

Spirited: Prohibition in America

Lesson Idea 1

Reading and Writing the 1920s

F. Scott Fitzgerald and Flapper Speak

Grade Levels 9-12

Summary:

In this lesson, high school students will explore the historical decade of the 1920s as described through an F. Scott Fitzgerald's work of literature (*Bernice Bobs Her Hair*, is one short-story example, though any novel can also be used. *The Great Gatsby* is also a novel that could be read and then viewed in the filmic version for comparison and contrast). This lesson will compare the experience of visiting the exhibition *Spirited: Prohibition in America* and historic fact to fiction writing. While reading the fiction text, students will note Fitzgerald's use of various slang terms and references to aspects of popular culture related to 1920s historical context to gain a better understanding of the era and compare it to contemporary perspectives. Using the supplemental Flapper Speak definitions included with this lesson and known historical social mores related to the Prohibition era, each student can invent his or her own short story or write a character study that describes and reflects the life of a 1920s teen or young adult using one's own imagination, inspiration from F. Scott Fitzgerald, historical knowledge gleaned from *Spirited: Prohibition in America*, and personal contemporary insight.

Objectives:

- Students will read and analyze a work of Fitzgerald fiction written during the Prohibition era and compare and contrast the writing style and descriptions with historic fact known about the era.
- Students will read and comprehend new vocabulary and 1920s-era slang in context.
- Using inspiration from the work of F. Scott Fitzgerald, students will create a short written work incorporating a real or imagined character from the 1920s and insert 1920s slang vocabulary to create an aesthetic of the era.
- Students will present and share their written works using a variety of formats (oral presentation, online, written chapbook etc.).

Materials Needed:

- Texts of a Fitzgerald short story or copies of a Fitzgerald novel for each student.

- Pencils/paper (or computer access for writing and printing out student work).
- Notes from experiencing the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibition or other historical research from the 1920s.
- (Optional) a filmic version of *The Great Gatsby* to compare the format of the film to that of the novel.

Lesson Time:

- Reading assignment (one to three weeks out of class as desired).
- Visit to the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibition (one class period).
- Discussion of exhibition content and additional research/context about the 1920s era (one class period as desired).
- Discussion of assigned Fitzgerald work of fiction and comparison contrast of historic fact through class discussion and introduction of the writing structure of a short story and creative writing assignment (one class period).
- Writing assignment time or in-class reading/sharing (as desired or needed).

Lesson Procedures:

Assign a Fitzgerald text as an out-of-class reading assignment and/or have students read segments of the text in class. While students are reading the Fitzgerald work, visit *Spirited: Prohibition in America*, and have them make notes about things they didn't know or that they found interesting about the 1920s era. For comparison between the novel and exhibition content, use a writing prompt for student reflection while they are in the exhibition for use as a later in-class discussion:

Exhibition Writing Prompt

What did you already know about Prohibition and the 1920s era?

What do you think life was like for teens and young adults during Prohibition?

What did Prohibition teens do for fun?

How do you think their lives were different from their parents at the same age?

What kind of conflicts do you think teens/young adults faced in their lives during the 1920s?

What surprised you most about Prohibition and the 1920s era?

Use one class period to discuss the Fitzgerald story and analyze its plot, character design, etc. Compare and contrast the fiction work to what students have researched or know through experiencing the *Spirited: Prohibition in America* exhibition.

Assign a creative writing activity and suggest students incorporate 1920s slang using the Flapper Speak glossary handout (included as a resource with this lesson). Emphasize and teach the structural elements of a story and demonstrate ways to design a plotline through a simple classroom activity (see Plot Structure activity included as a resource with this lesson) to help students make the story interesting and successful. Have student share their stories in class or through another avenue such as an online publication (website) or have students create a chapbook etc.

Resources:

McCutcheon, Marc. *The Writer's Guide to Everyday Life from Prohibition through World War II*. Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 1995.

Teaching Plot Structure

Elements of a story . . .

1. Requires the character to make a choice,
2. Shows that choice by actions, and that . . .
3. Those actions must have consequences.

<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/teaching-plot-structure-through-401.html>

Teaching Plot Structure Activity:

Write on slips of paper the words listed below (which outline characters, prop, conflict, motivation, time and place, and emotion) and distribute them to students for an easy group brainstorming session to illustrate designing a simple story structure.

Probe using the following questions:

Who is involved in this story? Why are they involved? Is the situation related to time or location? Is the prop important?

Whose prop is it? Who has this emotion and why? Who will do what next?

A bar owner

A Prohibition agent

A young modern woman

A church pastor

A rumrunner

A jail

A boat

A fast car

A speakeasy

A brewery
A cigarette holder
A still
A bottle of champagne
A gun
A trumpet
To get rich quick
To escape the law
To stay drunk
To save lives
To make the world a better place
Happiness
Fear
Anger
Distrust
Jealousy
A Conflict

Flapper Speak: A Dictionary of Slang from the 1920s

Absent Treatment—Dancing with a bashful partner.

Ace-Deuce—sudden fit of panic or consternation, often used with “throw”: throw an ace-deuce

Airedale—A homely man.

Alarm Clock—Chaperone.

Anchor—Box of flowers.

Apple Knocker—A hick; a hay-shaker.

Apple Sauce--Flattery; bunk.

Balloon Soup—nonsense, empty talk.

Bank's Closed—No petting allowed; no kisses.

Barlow—A girl, a flapper, a chicken.

Barneymugging—Lovemaking.

Battler—A thug, a violent gangster.

Bean Picker—One who patches up trouble and picks up spilled beans.

Bee's Knees—See “Cat's Pajamas”

Bell Polisher—A young man addicted to lingering in vestibules at 1 a.m.

Berries—Great.

Berry Patch—A man's particular interest in a girl.

Big Timer—(n. masc.)—A charmer able to convince his sweetie that a jollier thing would be to get a snack in an armchair lunchroom; a romantic.

Billboard—Flashy man or woman.

Biscuit—A pettable flapper.

Blaah—No good.

Blouse—To go.

Blow—Wild party.
Blushing Violet—A publicity hound.
Boob Tickler—Girl who entertains father’s out-of-town customers.
Brooksy—Classy dresser
Bun Duster—See “Cake Eater”.
Bush Hounds—Rustics and others outside of the Flapper pale.
Bust—A man who makes his living in the prize ring, a pugilist.
Cake Basket—A limousine.
Cake Eater—See “Crumb Gobbler”
Cancelled Stamp—A wallflower.
Cat’s Pajamas—Anything that’s good
Cat’s Particulars—The acme of perfection; anything that’s good.
Cat’s Pajamas—Anything that’s good.
Cellar Smeller—A young man who always turns up where liquor is to be had without cost.
Chopper—a submachine gun, like a Tommy gun, or a gangster who uses one.
Clip Joint, Cab Joint, or Steer Joint—a business that overcharges or cheats its customers.
Clothesline—One who tells neighborhood secrets.
Clown—a policeman.
Cluckish—stupid.
Cold One—a euphemism for beer.
Corn Shredder—Young man who dances on a girl’s feet.
Crasher—Anyone who comes to parties uninvited.
Crashing Party—Party where several young men in a group go uninvited.
Crepe Hanger—Reformer.
Crum-joint—a second rate or dirty bar or club.
Crumb Gobbler—Slightly sissy tea hound.
Cuddle Cootie—Young man who takes a girl for a ride on a bus, gas wagon or automobile.
Cuddler—One who likes petting.
Dapper—A flapper’s father.
Dewdropper—Young man who does not work, and sleeps all day.
Di Mi—Goodness.
Dincher—A half-smoked cigarette.
Dingle Dangler—One who insists on telephoning.
Dimbox—A taxicab.
Dipe Ducat—A subway ticket.
Dog Kennels—Pair of shoes.
Dogs—Feet.
Dreambox—a person’s head
Dropping the Pilot—Getting a divorce.
Dumbdora—Stupid girl.
Duck’s Quack—The best thing ever.

Ducky—General term of approbation.

Dud—Wallflower.

Dudding Up—Dressing.

Dumbbell—Wall flower with little brains.

Dumkuff—General term for being “nutty” or “batty.”

Dynamite—to talk loudly or aggressively, especially when trying to sell something or seduce someone.

Edisoned—Being asked a lot of questions.

Egg Harbor—Free dance.

Embalmer—A bootlegger.

Eye Opener—A marriage.

Face Stretcher—Old maid who tries to look younger.

Father Time—Any man over 30 years of age.

Feathers—Light conversation.

Finagler—one who stalls until someone else pays the check.

Finale Hopper—Young man who arrives after everything is paid for.

Fire Alarm—Divorced woman.

Fire Bell—Married woman.

Fire Extinguisher—A chaperone.

Flap—Girl

Flat Shoes—Fight between a Flapper and her Goof

Flatwheeler—Slat shy of money; takes girls to free affairs.

Floorflusher—Inveterate dance hound.

Flour Lover—Girl who powders too freely.

Fluky—Funny, odd, peculiar; different.

Footjuice—cheap wine.

Forty—fine, satisfactory, okay.

Forty-Niner—Man who is prospecting for a rich wife.

Frog’s Eyebrows—Nice, fine.

Gander—Process of duding up.

Gassed—intoxicated.

George—in the know, wise.

Gimlet—A chronic bore.

Give Your Knee—Cheek-to-cheek or toe-to-toe dancing.

Given the Air—When a girl or fellow is thrown down on a date.

Goofy—To be in love with, or attracted to. Example: “I’m goofy about Jack.”

Goat’s Whiskers—See “Cat’s Particulars”

Goof—Sweetie.

Green Glorious—Money and checks.

Grubber—One who always borrows cigarettes.

Handcuff—Engagement ring.

Hen Coop—A beauty parlor.

His Blue Serge—His sweetheart.

Highjohn—Young man friend; sweetie, cutey, highboy.
Hopper—Dancer.
Hoose—send to jail.
Houdini—To be on time for a date.
Horse Prancer—See “Corn Shredder”.
Hotsy Totsy—when describing a place, sophisticated, elegant, or just right.
Hush Money—Allowance from father.
Ish Kabibble—a phrase meaning “I don’t care” or “what, me worry?”
Jag Juice—A strong liquor.
Jane—A girl who meets you on the stoop.
Jazz Baby—a flapper
Jelly Bean—a flapper’s boyfriend.
Jingled—tipsy, elated with drink, sometimes used with “up”: jingled up.
Johnnie Walker—Guy who never hires a cab.
Judas-holes—name sometimes used in New York City speakeasies (an allusion to their peepholes).
Juice House of Juice Joint—establishment that sells liquor.
Kale or Kaleseed—money.
Kitten’s Ankles—See “Cat’s Particulars”.
Kluck—Dumb, but happy.
Knock a Jug—to get drunk.
Lallygagger—A young man addicted to attempts at hallway spooning.
Lap—Drink.
Lens Louise—A person given to monopolizing conversation.
Lemon Squeezer—An elevator.
Louse Around—to loiter or fool about.
Low Lid—The opposite of highbrow.
Mad Money—Carfare home if she has a fight with her escort.
Meringue—Personality.
Monkey’s Eyebrows—See “Cat’s Particulars”.
Monog—A young person of either sex who is goofy about only one person at a time.
Monologist—Young man who hates to talk about himself.
Mope— a stealthy departure or escape sometimes used with “cop”: cop a mope.
Mug—To osculate or kiss.
Munitions—Face powder and rouge.
Mustard Plaster—Unwelcome guy who sticks around.
Necker—A petter who puts her arms around a boy’s neck.
Noodle Juice—Tea.
Nosebaggery—Restaurant.
Nut Cracker—Policeman’s nightstick.
Obituary Notice—Dunning letter.
Oilcan—An imposter.
Orchid—Anything that is expensive.

Oscar—to move hurriedly.
Out on Parole—A person who has been divorced.
Petting Pantry—Movie.
Petting Party—A party devoted to hugging.
Petter—A loveable person; one who enjoys to caress.
Pillow Case—Young man who is full of feathers.
Police Dog—Young man to whom one is engaged.
Potato—A young man shy of brains.
Ritz—Stuck-up.
Ritzy Burg—Not classy.
Rock of Ages—Any woman over 30 years of age.
Rug Hopper—Young man who never takes a girl out. A parlor hound.
Saltwater—alcohol.
Sap—A Flapper term for floorflusher.
Scandal—A short term for Scandal Walk.
Scandaler—A dance floor fullback. The interior of a dreadnaught hat, Piccadilly shoes with open plumbing, size 13.
Seetie—Anybody a flapper hates.
Sharpshooter—One who spends much and dances well.
Shifter—Another species of flapper.
Show Case—Rich man’s wife with jewels.
Sip—Flapper term for female Hopper.
Slat—See “Highjohn”; “Goof”.
Slimp—Cheapskate or “one way guy”.
Smith Brothers—Guys who never cough up.
Smoke Eater—A girl cigarette user.
Smooth—Guy who does not keep his word.
Snake—To call a victim with vampire arms.
Snuggleup—A man fond of petting and petting parties.
Sod Buster—An undertaker.
Squiffy—drunk.
Stilts—Legs.
Stander—Victim of a female grafter.
Static—Conversations that mean nothing.
Strike Breaker—A young woman who goes with her friend’s “Steady” while there is a coolness.
Swan—Glide gracefully.
Tomato—A young woman shy of brains.
Trotzky (sic)—Old lady with a moustache and chin whiskers.
Umbrella—young man any girl can borrow for the evening.
Urban Set—Her new gown.
Walk In—Young man who goes to a party without being invited.
Weasel—Girl stealer.

Weed—Flapper who takes risks.
Weeping Willow—See “Crepe Hanger”
Whangdoodle—Jazz-band music.
Whiskbroom—Any man who wears whiskers.
Whoopee Mama—a flapper.
Wind Sucker—Any person given to boasting.
Wurp—Killjoy or drawback.
Zozzled— (adj). drink

Connections to Common Core English Language Arts Standards (example standards grades 9-10)

Reading Literature: Literacy

Key Ideas and Details

- Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme).

Craft and Structure

- Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).
- Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots) and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Writing

Text Types and Purposes

- Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.
- Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

Research to Build and Present Knowledge

- Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.