



Impact of the Depression on People

Curriculum Alignment

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5
X	X		X	X



Instructional Purpose

- To analyze photos and written sources to describe the experience of people economically affected by the Depression
- To write a letter or diary entry taking on the role of someone living in the 1930s



Materials/Resources

1. Photos from the Depression (see Notes to Teacher for sources)
2. Brother, Can You Spare a Dime? (Handout 6A)
3. Voices of the Depression (Handout 6B)
4. What Can Photographs Tell Us? (Handout 6C)
5. Effects of the Depression (Handout 6D)
6. Pressures of the 1930s (Handout 6E)
7. Remembering the Depression (Handout 6F)



Vocabulary

hobo—a homeless person; sometimes refers to migrant workers

migratory workers—one who changes location periodically, especially by moving seasonally to follow the harvest



Activities

1. Play the song “**Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?**” (Handout 6A) which has been recorded by Woody Guthrie, and share the lyrics with students. Ask students what their reaction is to the song.
 - *What do you think about the title?*

- ◆ *What does it tell you about life in the Depression that there is a song written with this title?*
 - ◆ *What is the main idea of this song?*
2. Tell students that during the discussion in Lesson 2 they pretended to experience the crash of the stock market and they imagined what the effect of the Depression was on America. Tell students that today they are going to find out what it was like for some of the people who actually lived through the Depression.
 3. Have students get into groups of 3 to 4. Provide each group with at least one photo of people affected by the Depression and a copy of **Voices of the Depression** (Handout 6B). (Suggestions for photo sources are given in Notes to Teacher.) Have students fill out **What Can Photographs Tell Us?** (Handout 6C) and **Effects of the Depression** (Handout 6D), using their photo(s) and the excerpts. Have students share their photos and inferences with the class. Allow groups to ask questions so that everyone gets to see and think about each photo. (To give students a chance to see more photos, groups could switch photos after a designated amount of time and analyze a different picture.) After each report on a photo, ask additional questions to help students consider things they may not have thought about: for example, if there are children in the photo, ask if the students think the children are going to school; or if they are migratory workers how the children might be being educated. Encourage students to take on the questioning role as well to spur one another's thinking.
 4. Discuss student responses to the **Effects of the Depression** chart further. Use the following questions as a guide for discussion:
 - ◆ *Were there things that surprised you in the reading? How would the Depression change family relationships? (If you are reading the Irene Hunt novel *No Promises in the Wind* you could discuss the changes brought about in Josh's family in Chapter 1: How has the Depression changed life for Josh's family? What things that once were important to them are not anymore? How has the Depression changed his relationship with his father? How has the Depression changed Josh's father? What issues is Josh's father struggling with?)*
 - ◆ *How do you feel seeing these photos and reading the passages?*

- ♦ *What do you think should be done for these people—anything? Who should be responsible for doing something?*
 - ♦ *What do you think is the effect on the United States if people are experiencing these things? What might people expect of the government?*
5. Have students write a letter or a diary entry as if they are one of the people in the photos. Have them choose a specific person in one of the photos. They should write in the first person and describe such things as what their daily life is like, how they are feeling, what their fears are, what their dreams are, and what they think about their condition and the situation in the U.S.
 6. Explain to students that in order to help them organize the information they will be looking at for the rest of the unit, you are going to do a little demonstration. Get an empty shoebox and remove the lid. Set the box on one of its long sides. Get a small pile of books (enough to crush the box) and ask students what will happen if you put the books on the box. Demonstrate. Ask students how you could prevent the box from collapsing. Then do the same experiment with another shoebox, but with this one place cardboard supports inside it to prevent it from collapsing. Explain that through the next few lessons, students will see the ways that the Depression put pressures on the United States and how the American public and the government dealt with those pressures. Give each student **Pressures of the 1930s** (Handout 6E) and have students write pressures they already have discussed inside the arrows and think about what some other pressures and supports might have been. As students go through the unit, they will continue to add to the graphic with additional pressures and supports.

Homework

1. Read chapters 2 through 4 in *No Promises in the Wind*.
2. **Remembering the Depression Interviews** (Handout 6F). Interview someone who lived during the Depression about their experiences. Be prepared to share your findings in Lesson 9.

Extensions

1. Have students write about or discuss the following question: How are the images and experiences you have looked at today similar or different from conditions in America today? Does hearing the voices and stories of these people in the Depression change your feelings about people in poverty that you encounter today? What support structures are in place in the United States for the poor? How many of these date from the Depression era?
2. Listen to other songs from the Depression and analyze the emotions expressed in each. In what ways did songs reflect the experiences of people in the Depression?

Notes to Teacher

1. One excellent collection of photos for use in this lesson and throughout the unit, the *America Revisited 1920–1940* photo packet, can be obtained from Social Studies School Service, 1-800-421-4246 or <http://socialstudies.com>. Specific photos from the packet recommended for use in this lesson are 3.16, 3.17, 3.19, and 3.20. Additional photos can be found in library books. The Time-Life Series *Our American Century* has a volume titled “Hard Times: The 30s,” and pages 40–64 have several photos that students could use. Websites with photograph collections from the 1930s include the following:



- <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tshome.html>
 - <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ffsovhome.html>
 - <http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/lange/index.html>
2. The graphic **Pressures of the 1930s** is meant to help students think about the social and legal support structures that evolved or were established in the U.S. in response to the pressures of the 1930s. Students may add more arrows to demonstrate more pressures as needed, and they should use the stripes of the flag to write in supports, much like the cardboard supports to hold up the box in the demonstration. Vertical supports may also be drawn into the stripes to strengthen the visualization.

Assessment

- What Can photographs Tell Us? Sheet
- Pressures of the 1930s chart
- Diary entry/letter



Notes





Voices of the Depression

(Excerpted from Studs Terkel, *Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression*.)

1929 was pretty hard. I hoboed, I bummed, I begged for a nickel to get somethin' to eat. When I was hoboing sometimes ten or fifteen of us would be on the train . . . Sometimes we sent one hobo to walk, to see if there were any jobs open. Everybody was poor. We used to take a big pot and cook food, cabbage, meat, and beans all together. Twenty-five or thirty would be out on the side of the rail . . . They didn't have no mothers or sisters, they didn't have no home, they were dirty, they had overalls on, they didn't have no food, they didn't have anything. A man had to be on the road. Had to leave his wife, had to leave his mother, leave his family just to try to get money to live on. But he think: my dear mother tryin' to send her money, worryin'.

—Louis Banks

My mother'd send us to the soup line. If you happened to be one of the first ones in line, you didn't get anything but water that was on top. So we'd ask the guy that was ladling out the soup into buckets—everybody had to bring their own bucket to get the soup—he'd dip the greasy, watery stuff off the top. So we'd ask him to please dip down to get some meat and potatoes from the bottom of the kettle. Then we'd go across the street. One place had bread, large loaves of bread. Down the road just a little piece was a big shed and they gave milk. My sister and me would take two buckets each. And that's what we lived off for the longest time. I can remember one time, the only thing in the house to eat was mustard. My sister and I put so much mustard on biscuits that we got sick.

—Peggy Terry

Oh, I remember having to move out of our house. We had always lived in that house and we couldn't understand why we were moving out. I saw my two, three other uncles also moving out. And for the same reason. The bank had foreclosed on the loan. We all of us climbed into an old Chevy that my dad had. And then we were in California, and migratory workers. There were

five kids. Well, it was a strange life. We had been poor, but we knew every night there was a bed there, and that this was our room. There was a kitchen. But that all of a sudden changed. When we moved to California, we would work after school. Sometimes we wouldn't go. "Following the crops," we missed much school trying to get enough money to stay alive the following winter. We'd go to school two days sometimes, a week, two weeks, three weeks at most. We started counting how many schools we'd been to and we counted thirty-seven elementary schools.

—Cesar Chavez

I remember all of a sudden we had to move. My father lost his job and we moved into a double-garage. The landlord didn't charge us rent for seven years. We had a coal stove, and we had to each take turns, the three of us kids, to warm our legs. In the morning, we'd get out and get some snow and put it on the stove and melt it and wash around our faces. Put on our two pairs of socks on each hand and two pairs of socks on our feet and long underwear and lace it up with Goodwill shoes. My father had owned three or four homes. He lost these one by one. One family couldn't pay the rent.

—Dynamite Garland

My father spent two years painting his father's house. He painted it twice. It gave him something to do. It prevented him from losing all his self-respect. There were many, many people who were also out of work.

—Bob Leary

It was in my junior year of college and I came home for Christmas . . . I found the telephone disconnected. And this was when I realized that the world was falling apart. Imagine us without a telephone! When I finished school, I couldn't avoid facing the fact that we didn't have a cook any more, we didn't have a cleaning woman any more. Things were beginning to look a little shabby. My great-grandfather's house was lost, about to be sold for taxes. Our own house was sold. It was considered the most attractive house in town, about a hundred and fifty years old. Imagine my shock when it was sold for \$5,000 in back taxes. I never felt so old in my life as I felt the first two years out of college.

—Diana Morgan



What Can Photographs Tell Us?

What do you see?

First, list the people, objects, and setting in your photo.

People	Objects	Setting
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
-----	-----	-----
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Now describe the things you listed, based on what you see.

<p>What are they wearing (is it clean, dirty, fancy, workclothes, etc)? What are they doing? Are they sitting, standing, active, looking at or away from the camera?</p>	<p>What condition are the objects—worn out, good shape, brand new? What are they used for? What are the people doing with them?</p>	<p>Is the photo inside, outside, public place, home, special occasion?</p>
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Inferences: Based on your observations, list some inferences you can make about the people in this photo, their experiences, or what is going on in this photo.

1) _____

2) _____

Effects of the Depression



Using the people in *No Promises in the Wind*, the handout you just read, and the photos, complete the chart.

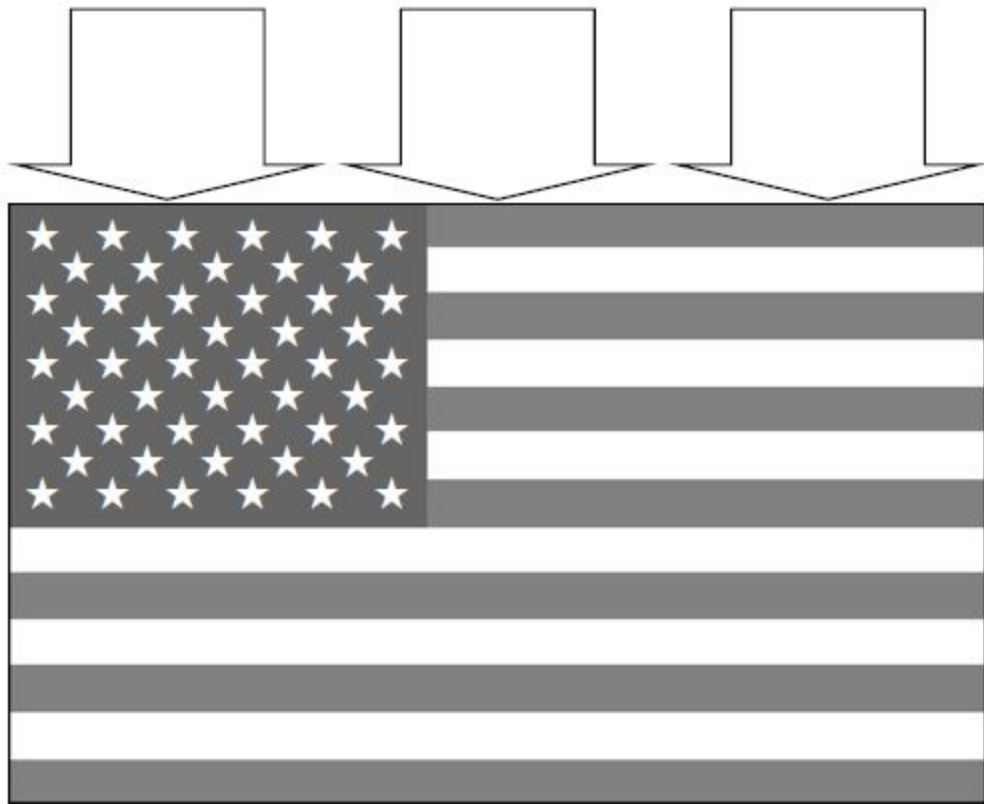
Person	Changes the person experienced	What do you think were the short-term effects of these changes?	What do you think might be some long-term effects of these changes for this person?

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Name _____ Date _____

Handout

Pressures of the 1930s



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Remembering the Depression

Many older people living today lived through the Depression, and that experience affects the way they live and see the world. Your teacher will tell you how many people to interview. These people need to be old enough to remember life in the Depression. Your grandparents, neighbors, or other community members might remember. The following questions are to help get you started; you might be surprised by the information you find out.

Before beginning your questions, explain what you are doing—that this is to help your class at school find out more about what life was like during the Depression.

About how old were you during the Depression?

What do you remember about life during the Depression? What do you remember doing? What things do you remember seeing?

How did the Depression change things for your family? Were you very aware of the Depression going on?

What important things do you think that young people today could learn from your experiences during the Depression?

Thank the person for his or her time.