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# An Analysis of the Prohibition in the Great Gatsby, a Novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald

Prohibition in the Great Gatsby symbolizes the resistance of the American people. F. Scott Fitzgerald gives the readers an inside look to the 1920's. The Great Gatsby is brimming with the resistance of the alcohol bans set in place by the U.S. government.

The Prohibition was set into action on January 16, 1920. No one could no longer in the U.S. manufacture, import, export, or sale alcoholic beverages(The Roaring 20s). The government was pressured into the new amendment because of many movements such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The WCTU was largely concerned with the protection of the family. The union saw drinking by men a threat to wives and children. Drinking was also saw as sinful by many Protestant churches(Women Leaders of Temperance). It was groups and movements like these that undoubtedly wanted to prohibit alcohol. Although it seemed like a good concept it was tough for many to accept and even harder to execute.

After the Prohibition Act came the Volstead Act ensued. This outlawed even beverages containing as little as 0.5% alcohol. Included in this was beer and wine. Many Americans thought that only hard liquor would be banned, the addition of drinks like beer and wine caused many to abandon the Prohibition Act (Prohibition). Early America wasn't the driest of countries. Everyone drank alcohol in some shape and form no matter the age (The Bootlegging Business).

Many Americans opposed the Prohibition Act, so they found the means to get what they wanted. Underground establishments soon became a large business and a great opportunity to make some money. The most popular name for these establishments were speakeasies. The name came about because you would have to "speak easy" or quietly about it in public or around police (The Roaring 20s. While in a speakeasy patrons drank the hard liquor out of tea cups so that if a raid were to happen, they would be safe. Illegal drinking became the hit of the season. Soon gangster-owned speakeasies replaced neighborhood saloons and by 1925 they were about ten thousand speakeasies in New York (The Riverwalk Jazz).

Hard liquor was very hard to buy, now that it was illegal it became very expensive. Those who could not afford it simply made their own - often in bathtubs. Bathtub gin as it was called, was not always safe and was responsible for causing blindness and even death. People who had no idea what they were doing were often the ones making it. Drinking bathtub gin put drinkers at risk of consuming unsafe concentrations of wood or denatured alcohol (Prohibition).

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Gangsters realised that there was big money behind selling hard liquor. Not even an hour after the Prohibition Act was set in place six armed men had been found trying to rob a train in Chicago of medicinal whiskey (How Prohibition Backfired). One gangster bought a group of pharmacists in the Midwest so that he was able to legally obtain alcohol and then hijack his trucks and take the alcohol for illegal uses. Alcohol used for industrial reasons was turned onto moonshine easily by bootleggers. In many large cities it wasn't unusual for hardware stores to sell copper still and other ingredients to make alcohol (Prohibition and Why It Failed).

The biggest gangster of them all was Al Capone. He made a name for himself by running a multi-million dollar operation. He smuggled illegal alcohol into Chicago. He was also known for being incredibly violent with his rival gangs (The Roaring 20s). In two years, Capone was earning around sixty million a year from alcohol sales alone. Capone was able to bribe the police and important politicians of Chicago, overall it cost him seventy five million dollars to keep them in line but he considered it a good investment. The mayor of Chicago in 1927 was one of Capone's men, Big Bill Thompson (Prohibition and the Gangsters).

Prohibition was never enforceable. Moderate drinking for Americans just simply wasn't viewed as sinful (Prohibition). The Prohibition proved to be worthless and only lowered the regard for the government and law. In 1933, the eighteenth amendment was repealed, although many states kept the idea (The Roaring 20s). Many scholars have concluded that the Prohibition did more damage rather than help the communities. The greatest failure of the Prohibition was that it led to growth in organised crime. It also failed because ordinary citizens were willing to break the law. Corruption was rife among the police as well as those who were charged with enforcing the Prohibition (Prohibition and Why It Failed).

Gatsby was known to have these crazy parties where people got drunk. Meaning he was able to get his hands on alcohol illegally. "He and this Wolfsheim bought up a lot of side-street drug stores here and in Chicago and sold grain alcohol over the counter". Gatsby did something very similar to an gangster in New York that bought the pharmacies. Gatsby then used the alcohol at his gigantic parties (The Great Gatsby).

Symbolized in the Great Gatsby was the Prohibition. Gatsby had large parties where many people would get wildly drunk. Fitzgerald gave his readers an inside look into his life. The roaring 20s. The Great Gatsby is filled with resistance from many American people that once supported the Prohibition Act.

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