

## A Mirror for the Intemperate, c. 1830

### Introduction

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The temperance crusade against liquor consumption was a central element of reform movements of the antebellum period. It drew support from middle-class Protestants, skilled artisans, clerks, shopkeepers, free blacks, and Mormons, as well as many conservative clergy and some Southerners who were otherwise hostile to reform. This broadside, “A Mirror for the Intemperate,” reflects the movement’s concerns that alcohol consumption led to economic waste, polluted youth, crime, poverty, and domestic violence.

“A Mirror for the Intemperate,” printed in Boston, c. 1830, features illustrations, poems, and extracts exemplifying the dangers of alcohol. One illustration features a barroom scene where a brawl has broken out. Another shows a “moderate drinker” being overtaken by a many-headed “hydra monster” representing alcohol. Each of the monster’s heads represents a type of liquor—brandy, rum, whiskey, and gin—and a lady temperance takes on the monster, killing it one head at a time.

The broadside also features an “Extract from the dying Declaration of Nicholas Fernandez, who, with nine others, were executed in front of Cadiz Harbor in December, 1829, for Piracy and Murder.” Fernandez blames his fate on “the habitual use of ardent spirits” and warns parents to teach their children “the fatal consequences of Intemperance.”

### *Excerpt*

Parents into whose hands this my dying declaration may fall will perceive that I date the commencement of my departure from the paths of rectitude and virtue, from the moment when I become addicted to the habitual use of ardent spirits—and it is my sincere prayer that if they value the happiness of their children—if they desire their welfare here, and their eternal well being hereafter, that they early teach them the fatal consequences of Intemperance!

### Questions for Discussion

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Read the document introduction, examine the image, and apply your knowledge of American history in order to answer the questions that follow.

1. Choose one of the following four arguments in the broadside against alcohol: that it contributed to crime and poverty; that it resulted in economic waste; that it polluted youth; or that it caused male abuse of a wife. Prepare a paragraph-length explanation of your argument as if you were a supporter of the Temperance Movement.

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2. Why did the Temperance Movement, unlike the movements for women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery, attract a broad base of supporters?
3. What arguments at that time might have been offered to continue the production and consumption of alcohol?
4. To what extent do the effects of the Temperance Movement continue to effect local laws? (Examine your community regulations.)

