

In the painting, several of the musicians are women.



What symbolism do you see in this? Explain.

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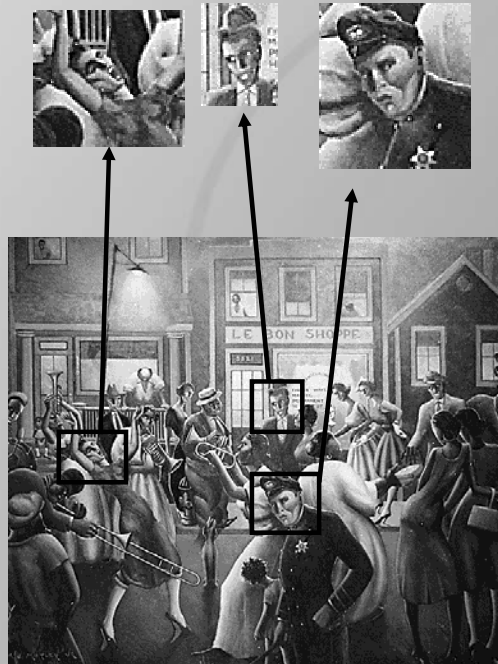
The 1920s is also frequently considered an era of increased women's rights as well as the era of the "flapper." Students may make a similar connection between the women in the painting in comparison to what they have studied about the changing roles of women during the period. It's also possible to infer that women played a more dominant role in African American culture at the time than they did in white culture.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

The subjects' faces in this painting bear a strong resemblance to African tribal art.



Why do you think the artist chose to portray the subjects in this manner?



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Like other visual artists of the Harlem Renaissance, Motley's use of visuals that resembled African tribal art probably had two main goals: to celebrate African American heritage, and to give his art a look and feel that was distinctly different from that of white artists of the era.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



What are the main themes the artist is trying to convey?

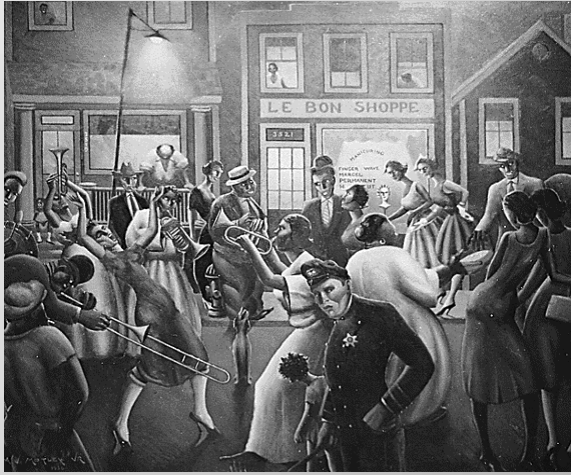
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The painting conveys a celebration of African American heritage and culture; however, it's also possible to interpret the painting as showing the suspicion that whites had (in this case, the police officer) toward the surge in black music and culture during the period.



## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Alain Locke, a Harlem Renaissance author, wrote in 1926 that “Negro life is seizing its first chances for group expression and self-determination.”

Does this work of art support Locke’s claim?  
Brainstorm as a class about why or why not.

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Motley’s painting does celebrate a specific idea of what the black experience in the 1920s should be, since the characters in the painting are demonstrating their outward joy regarding jazz and playing music in public. There certainly is a great deal of “group expression” depicted, and students should pick up on this fact. As for self-determination: first, make sure students understand what the term means, then try to lead them to see how the fact that African Americans dominate the scene in the painting can be interpreted as a form of self-determination.

## The Ku Klux Klan

- Enjoyed a resurgence in the 1920s
- The “Red Scare” and nativism helped fuel prejudice
- The Klan persecuted not only blacks, but also Jews, Catholics, and immigrants
- “One hundred percent Americanism”
- The Klan enjoyed popularity in several areas of the United States
- Criminal activity and the arrest of the Grand Dragon of the Indiana Klan led to its decline at the end of the decade

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The Red Scare, the trial of the immigrants Sacco and Vanzetti, and an increasing fear of anarchists led to increased feelings of prejudice against immigrants, Catholics, Jews, and African Americans. All of this fueled a revival of the Ku Klux Klan during the 1920s.

The revived Klan wrapped itself in what it called “One hundred percent Americanism” and became popular in many areas of the United States; however, it enjoyed its greatest popularity in Indiana, where it exercised such influence that the state Grand Dragon, D.C. Stephenson, bragged that, “I am the law in Indiana.” When Stephenson was convicted of second-degree murder in 1925, the Klan rapidly lost a great deal of respect and influence nationwide.



## The Ku Klux Klan

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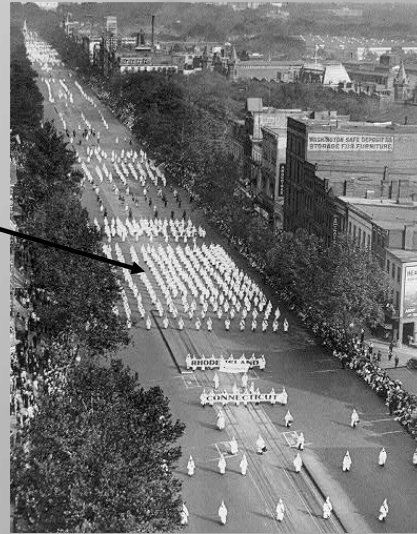
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Give students approximately one minute to look at the photo, then go on to the following slides.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Speculate as to the number of Klan members on parade in the photo.
- What can you infer about the popularity of the Klan at the time based on what you see?

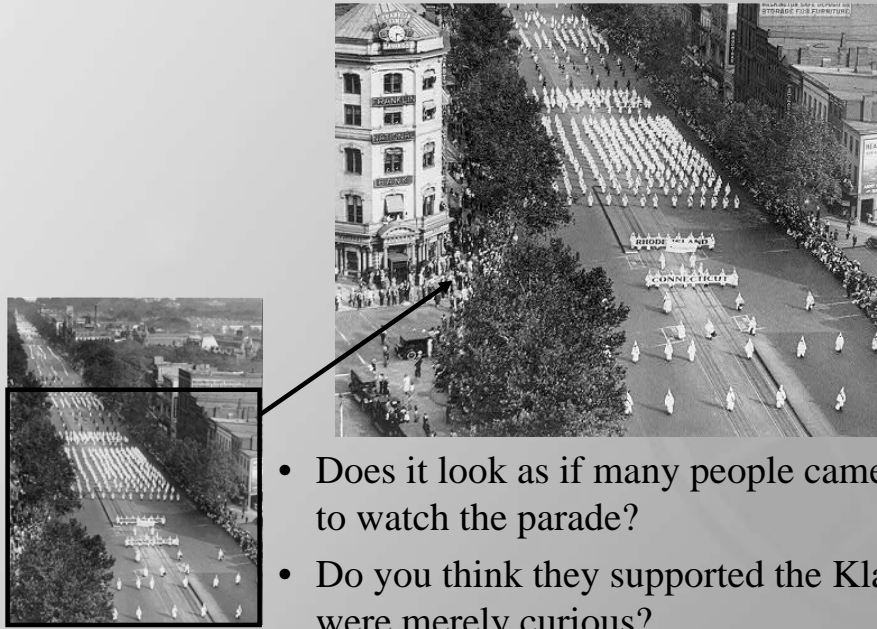


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It looks as if anywhere from several hundred to several thousand Klan members are visible in this photograph. Clearly, the large turnout for the march shows that the Klan at the time enjoyed a significant degree of popularity.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



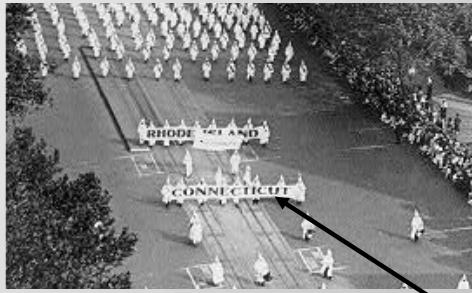
- Does it look as if many people came out to watch the parade?
- Do you think they supported the Klan or were merely curious?

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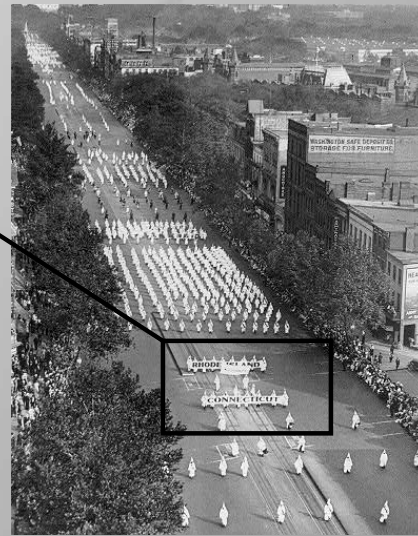
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It looks as if a fair amount of people came out to watch the march, although the numbers are far from overwhelming. Most of the people in the crowd probably supported the Klan—otherwise they wouldn't have attended the march. In addition, it's unlikely that any of the people the Klan persecuted—African Americans, immigrants, Jews—would have risked coming out to view the march in person, no matter how curious they might have been.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Why might the marchers have had banners reading “Rhode Island” and “Connecticut”?
- What do the banners imply about the strength and outreach of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s?



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The banners are reminiscent of, and were probably intended to be similar to, signs and banners used by well-known, respected national organizations—including political parties. They indicate that the Klan during this time had aspirations to become such a nationwide organization, and perhaps to even situate itself as a political party. The inclusion of states such as Rhode Island and Connecticut imply that the outreach of the Klan of the 1920s was much greater than in years past, when it was primarily a Southern organization.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why do you think the Klan decided to hold a parade rather than just a rally with featured speakers?

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Note how the Klan members are in regular formation, like a marching band or drill team. One might draw the conclusion that a parade, unlike a rally, would allow the Klan to more effectively put on a military-style display of strength and discipline that could both impress potential converts and intimidate opponents. The Klan was also big on “pomp and circumstance,” and a parade would have offered more opportunities for this than a rally would have.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



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Give students approximately one minute to view the photograph, then go on to the following slides.



## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why might this man have been carrying an American flag?



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The man in black is probably carrying a flag to underline the “One hundred percent American” ideal of the Klan. Make sure that students know that the Klan at this time was striving for greater legitimacy, visibility, and political power. Part of the organization’s tactics included framing the Klan as a patriotic organization rather than as one that was simply anti-black or anti-immigrant.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



In many pictures of Klan rallies, members have their faces covered.

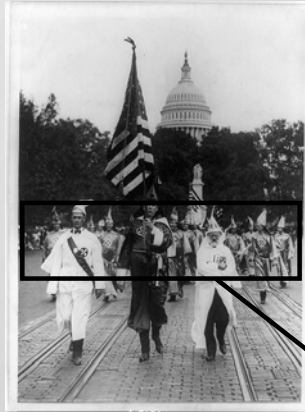
Why do you think the Klan members in this picture are marching in public with their faces in full view?

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Again, since the Klan at this time was aiming to achieve greater respectability, part of that push would include no longer having to hide one's ties to the organization. The Klan members in this photo wanted to display pride in their organization, and hiding under masks would have undermined that. Also, the Klan of the 1920s enjoyed more political support than the Klan of the late 1800s, and therefore the men shown in this photo most likely did not fear possible arrest by the authorities for their actions.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Look at the expressions on the faces on the men in the picture.

- What sort of emotions or feelings do their faces display?
- What impression do you think they wanted to convey to the crowd through their behavior?



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Some might see determination, pride, or a kind of military stoicism. Others might perceive the emotions that helped give rise to the Klan in the first place: anger, intolerance, self-righteousness. The men marching probably wanted to convey that the Klan was orderly, respectable, strong, and proud.

### Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Note the elaborate insignia and the variety of Klan uniforms.

Why might the Klan have thought it important to emphasize the quasi-military nature of their organization during this march?

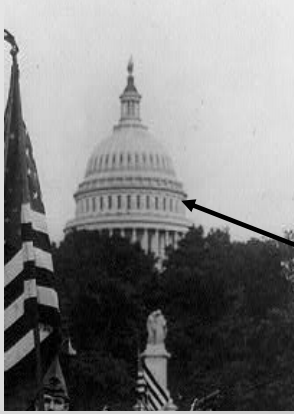


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As stated earlier, emphasizing the quasi-military nature of the Klan worked both to impress and to intimidate onlookers. In addition, the elaborate insignia and uniforms also helped dispel the idea that the Klan was a disorganized collection of thugs; instead, it served to convey the impression that the Klan was well run and had solid leadership and a clear purpose.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Note the Capitol Dome in the background.

Why do you think the Klan held this march in Washington, D.C.?



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Having the Capitol Dome in the background might appear to give the Klan legitimacy and a legal acceptance that it had yet to fully enjoy. The fact that the Klan could parade in the heart of Washington, D.C., might also suggest to observers that it did so with the approval of the federal government.

## Automobiles/Consumerism

- Advertising “came into its own” during the 1920s
- Brand names become well-known
- The “installment plan”/“big ticket” items
- Owning an automobile became an essential part of American life
- Consumerism led to overuse of credit

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The 1920s witnessed a dramatic increase in the demand for consumer goods. Automobiles, radios, washing machines, and refrigerators were just some of the “big ticket” items consumers will willing to buy—usually on the “installment plan,” which offered buyers the chance to “buy now, and pay later.”

Advertising drove the buying frenzy. Not only did ad agencies try to sell brand names such as Ford, RCA, and Woolworth’s, but they also conducted psychological studies to determine the best slogans for selling products and what type and color of packaging might best appeal to the buyer.

Perhaps no product was more desired than the automobile. Though automobiles had been available for purchase since the previous decade, for millions in the 1920s the automobile became an essential part of the daily routine, allowing drivers to travel long distances in a shorter amount of time and visit places not accessible by horse. For teenagers in the 1920s, the car represented liberation from strict supervision by parents and other family members.

The buying frenzy of the 1920s came at a very high price. While it appeared to many that business was booming, for the most part the profits existed only on paper. In addition, many consumers using installment plans quickly found that they had overextended themselves and accumulated large amounts of debt. The overabundance of credit also led many business to try and expand too quickly, which proved to be a fundamental cause of the Great Depression of the 1930s.

February, 1926 AMERICAN MOTORIST 37



**Easier to handle-  
safer to drive**

The driving control of the Ford car is exceedingly simple, yet always dependable. It effectively reduces the possibilities of accidents—particularly in crowded city traffic. Foot pedal gear changing, powerful brakes, short wheelbase and full visibility, afforded by the all-steel body construction with narrower pillars and large plate glass windows, are important reasons why Ford owners enjoy such security. Let the nearest Authorized Ford Dealer explain the many features of Ford cars and demonstrate their easy handling. Get full particulars about convenient time payment plans.

STANDARD FORD CO., 1100 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, N.Y. FORD MOTOR COMPANY, DETROIT, MICH. FORD CARS ARE BUILT TO LAST. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE USED. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE DRIVEN. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE ENJOYED. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE SAFE. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE RELIABLE. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE ECONOMICAL. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE CONVENIENT. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE BEAUTIFUL. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE THE BEST. THEY ARE BUILT TO BE THE FORD.

**FORD**

BEAUTY .. COMFORT .. CONVENIENCE .. UTILITY

## Automobiles/ Consumerism

35

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Give students approximately one minute to view the photograph, and then go on to the following slides.

Easier to handle-  
safer to drive



- What features of the automobile does the large headline in the ad highlight?
- Why might these things have been important to 1920s consumers?

36

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

The headline emphasizes safety and handling ability, which may have been important to 1920s consumers because the automobile was still a fairly new invention and people probably had concerns about it being difficult to operate and potentially dangerous.



## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



How might these words in the ad have induced consumers to buy this automobile?

BEAUTY .. COMFORT .. CONVENIENCE .. UTILITY

37

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

These words portray the automobile both as a leisure item and as a practical item. They would have been designed to appeal both to consumers who wanted to purchase something “nice” and to consumers who wanted to purchase something that could make their lives easier.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

- To which consumers would the idea of “convenient time payment plans” been appealing?
- What does this line tell us about the type of consumers Ford hoped would buy this car?



demonstrate their easy handling.  
Get full particulars about convenient time payment plans.

38

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

The idea of a “time payment plan” would have been attractive to middle-class buyers who could not afford to pay cash for a vehicle. This line in the ad tells us that Ford did not intend the car to be a luxury vehicle, but instead hoped that it would appeal to the average American consumer.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

This car cost \$520 at the time, which is roughly equivalent to \$5800 today.



- Was this car relatively cheap or expensive?
- What does the location of the price in the ad imply as to how important the cost of the car might have been to the consumer?

39

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

This car was relatively affordable for many consumers. The price of the vehicle was most likely featured in the center of the ad and surrounded by a darker border in order to attract the viewer's attention to the affordability of the car; however, it blends in somewhat with the picture of the car and it's also not as large as the headline emphasizing ease of handling and safety. The creators of the ad may have thought that price was not as important to consumers as other features of the car.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

Why do you think the ad shows a woman driving the car rather than the man?



Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

40

While there is no specific indication as to exactly why the woman is driving the car in the ad, Ford ad executives may have wanted to appeal to the “liberated woman” of the 1920s, who would be independent and able to drive an automobile with her husband (or boyfriend) sitting as the passenger. Ford may have also wanted to prove that the automobile was safe enough (and easy enough) for women to drive as well as men.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

### AMERICAN MOTORIST

- In what sort of publication did this ad appear?
- What does this tell us about the popularity of automobiles at the time?



Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

41

This ad appeared in a magazine called *American Motorist*. The fact that such a magazine even existed at this point (circa 1924) clues us in as to how quickly automobiles had become an important part of American culture. It also underlines the fact that automobiles were not considered as simple luxury items for the rich; instead, cars had a mass appeal.

## The “Roaring ‘20s”

- Booming economy, desire to recover from the sacrifices of WWI and have fun
- Fads: flagpole sitting, dance marathons
- Silly songs, slang, fashions, dances
- “Flappers”

42

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

The 1920s was a decade of fads, changing morals, and “reckless youth.” After sacrificing for the war effort during World War I, many people in the next decade wanted to take advantage of the improving economy and have some fun. People looked for an escape from Prohibition by frequenting speakeasies where illegal liquor was sold. Young adults in particular seemed to take pleasure in participating in seemingly pointless activities which seemed to frustrate their elders, such as dance marathons and flagpole sitting. Silly songs (such as “Yes! We Have No Bananas”), slang (such as “bees’ knees” and “cat’s pajamas,” both terms of approbation), fashions (such as raccoon coats), and dances (such as the Charleston) also became popular.

Women, perhaps emboldened by the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, sought new levels of social freedom to go along with their newly won political rights. Women began to do things like in public that were previously taboo, such as smoking cigarettes and drinking liquor. They also challenged social norms through fashion choices; women not only bobbed their hair, but they wore their skirts “scandalously” short (meaning just below the knees) as well. The “new” women of the 1920s were popularly known as “flappers.” The flapper was more a symbol of moral liberation than a reality, and many only dressed as “liberated women.” In general, though, women in the 1920s sought more freedom and equality with men.



## The “Roaring ‘20s”

43

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Give students approximately one minute to view the photograph, and then go on to the following slides.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Approximately how old do the people in the photo appear to be?
- What do they appear to be doing?

44

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

The people in the picture look to be in their 20s or early 30s. It's fairly evident that they're dancing, most likely doing the Charleston, which was one of the more popular dances of the era.



## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

How do the women's hairstyles and clothing symbolize the changes in women's attitudes and roles during the 1920s?



45

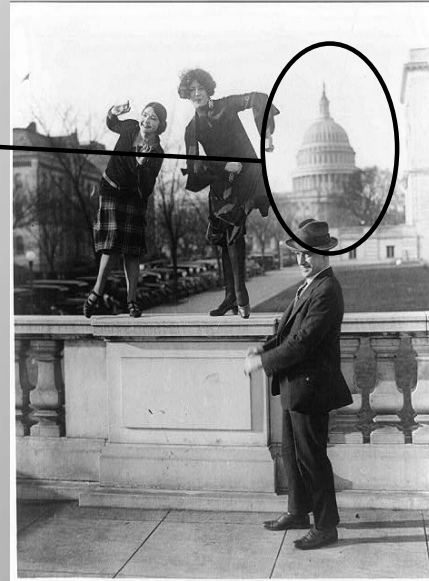
Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

The women's shorter hairstyles symbolized freedom because women would not be required to spend as much time taking care of short hair compared to what they would do with hair that was a considerably longer length. As for their clothing, the hemlines of the women's skirts would have been considered somewhat revealing for the time period. Both their hair and their clothing differed significantly from those women of the previous generation would have had; therefore, one might conclude that the fashions shown here symbolize not just a new, freer attitude, but also a rebellion of sorts against social norms.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why might the photographer have framed this picture with the U.S. Capitol in the background?



46

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Although the framing may have been simply coincidental, having these people dance in front of a well-known landmark such as the Capitol Building was probably designed to puncture the perceived stuffiness of Washington, D.C., and exhibit the “devil may care,” have-fun-anywhere/anytime attitude of the era.

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

How do you think the average American living in the 1920s might have viewed this photo and the scene depicted in it?



47

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Older Americans might have felt some discomfort that a picture such as this showed a deliberate disrespect both for government and for social norms that discouraged dancing in public; some would also have probably frowned upon the women's decision to do something "dangerous" like dance on the railing. Many younger Americans, however, probably would have liked the picture and found it both amusing and even liberating.

### Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Do you think the women in the photo offer a good representation of the “reckless youth” or “flappers” of the 1920s?
- Do they seem “reckless” or “rebellious” by today’s standards?

48

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Most students will probably say that this photo does provide a good representation of both “reckless youth” and “flappers,” but that the women don’t seem rebellious at all by today’s standards. Use this as an opportunity to have a discussion in which the class makes more comparisons between life in the 1920s and life today: What do young people today do that annoys their parents’ generation? What fads exist today? How do young women today use fashion to push against boundaries and redefine social norms?

## Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



49

Social Studies School Service: [www.socialstudies.com](http://www.socialstudies.com)

Note to teacher: If desired, pose any or all of the following wrap-up questions to the class as a whole:

- Which of these images stood out the most to you? Why?
- Which one do you think you'll remember the most? Why?
- Which one would you choose as being most representative of the era? Point out specific elements of that image that led you to select it.

## The 1920s



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## Table of Contents



- Prohibition
- Harlem Renaissance
- Ku Klux Klan
- Automobile/Consumerism
- "The Roaring 20s"

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## 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

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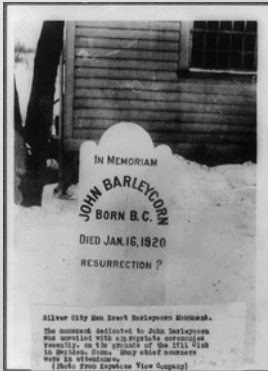
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## Prohibition

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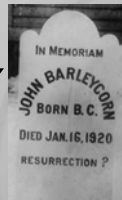
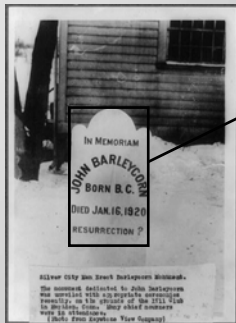
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- What is this “monument” supposed to be?
- How can you tell?

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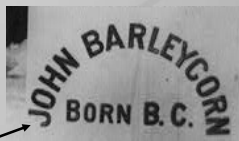
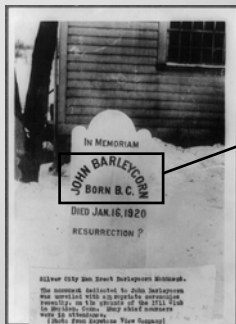
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- What is the significance of the name “John Barleycorn” as posted on the monument?
- What does the use of this name reveal about the monument’s purpose?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

What is the significance of the dates mentioned on the monument?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

What is the significance of this line on the monument?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

The monument dedicated to John Barleycorn was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies recently, on the grounds of the 1711 Club in Meriden, Conn. Many chief mourners were in attendance.

- What might the "1711 Club" have been?
- How might Prohibition have affected the club and its members?

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This monument was located in the town of Meriden, a Connecticut suburb.

Would you expect that resistance to Prohibition was more common in rural or urban areas? Why?

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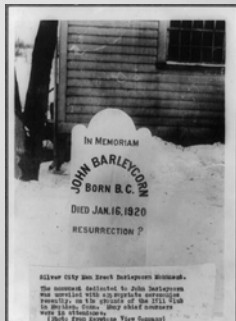
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Do you think this monument was a serious protest against Prohibition or a joke?

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## The Harlem Renaissance

- Flourishing of black artistic and literary talent in the 1920s
- Black artists became more accepted in mainstream culture and explored new avenues of artistic expression
- Frequent themes included celebration of African heritage as well as the difficulties of being African American during the early 20th century
- Well-known names in the Harlem Renaissance included Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, and Archibald Motley

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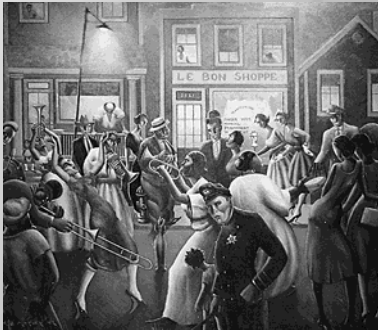
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## The Harlem Renaissance



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- What is going on in the scene depicted in this painting?
- Describe the people in the painting—what do they look like?
- How are they dressed?

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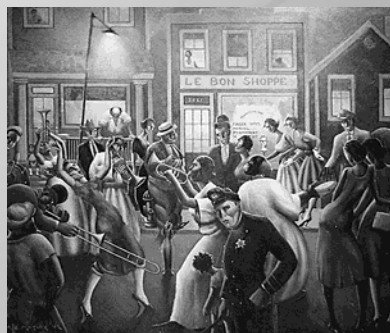
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What type of music do you think is being played by the musicians in the picture?



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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

- How does the character of the policeman in the picture differ from most of the other characters?
- What do you think his expression conveys?



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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

What do the expressions of the bystanders in the painting reveal about the scene and the event?



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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

In the painting, several of the musicians are women.



What symbolism do you see in this? Explain.

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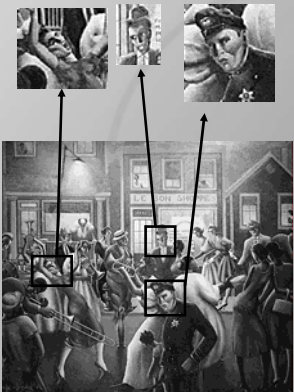
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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

The subjects' faces in this painting bear a strong resemblance to African tribal art.



Why do you think the artist chose to portray the subjects in this manner?




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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



What are the main themes the artist is trying to convey?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Alain Locke, a Harlem Renaissance author, wrote in 1926 that “Negro life is seizing its first chances for group expression and self-determination.”

Does this work of art support Locke’s claim? Brainstorm as a class about why or why not.

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## The Ku Klux Klan

- Enjoyed a resurgence in the 1920s
- The “Red Scare” and nativism helped fuel prejudice
- The Klan persecuted not only blacks, but also Jews, Catholics, and immigrants
- “One hundred percent Americanism”
- The Klan enjoyed popularity in several areas of the United States
- Criminal activity and the arrest of the Grand Dragon of the Indiana Klan led to its decline at the end of the decade

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## The Ku Klux Klan

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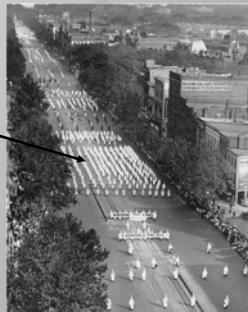
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- Speculate as to the number of Klan members on parade in the photo.
- What can you infer about the popularity of the Klan at the time based on what you see?



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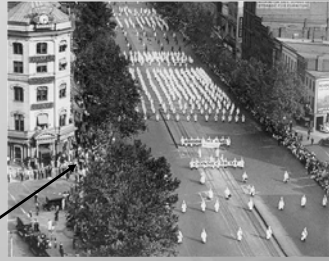
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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Does it look as if many people came out to watch the parade?
- Do you think they supported the Klan or were merely curious?

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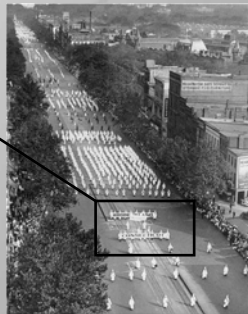
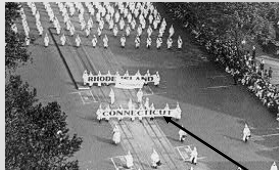
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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Why might the marchers have had banners reading “Rhode Island” and “Connecticut”?
- What do the banners imply about the strength and outreach of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s?

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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why do you think the Klan decided to hold a parade rather than just a rally with featured speakers?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why might this man have been carrying an American flag?



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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



In many pictures of Klan rallies, members have their faces covered. Why do you think the Klan members in this picture are marching in public with their faces in full view?



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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Look at the expressions on the faces on the men in the picture.

- What sort of emotions or feelings do their faces display?
- What impression do you think they wanted to convey to the crowd through their behavior?



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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Note the elaborate insignia and the variety of Klan uniforms.

Why might the Klan have thought it important to emphasize the quasi-military nature of their organization during this march?



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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Note the Capitol Dome in the background.

Why do you think the Klan held this march in Washington, D.C.?



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## Automobiles/Consumerism

- Advertising “came into its own” during the 1920s
- Brand names become well-known
- The “installment plan”/“big ticket” items
- Owning an automobile became an essential part of American life
- Consumerism led to overuse of credit

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## Automobiles/ Consumerism

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- What features of the automobile does the large headline in the ad highlight?
- Why might these things have been important to 1920s consumers?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



520  
Easier to handle-  
safer to drive

How might these words in the ad have induced consumers to buy this automobile?

**Ford**

BEAUTY .. COMFORT .. CONVENIENCE .. UTILITY

37

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- To which consumers would the idea of “convenient time payment plans” been appealing?
- What does this line tell us about the type of consumers Ford hoped would buy this car?

demonstrate their easy handling. Get full particulars about convenient time payment plans.

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

This car cost \$520 at the time, which is roughly equivalent to \$5800 today.

- Was this car relatively cheap or expensive?
- What does the location of the price in the ad imply as to how important the cost of the car might have been to the consumer?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

Why do you think the ad shows a woman driving the car rather than the man?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

AMERICAN MOTORIST

- In what sort of publication did this ad appear?
- What does this tell us about the popularity of automobiles at the time?

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Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

## The “Roaring ‘20s”

- Booming economy, desire to recover from the sacrifices of WWI and have fun
- Fads: flagpole sitting, dance marathons
- Silly songs, slang, fashions, dances
- “Flappers”

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## The “Roaring ‘20s”

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- Approximately how old do the people in the photo appear to be?
- What do they appear to be doing?

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How do the women's hairstyles and clothing symbolize the changes in women's attitudes and roles during the 1920s?



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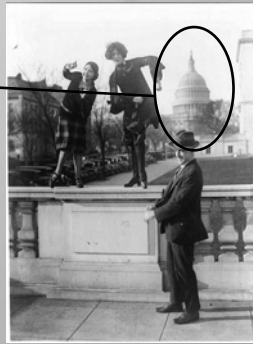
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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



Why might the photographer have framed this picture with the U.S. Capitol in the background?



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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources

How do you think the average American living in the 1920s might have viewed this photo and the scene depicted in it?



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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



- Do you think the women in the photo offer a good representation of the “reckless youth” or “flappers” of the 1920s?
- Do they seem “reckless” or “rebellious” by today’s standards?

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# Analyzing Visual Primary Sources



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## IMAGE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

### Step 1. Observation

- A. Form an overall impression of the image and then examine individual items. Next, divide the image into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.
- B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the image.

<u>People</u>	<u>Objects</u>	<u>Activities</u>

### Step 2. Inference

List three things about the historical time period you can figure out from looking at this image.

1.

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2.

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3.

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### **Step 3. Questions**

- A. What more would you want to know about this image and the time period from which it comes?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- B. Where might you find answers to your questions?

**Modified from**

[http://www.archives.gov/digital\\_classroom/lessons/analysis\\_worksheets/photo.html](http://www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/analysis_worksheets/photo.html)

**Education Staff, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408.**



## CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

1. In two or three sentences, describe the image in terms of people, activities, objects, places, etc.
2. What specifically in the image indicates that it's from a certain time period?
3. Why might the source have been created?
4. Who in the past would have come in contact with this source? How might they have been affected by the source?
5. What other information would you need to help you better understand the image?
6. List one or two things the source tells you about life in the time period and country in which it originated.
7. What question(s) may be left unanswered by this source?