



Wisconsin

Thinking about the Picture

1. What is this woman riding?
2. What can you tell about the woman from her expression?
3. Why do people enjoy riding motorcycles?

Harley-Davidson



Riding bicycles became popular in the United States in the late 1800s. Many people, however, wanted to travel faster. The answer was a bicycle with a motor. In 1885, Gottfried Daimler publicly showed his motorcycle in Germany. Mechanics in other countries invented new models. In 1903, William Harley and Arthur Davidson introduced their motorcycle in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That was how the Harley-Davidson Company began. Arthur's brothers William and Walter joined the company later.

In 1909, the company improved its engine. The new design had two cylinders that formed a "V-twin." Since then, other improvements have been made, but the same kind of engine is still used today.

Harley-Davidson began to sell motorcycles to the police and the military. During World War I, the U.S. Army bought 20,000 motorcycles, most of them Harleys. In World War II, the company sold more than 90,000 motorcycles for military use.

In the 1940s, Harley-Davidson began to sell black boots and leather jackets to its bikers. Soon this clothing was the uniform of "motorcycle culture." Bikes and leather jackets became symbols of rebellion against an older generation. Once there were 150 motorcycle companies in the United States. In 1953, Harley-Davidson became the only one.

In the 1970s, many bikers turned to Japanese motorcycles. They were less expensive. Harley-Davidson's share of the market dropped sharply. In 1983 the U.S. government placed a tax on imported heavyweight motorcycles. In 1987, the company asked that the tax be lifted.

Today Harleys are sold all around the world. The average owner is a man in his mid-40s, with a high income. He often rides with other bikers for fun.

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