

Real-life Antagonists: Al Capone

Name _____

Al Capone, also known as Scarface, was one of America's most infamous and violent crime bosses. He was born in New York in 1899. He dropped out of school in sixth grade after hitting a teacher and began working a series of odd jobs at places including a bowling alley, candy store, and ammunition plant. Capone paired these jobs with life in a "kid gang"—a group of young troublemakers engaging in vandalism and petty crime on the New York streets. Capone also became a member of the James Street Boys Gang, led by Johnny Torrio.

Capone earned his notorious nickname at the Harvard Inn before turning twenty-one. While bartending at the Inn, Capone uttered a demeaning comment about the sister of a man named Frank Galluccio. Galluccio immediately took offense and stuck Capone's left cheek with a knife. The incident resulted in Capone's iconic nickname - Scarface.

In 1920, Capone traveled from New York to Chicago with Torrio and became the city's crime leader in 1925 after Torrio went back to Italy. As leader, Capone engaged in numerous illegal activities in Chicago including gambling and fighting. Capone's reign coincided with a significant time period in American history—Prohibition, an era in which the production, sale, and consumption of alcohol were all considered against the law. Capone acted in direct opposition to Prohibition by engaging in bootlegging, or illegal selling of alcohol. He ruled by force and intimidation. Businesses that refused to buy alcohol from him were often destroyed or bombed. Business owners were sometimes tortured or killed. His unlawful actions led to him accumulating a large sum of "dirty" money, and by 1927, his fortune was estimated at 100 million dollars. Because he had made deals with the city's mayor and police force, the violent and criminal activities propagated by Capone and his gang went unchecked for nearly seven years.

In 1927, Capone was finally brought to court, but not for his actions with the gang—for 22 counts of income tax evasion. Capone had been ducking out of paying his taxes, and it cost him dearly. He was eventually also charged for his role in bootlegging and violating Prohibition laws. He was sentenced to eleven years in prison and was ordered to pay a fine of \$50,000. After eight years in prison, Capone was released after contracting a severe illness; he moved to Florida and died of cardiac arrest in 1947, having fallen significantly from his criminal heyday.

- 1. How did Capone establish his reputation as a prominent gang figure at an early age?**
 - a. By dropping out of high school
 - b. By becoming the leader of the James Street Boys Gang in New York
 - c. By becoming a member of several gangs early in his life
 - d. By working jobs at many different places

- 2. Which of the following is not a state that Capone traveled to during his lifetime?**
 - a. New York
 - b. Colorado
 - c. Illinois
 - d. Florida

- 3. Which inference is the best possible explanation for why Capone's nickname "Scarface" stuck?**
- a. It made Capone seem more intimidating to other gangs and gang members over time.
 - b. It was a way to humiliate Capone for what happened at the inn.
 - c. Capone preferred the nickname to his own birth name.
 - d. Capone gave scars to rival gang members that he disliked.
- 4. How did Capone use the Prohibition era to his economic advantage?**
- a. By arresting individuals who violated Prohibition laws and collecting their bounty.
 - b. By buying large quantities of illegal alcohol for personal use.
 - c. By becoming a middleman between the government and the alcohol business.
 - d. By intimidating business owners into buying alcohol from him.
- 5. What is most ironic about the manner in which Capone was finally brought to justice?**
- a. He did not serve his entire prison sentence.
 - b. He was jailed for evading taxes instead of for murder and violence
 - c. His entire gang was not jailed with him.
 - d. Members of the gang were the ones who turned Capone in.
- 6. Why might Capone have been released prior to completing his full prison sentence?**
- a. Treatment for his illness required access to fresh air.
 - b. It was unethical to keep a terminally ill person in prison.
 - c. His gang petitioned for his release.
 - d. He needed medicine from Florida to treat his illness.
- 7. Which of the following would be another appropriate title for this passage?**
- a. "Al Capone's Most Notorious Deeds"
 - b. "The Rise and Fall of Scarface"
 - c. "Alcatraz: Capone's Prison Life"
 - d. "Capone and Torrio: A Lifelong Friendship"