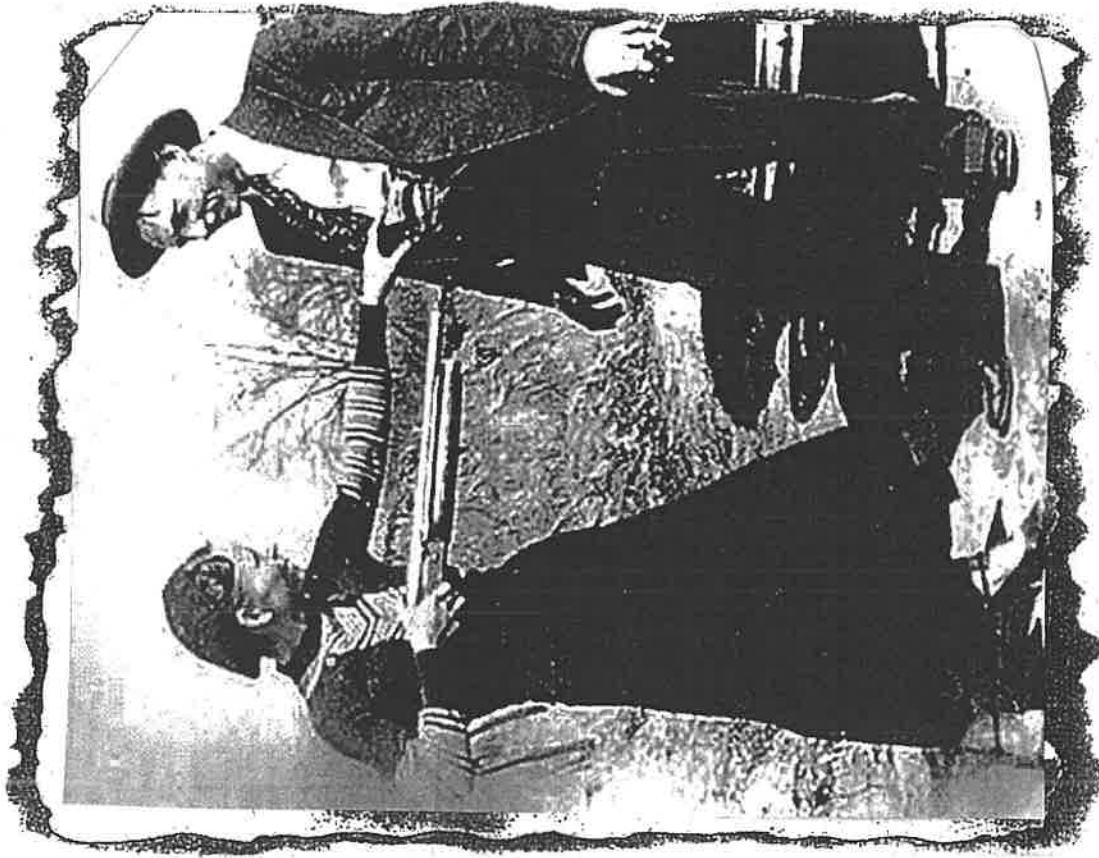


Bonnie and Clyde



He was the "Texas Rattlesnake." She was "Suicide Sal." Together they drove through Texas, robbing and killing at every turn. They never got rich. In fact, they never managed to steal more than \$1,500 at any one time. But they left a trail of blood across the land. It was this willingness to kill that made Bonnie and Clyde famous. From April 1932 until May 1934, they shot and killed a dozen people.

² Bonnie Parker met Clyde Barrow in 1930. She was a 19-year-old waitress

Early in their careers in crime, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow took time out for some houseplay. In this photo taken by a gang member, Bonnie pretends to rob Clyde at gunpoint. Later, they left the photo behind while escaping a raid.

who was bored with life. She wanted excitement and danger. That was exactly what 21-year-old Clyde seemed to offer. Clyde liked to gamble. He also liked to steal cars. When he needed money, he robbed stores or gas stations. Bonnie decided to hook up with him and have some "fun."

3 Unfortunately for Bonnie, Clyde wasn't a very good thief. At one break-in, he forgot to wear gloves. He left fingerprints all over the place. Soon after Bonnie met him, he was caught and sent to jail.

4 Bonnie could have walked away from Clyde right then. But she didn't. She was in love with him. So she visited him in jail, slipping him a gun that she had taped to her leg. That night, Clyde broke out of jail. He was quickly recaptured, however, and sent to Eastman, one of the toughest prisons in the country. Clyde served two years there. When he got out, he was angry and bitter. He vowed never to spend another day in prison. "I'll die first," he declared.

5 Clyde meant what he said. With Bonnie at his side, he began robbing again. But now he was tougher. In

fact, he was ruthless. He carried guns wherever he went. And he was ready to use them. On April 28, 1932, Clyde robbed a jewelry store in Hillsboro, Texas. He still wasn't a very smooth criminal, however, and during the robbery he panicked. He shot the 65-year-old owner through the heart.

6 Now Clyde was a murderer as well as a thief. Still, Bonnie remained loyal to him. In fact, she became as cold and hard as he was. To her, killing became a kind of joke. She had Clyde take pictures of her holding a machine gun. In one photo, she pretended to be robbing Clyde. In another, she and Clyde were both holding pistols and grinning wildly.

7 Like Clyde, Bonnie figured she would die young. She fully expected to be shot full of police bullets someday. That attitude earned her the nickname Suicide Sal. Bonnie actually wrote a poem by that title. The poem told the story of a woman who fell in love with a "professional killer." One part read:

I couldn't help loving him madly;
For him even now I would die.

Bonnie also wrote a poem called "The Story of Bonnie and Clyde." It included these lines:

They don't think they're too
tough or desperate,
They know that the law
always wins;
They've been shot at before,
But they do not ignore
That death is the wages of sin.

8 By the spring of 1933, Bonnie and Clyde had murdered seven people. They killed an old shopkeeper for \$28. Clyde killed a sheriff and a deputy who spoke to him at a barn dance. Clyde shot one man on Christmas Day just so he could take a ride in the man's car.

9 That June, Bonnie and Clyde were traveling down a country road. Clyde was driving. He was usually an excellent driver. But on this day, he failed to see that a bridge was closed for repairs. He tried to stop at the last minute, but it was too late. The car flew over a steep bank, crashed, and exploded in a ball of fire. Clyde was thrown clear of the wreck. Bonnie, however, was trapped in the flames.

By the time Clyde pulled her out, her whole body was badly burned.

11 Clyde took her to a nearby farmhouse. There a farmer's wife bandaged Bonnie as best she could. But Bonnie was in terrible pain. For a while, it looked as though she might die. Clyde nursed Bonnie all summer. He also continued to rob and kill. He rounded up some other thugs to help him. One was his brother Buck.

12 That July, Buck was killed in a shoot-out with police. It happened at a park where the outlaws were camping. Clyde and Bonnie were there, too, but they managed to escape. Although Clyde was hit with four bullets, he did not fall. He helped Bonnie swim across a river. Then he stole a car and whisked her up into the hills.

13 Bonnie and Clyde spent the next few weeks in misery. Both of them needed medical attention. But they didn't dare go to a hospital. So, as Bonnie put it, "we lived in little ravines, secluded woods, down side roads for days that stretched into weeks. We were . . . so sick that time went by without our knowing it. We lost track of the days."

14 By September, Clyde was feeling better. He took Bonnie to visit her

mother, Emma Parker. Mrs. Parker was horrified by her daughter's appearance. She said, "Bonnie was . . . unable to walk without help. She was miserably thin and looked much older. Her leg was drawn up under her. Her body was covered in scars."

15 Time was clearly running out for Bonnie and Clyde. Winter came. Still, the couple often had to sleep out in the open or in their unheated car. They moved from place to place, sticking to backwoods and small towns. By now, though, they weren't safe anywhere. A lawman named Frank Hamer was closing in on them.

16 In May of 1934, Hamer and his men set up an ambush near Gibland, Louisiana. On May 24, Bonnie and Clyde approached in a stolen car. Hamer's men shouted at them to halt. Said one officer, "We wished to give them a chance."

17 "But," added Hamer, "they both reached for their guns."

18 Before Bonnie or Clyde could get off a shot, officers blasted them with a total of 187 bullets.

19 Clyde slumped in his seat, dead. Bonnie, too, died instantly. The car crashed into a hillside. When Hamer and his men got to it, they found a

machine gun lying in Bonnie's lap. Clyde's hand still rested on a sawed-off shotgun.

20 In the end, then, Bonnie Parker had been right. She had predicted this day would come. Her poem called "The Story of Bonnie and Clyde" concluded with these words:

Some day they'll go down
together;

And they'll bury them side by side;

To a few it'll be grief—

To the law a relief—

But it's death for Bonnie and Clyde.



If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on page 55 and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on page 56.

Reading Time: Lesson 1

Minutes

Seconds

Machine Gun Kelly



The police called him Public Enemy Number One. His wife, Kathryn, nicknamed him "Machine Gun" Kelly.

To be sure, George R. Kelly was a criminal. There is no doubt about that. And he certainly

talked like a real tough guy. Kelly liked to brag that "no copper [police officer] will ever take me alive." But was he all that bad? Was he the terror that the press made him out to be? Or was Kelly just an easygoing thief who happened to marry the wrong woman?

George Kelly, an easygoing petty thief, got into real trouble when he kidnaped a rich oilman. Both "Machine Gun" Kelly and his wife, Kathryn, were given life sentences for the crime. Kathryn masterminded.

² Kelly began his life of crime as a bootlegger during the 1920s. (A bootlegger is someone who sells illegal liquor.) But he wasn't very good at it.

The police usually caught him. They either kicked him out of town or gave him a few months in jail. As one person put it, Kelly was "a good-natured slob, a bootlegger who spilled more [liquor] than he delivered."

³ That changed in 1927, the year Kelly met Kathryn Shannon. Before their fateful meeting, Kelly didn't even like guns. And he never hurt anyone. But Kathryn was an ambitious and ruthless woman. She soon saw that despite all the tough talk, George Kelly was really just a marshmallow. "You've got to be able to hurt people," she told him. "You've got to be tough or nobody will respect you."

⁴ Kathryn and Kelly were married, and she set out to toughen him up. She gave him a machine gun. She made him practice shooting walnuts off fence posts. In time, he became good enough to write his name on a wall with bullets. Kathryn also made sure that Kelly's reputation grew. She dreamed up phony stories about the

big banks Kelly robbed. Kathryn even gave away empty bullet shells saying, "Have a souvenir of my husband, Machine Gun Kelly."

⁵ By 1931 Kelly had moved up the criminal ladder. The former bootlegger began to rob real banks. But he picked small country banks without much money. That was not good enough for Kathryn. She wanted to do something big. She had read stories about kidnapers getting huge ransoms. She began nagging Kelly to kidnap someone with lots of money. It was the only way to get rich, she insisted.

⁶ "Too risky," Kelly told her. But she kept pushing. Finally—as usual—Machine Gun Kelly gave in. He joined up with Albert Bates, another petty crook. They agreed to kidnap a rich Oklahoma City oilman named Charles Urschel.

⁷ On the night of July 22, 1933, Kelly and Bates broke into Urschel's home. They found the oilman and his wife playing cards with another couple. That confused Kelly. He was so incompetent that he hadn't bothered to find out what Urschel looked like. "Which one's Urschel?" he barked.

⁸ Neither man answered. "All right," Kelly said at last, "we'll take both of you."

⁹ Kelly and Bates drove off with the two men. After a while, Kelly thought to look in their wallets. Only then did he discover who the real Urschel was. He and Bates kicked the other man out of the car, then continued on with the blindfolded Urschel.

¹⁰ They took the oilman to a ranch owned by Kathryn's parents in Paradise, Texas. From there, the Kellys demanded a ransom of \$200,000. The Urschel family agreed to pay. But with Machine Gun Kelly in charge, collecting the money wasn't easy. Kelly missed one meeting because he couldn't get his car started. Finally, after eight days, he collected the ransom.

¹¹ Kathryn now wanted to kill Urschel. For once in his life, Kelly stood up to her. He convinced Bates and Kathryn to let Urschel go. Kelly pointed out that shooting him would "be bad for future business."

¹² All this time, Charles Urschel had been alert and listening. The oilman had a keen memory. He noticed many

details about his kidnapping. He hoped the police could later use these details to catch his captors. Urschel noted that the car ride had taken about 12 hours over bumpy roads. He also noticed that a plane passed overhead twice a day. He even figured out the times—9:15 A.M. and 5:45 P.M.

¹³ After his release, Urschel gave these facts to agents from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). They knew what the 12-hour ride over bumpy roads meant. It meant the ranch was within 300 miles of Oklahoma City. The agents also studied hundreds of flight plans. They found the spot where daily flights crossed at 9:15 A.M. and 5:45 P.M. That spot was Paradise.

¹⁴ The FBI was now hot on the trail of Machine Gun Kelly. Agents labeled him Public Enemy Number One. Kelly and his wife ran, but they couldn't

hide. Investigators tracked them down at a cheap hotel in Memphis, Tennessee. Three police officers burst into Kelly's room. One shoved a shotgun into Kelly's stomach. Poor old Machine Gun gave up without a fight. "I've been waiting for you all night," he said softly.

¹⁵ At their trial, Kathryn turned against her husband. She tried to put all the blame on him. No one listened. Machine Gun, Kathryn, and Bates all got life sentences. It was a pitiful end for this so-called tough guy. Prison life at Leavenworth and Alcatraz was hard on George Machine Gun Kelly. His fellow inmates often laughed at him. They even gave him a new nickname—"Pop Gun" Kelly.

¹⁶ Just before he died in 1954, Kelly wrote a letter to his former victim, Charles Urschel. "These five words

seem written in fire on the walls of my cell," Kelly wrote. "Nothing can be worth this!" He might have said the same thing about his marriage to Kathryn.



If you have been timed while reading this article, enter your reading time below. Then turn to the Words-per-Minute Table on page 147 and look up your reading speed (words per minute). Enter your reading speed on the graph on page 148.

Reading Time: **Lesson 11**

Minutes

Seconds

**Compare and Contrast Criteria Chart
“Bonnie and Clyde” and “Machine Gun Kelly”**

“Bonnie and Clyde”	CRITERIA	“Machine Gun Kelly”
	Qualities that Made Criminals Dangerous	
	Crimes Committed	
	Weapons Used	
	Outcome for Criminal	

Top Hat Organizer
“Bonnie and Clyde” and “Machine Gun Kelly”

“Bonnie and Clyde”	“Machine Gun Kelly”
1)	1)
2)	2)
3)	3)
4)	4)
5)	5)
6)	6)
7)	7)
8)	8)
Similarities	
1)	4)
2)	5)
3)	6)

Compare and Contrast Conclusions “Bonnie and Clyde” and “Machine Gun Kelly”



Name#:

Block:

1. Are Bonnie and Clyde and Machine Gun Kelly more alike or more different? Using multiple pieces of evidence from your Top Hat Organizer, explain your answer. Be sure to explain how those details prove your claim.
2. What is the principal difference between Bonnie and Clyde and Machine Gun Kelly that sets them apart from one another? What could be some causes for this difference?