WCPS | Washington County Public Schools

US Studies II

Unit 2 DBQ

Prohibition: Why Did America Change Its Mind?

Prohibition: Why Did America Change Its Mind?

CV

THE AMERICAN ISSUE

U.S. IS VOTED DRY

36th STATE RATIFIES DRY AMENDMENT JAN. 16

DAILY MIRROR

FINAL

PROHIBITION ENDS AT LAST!

Overview: On January 16, 1919, Nebraska became the 36th state to ratify the 18th Amendment to the Constitution. The Amendment declared it illegal to manufacture, transport, and sell alcoholic beverages in the United States. More than two-thirds of the Senate, two-thirds of the House of Representatives, and three-fourths of the state legislatures approved the change. America would now be a dry country. And yet, 14 years later the Amendment was repealed. Americans had changed their minds. This Mini-Q asks why.

The Documents:

Document A: Prohibition Dance (cartoon)
Document B: Murder in America (chart)
Document C: Enforcement
Document D: Respect for the Law / Two-Tiered Justice
Document E: Lost Taxes

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Hook Exercise: Prohibition

Directions: Below are passages from the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act, which was written to support the Amendment. Your job is to read both and, with a partner, discuss the questions.

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18th Amendment (Ratified by the states, January, 1919)

Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within …the United States … is hereby prohibited.

Section 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Volstead Act (Passed by Congress, October, 1919)

No person shall on or after the date when the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States goes into effect, manufacture, sell, barter, transport, import, export, deliver, furnish, or possess any intoxicating liquor except as authorized in this Act….

Questions

1. How would you define "intoxicating liquor"?

2. With regard to alcoholic beverages, which of the following were prohibited by either the 18th Amendment or the Volstead Act that supported it?
   a. manufacturing
   b. selling
   c. transporting
   d. possession
   e. using (drinking)
   f. importing from Canada
   g. exporting to Mexico

3. Who will have the power to pass laws that require Americans to obey the Amendment?

4. Place yourself back in 1920. Do you expect prohibition to work? Why or why not?

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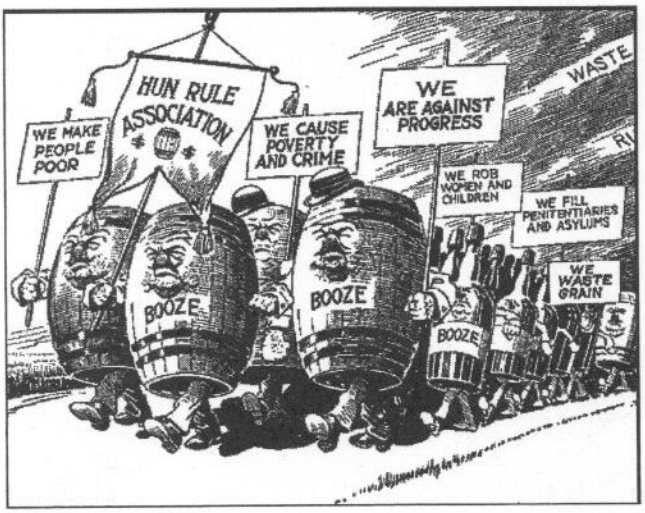
Prohibition: Why Did America Change Its Mind?

On December 17, 1917, the House of Representatives voted 282 to 128 to approve the 18th Amendment and prohibit the manufacture, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages in the United States. One day later, by a 47 to 8 vote, the US Senate agreed. During the next year, more than three-quarters of the states ratified, and in early 1920, the 18th Amendment went into effect. The country was now officially **dry**.



Prohibition passed for several reasons. For one thing, it rode the coattails of the **Progressive Movement**. That is, a number of states decided that drinking was behind some of America's most serious problems – problems like corruption, child abuse, crime, unemployment, and worker safety. Also, John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford saw drinking as a huge drag on the economy. Drunken workers and absentee workers were not good for American business. For these reasons, individual states took action. By the time America entered World War I in 1917, twenty-six states had voted themselves dry.

World War I overwhelmed the **wets** as they tried to oppose the push for Prohibition. Many Americans believed that spending money on beer, wine, and whiskey when the nation needed all its resources to fight in Europe was unpatriotic. Others went further. Germany was the main enemy in the war. Wasn't it true that many of America's major breweries – Pabst, Blatz, Schlitz, Budweiser – had German names? German-Americans and their breweries were an easy target. Also there were the Jews and their Sabbath wine, and those hard-drinking, slum-dwelling Irishmen, Italians, and Greeks. Prohibition was a way to clean up the cities and the people in them.

Once the 18th Amendment passed Congress, it was then necessary to create legislation to carry it out. This took the form of the famous **Volstead Act**. Among other provisions, the Volstead Act defined a drink as intoxicating if it contained more than 1% alcohol. This made beer and wine illegal, which came as a surprise to many. Workers who supported the 18th Amendment had been assured that it would only apply to hard liquor. When wine and beer were outlawed there was immediate criticism. In fact, President Woodrow Wilson vetoed the Volstead Act because he thought it was too strict. Congress quickly overrode the veto not daring to appear soft to their dry supporters.

Beginning in 1922 and continuing for the next ten years, *Literary Digest* magazine conducted annual polls to measure how Americans felt about Prohibition. In 1922, nearly 80% of Americans were in general support; only about 20% were against Prohibition. Ten years later those numbers were turned upside-down. In 1932, three out of every four Americans wanted **repeal**.

Congressmen read the polls. In 1933 by a huge majority, both the Senate and the House voted to remove the 18th Amendment. It was the first and only time in American history that an amendment to the Constitution has been repealed.

This Mini-Q asks why this turn-around took place. In other words, *why did America change its mind about Prohibition*?

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Background Essay Questions

1. What did the 18th Amendment prohibit?

2. Prohibition "rode the coattails of the Progressive Movement." What does that mean?

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3. In what ways might alcohol slow down business production?

4. How did World War I help the 18th Amendment get ratified?

5. The 18th Amendment was not very popular in Milwaukee. Can you explain why?

6. Define each of the following:

dry

Progressive Movement

wets

Volstead Act

repeal

1920 – January 16, 12:01 AM. America goes dry

1922 – First radio broadcast of a baseball game

1925 – First National Spelling Bee

1927 – Charles Lindbergh flies across Atlantic

1929 – St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago. 6 gangsters die

1933 – Prohibition is repealed

Understanding the Question and Pre-Bucketing

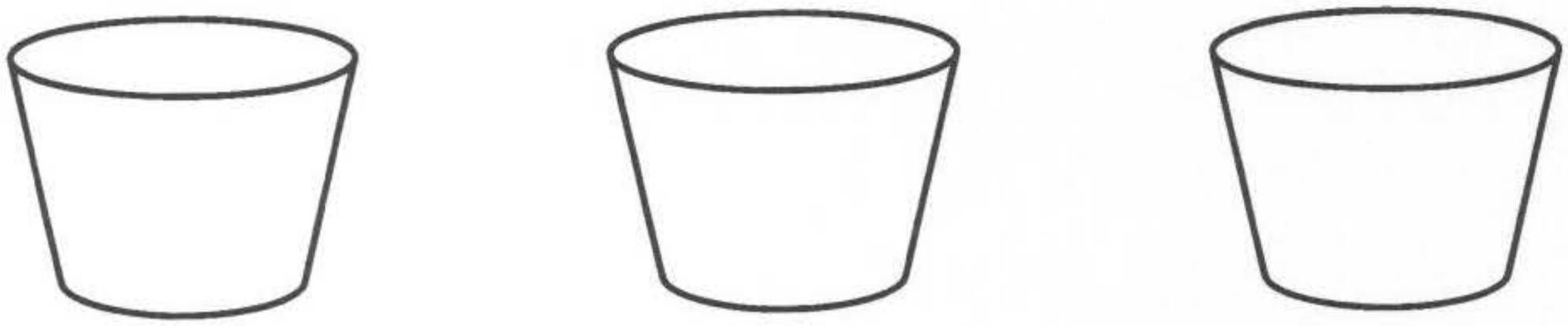
1. What is the analytical question asked by this Mini-Q?

2. What terms in the question need to be defined?

3. Rewrite the question in your own words.

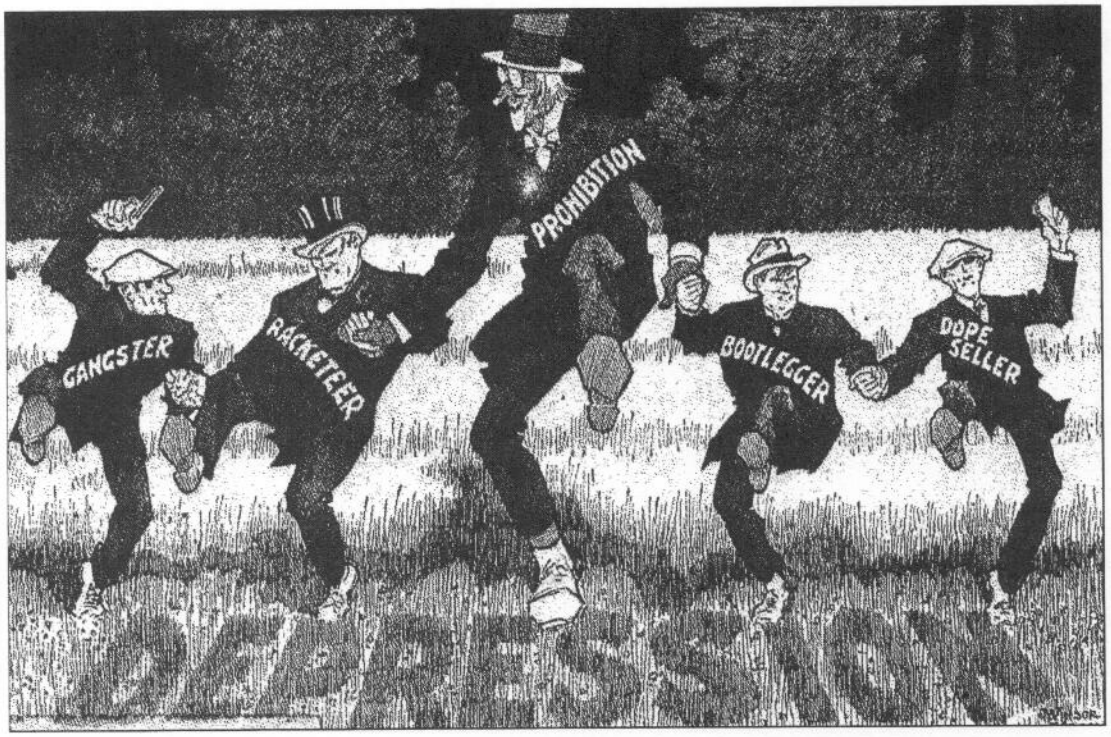
Pre-Bucketing

Directions: Using any clues from the Mini-Q question and the document titles on the cover page, guess the analytical categories and label the buckets. We suggest a three-bucket format, but there may be other possibilities.



Document A

Source: Cartoonist, Winsor McCay. Early 1930s.



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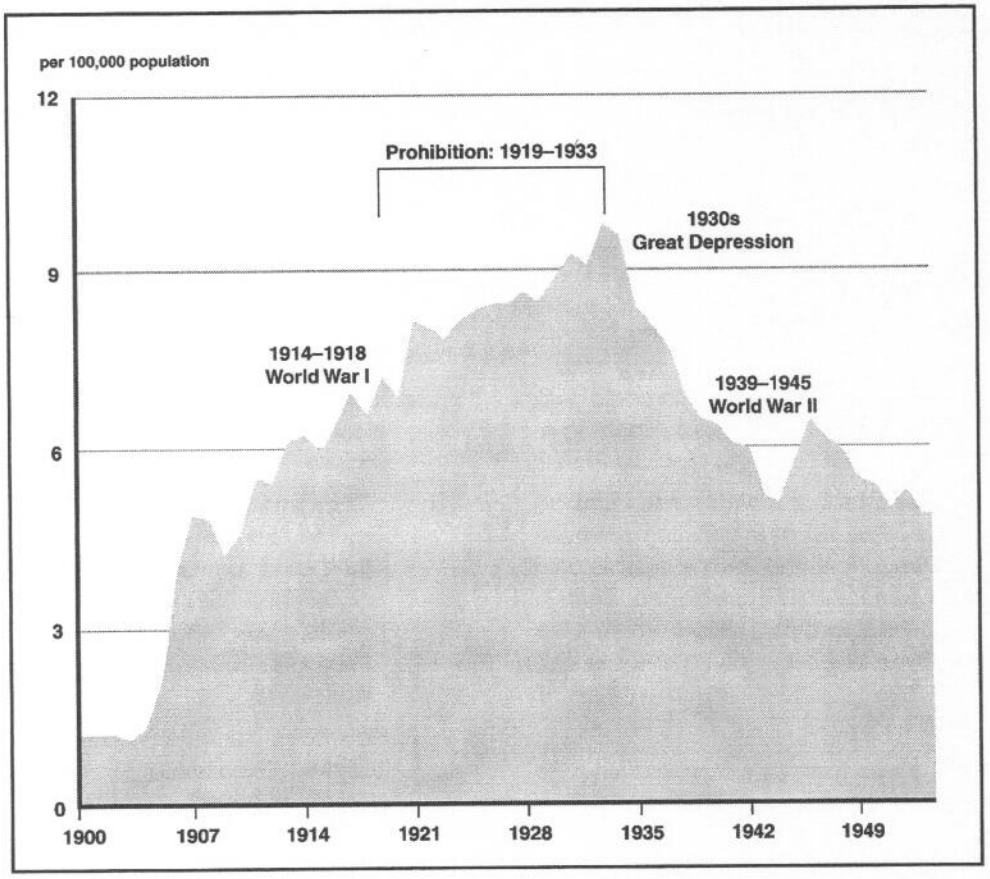
Document B

Source: US Census and *FBI Uniform Crime Reports* in *Drug War Facts*, 6th Edition, 2008.

Homicides per 100,000 population
1900 - 1953



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Document C

Source: Frederic J. Haskin, *The American Government*, Washington DC, 1923.

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The Prohibition Unit of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, which is charged with enforcing prohibition … is an organization headed by a commissioner established in Washington, with State and regional directors, State agents and flying squadrons (quick strike enforcement units) stationed throughout the country. This force numbers from 3,000 to 3,500….

The stories of prohibition enforcement are more absorbing than detective tales…. One still operated successfully for months in a house adjacent to a police station. The moonshiners had cut through the wall … so that the smoke and fumes of the still escaped up the chimney of the station house….

Smuggling from Mexico and Canada has been successful on a large scale because it is an utter impossibility to patrol the thousands of miles of border…. (B)ootleggers … maintain large fleets of trucks and automobiles running on regular schedules between Mexican and Canadian points and cities such as St. Louis, Kansas City, and Denver.

On the Atlantic Coast the smugglers are so numerous and so active that there is at all times … a rum fleet standing off or anchored outside the 3-mile limit near New York and New Jersey. The fleet consists of vessels of all kinds and sizes that bring their … cargoes from the Bermudas or the West Indies, or even from across the Atlantic. As long as they remain outside the 3-mile limit this Government cannot interfere with them and they are able to make their deliveries to bootleggers that slip out to them under cover of darkness in motor speed boats.

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Document D

Source: Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Deputy U.S. Attorney General for Prohibition Enforcement, *The Inside of Prohibition*, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis, 1929.

(T)he very men who made the Prohibition law are violating it.... How can you have the heart to prosecute a bootlegger, send a man to jail for six months or a year for selling a pint or a quart of whiskey, when you know for a fact that the men who make the laws ... are themselves patronizing bootleggers?

I have not lived in Washington all these years without becoming well acquainted with the fact that many Congressmen and Senators ... are persistent violators of the Volstead Act. Senators and Congressmen have appeared on the floors in a drunken condition. Bootleggers infest the halls and corridors of Congress and ply their trade there.

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Document E

Source: Leslie Gordon, *The New Crusade*, Cleveland, The Crusaders Inc., 1932.

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> (B)efore prosperity can return in this country the budgets of local and national governments must be balanced. If the liquor now sold by bootleggers was legally sold, regulated, and taxed, the (tax) income would pay the interest on the entire local and national (debt) and leave more than $200,000,000 for … urgently needed purposes.

Document Analysis

1 Why didn't the federal local governments collect an excise tax on alcohol during Prohibition?

2. How does this document help explain why the 18th Amendment was repealed?

Bucketing – Getting Ready to Write

Bucketing

Look over all the documents and organize them into your final buckets. Write final bucket labels under each bucket and place the letters of the documents in the buckets where they belong. It is legal to put a document in more than one bucket. Remember, your buckets are going to become your body paragraphs.

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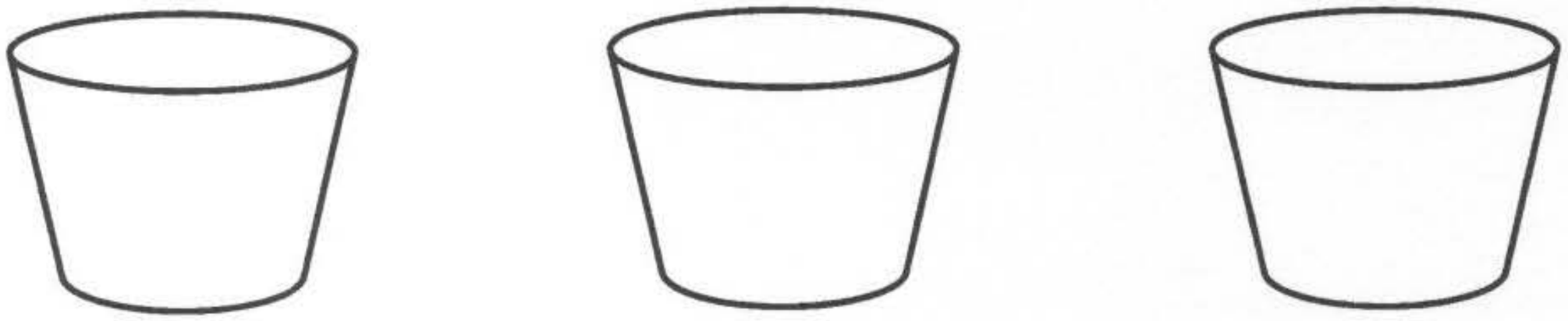
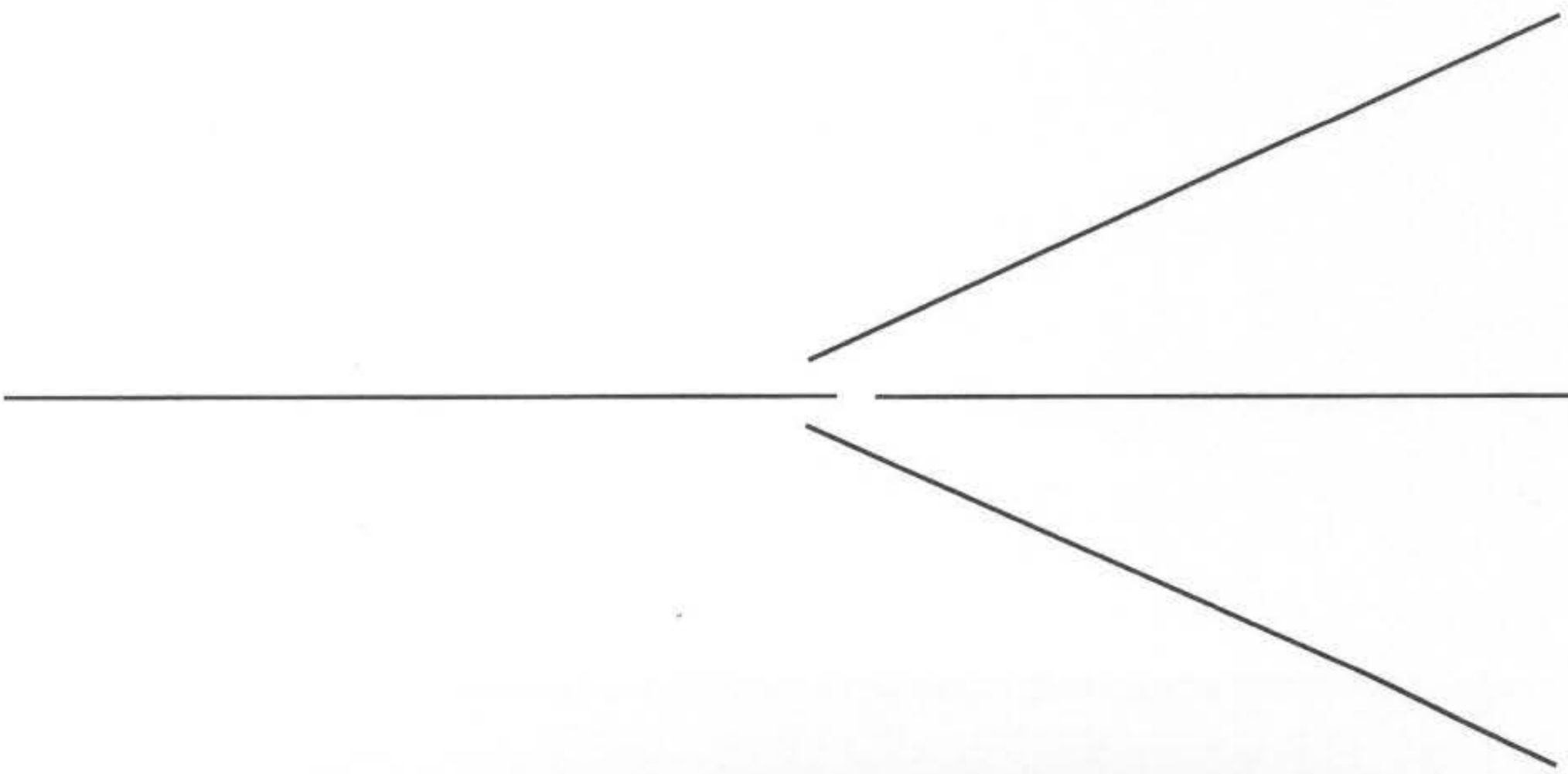


Thesis Development and Roadmap

On the chickenfoot below, write your thesis and your roadmap. Your thesis is always an opinion and answers the Mini-Q question. The roadmap is created from your bucket labels and lists the topic areas you will examine in order to prove your thesis.



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From Thesis to Essay Writing

Mini-Q Essay Outline Guide

Working Title

Paragraph #1

Grabber

Background

Stating the question with key terms defined

Thesis and roadmap

Paragraph #2

Baby Thesis for bucket one

Evidence: supporting detail from documents with document citation

Argument: connecting evidence to the thesis

Paragraph #3

Baby Thesis for bucket two

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #4

Baby Thesis for bucket three

Evidence

Argument

Paragraph #5

Conclusion: Restatement of main idea along with possible insight or wrinkle

Student Mini-Q Lined Paper

Student Mini-Q Lined Paper

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