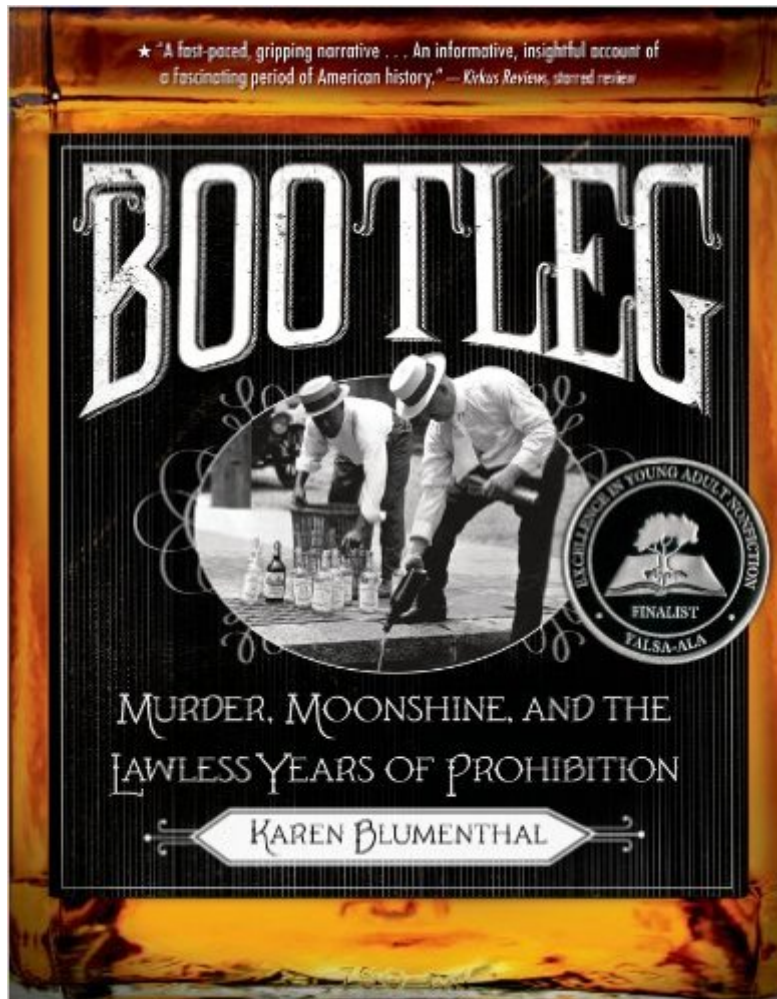


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# Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, And The Lawless Years Of Prohibition



## Synopsis

It began with the best of intentions. Worried about the effects of alcohol on American families, mothers and civic leaders started a movement to outlaw drinking in public places. Over time, their protests, petitions, and activism paid off—when a Constitutional Amendment banning the sale and consumption of alcohol was ratified, it was hailed as the end of public drunkenness, alcoholism, and a host of other social ills related to booze. Instead, it began a decade of lawlessness, when children smuggled (and drank) illegal alcohol, the most upright citizens casually broke the law, and a host of notorious gangsters entered the public eye. Filled with period art and photographs, anecdotes, and portraits of unique characters from the era, this fascinating book looks at the rise and fall of the disastrous social experiment known as Prohibition. Karen Blumenthal's *Bootleg* is a 2011 Kirkus Best Teen Books of the Year title. One of School Library Journal's Best Nonfiction Books of 2011. YALSA Excellence in Nonfiction Finalist in 2012.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

As I've said in reviews before, the era of American Prohibition completely and utterly fascinates me for more reasons that I'd care to cite. Because I've had the good fortune to read so many of the scholarly efforts exploring this unique period in U.S. history, I've now been directed toward some of the books targeted at readers much younger than I

and I'm giving Karen Blumenthal's *BOOTLEG: MURDER, MOONSHINE, AND THE LAWLESS YEARS OF PROHIBITION* an enthusiastic thumbs up. It's a quick read, briskly covering approximately 100 years of American background. How can that be given the fact that Prohibition itself only lasted 13 years? Well, Blumenthal rightly explores the decades that led up to this grand social experiment as there were several important events that culturally set the stage for a voting electorate to get behind such a daunting political achievement. That's a reality many books leave out or only cover superficial; to her credit, Blumenthal embraces what effect Morris Sheppard, Carrie Nation, and a handful of important others had on society-at-large. At a lean 130 pages, *BOOTLEG* clearly doesn't fathom the depths of these events. Instead, Blumenthal keeps the target focused on young readers, choosing to present perhaps only the more colorful players that set America on the path to enacting the Eighteenth Amendment. In fact, the first half of her work concentrates on the formative incidents, leaving the second half free to investigate the people who made Prohibition what it was: bootlegger Bill McCoy, cultural pioneer Henry Ford, and (naturally) mobster Al Capone. Because I have read so much of this subject matter, it would be easy to brush aside *BOOTLEG* and criticize its brevity. However, it's precisely because I have read so much that I can attest to the book serving as one of the best functional explanations of how a nation got itself into such a predicament and what lengths they were forced to consider to get itself out of it. Sure, it's a quick read "I took it all in in a single sitting of a few hours" but it was a great summation of why *The Roaring Twenties* properly earned the moniker. **HIGHEST RECOMMENDATION POSSIBLE.** Adults might not be fulfilled but young one and teens looking for a terrific book for a book report or to expand on what you've learned in class couldn't do better than sharing a few hours with Karen Blumenthal's *BOOTLEG: MURDER, MOONSHINE, AND THE LAWLESS YEARS OF PROHIBITION*. It's a dynamic telling of a fairly dark era in America's past.

This fascinating new narrative nonfiction book delves into the story of Prohibition, a unique and colorful decade in our country's history. Author Karen Blumenthal, a long-time journalist with the Wall Street Journal, puts her considerable writing skills to good use in explaining how the great social revolution known as Prohibition, which was supposed to forever end drunkenness, reduce crime, and improve the lives of America's families, led instead to a culture of lawlessness, bribery, gangsters, and even murder. Blumenthal goes back to the earliest days of the Pilgrims to trace the history of liquor in America, noting that rum was almost a form of currency in the earliest days of the

country. In the 19th century, taverns multiplied, as did concerns about excessive drinking, leading to the formation of the temperance movement, who at first worked toward drinking in moderation. Soon, however, the movement changed its platform to total abstinence. The author profiles some of the most important personalities from the temperance movement, such as Morris Sheppard, the "boy orator of Texas" who was the first to introduce a constitutional amendment against "an evil that will prove to be the source of the nation's death," and Carrie Nation, the infamous "bar smasher" who believed she was on a mission from God to destroy saloons. The temperance movement was the first to put women in leadership positions, and forever changed women's influence in politics. The political machinations of the "dries" to get the 18th amendment passed could spur many interesting discussions about parallel political movements today, and the whole saga of the rise and fall of the temperance movement is made all-too-contemporary in Blumenthal's lively narrative, which is full of personal anecdotes as well as sweeping analysis of the failures and limited successes of the prohibition movement. The book includes a glossary of some of the colorful prohibition and temperance vocabulary (i.e. "real McCoy, hooch, moonshine, flapper, etc.) as well as a detailed bibliography (both books and websites) source notes, and an index. The book is handsomely illustrated with many period photographs as well as cartoons and newspaper clippings. Several new YA series have come out about this era recently: Bright Young Things, by Anna Godbersen, and the Flappers series by Jillian Larkin. Bootleg would be a perfect read-along for both these series.

I can only give this book a 3 because it is such a brief history of the era. I think it is certainly factually correct and hits many of the highlights but so much of details have been left out. To get a really good read on the events leading up to and the end of this fascinating time in our country's history, buy Last Call by Daniel Okrent. Available at .com.

This is an extremely basic overview of prohibition written at a high school level, complete with discussion questions at the end. If this is what you're looking for, then great, you've found it. If not, then keep looking.

Great Book! This is the story, start to finish, of the era we know as Prohibition. It talks about the players involved, the social conditions at the time that drove their motivations, and the intentions of those involved. It also talks about the failure, the short-sighted vision of the authors and the true effects of 'The Noble Experiment.' More, she details the detrimental effects of the time period that

are still with us to this day. It's well written and well done, but more, you can read between the lines and see the similarities, the cause and effect, the different outcomes that COULD have been as they relate to our own social issues today. Specifically, We all get so up in arms in this country about drug smuggling, medical marijuana, abortion, gun control, even gay marriage. The two tidal waves of opinion that first started, and then ended prohibition are valuable lessons for us all today and are well presented by the author!

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