



4-1-2014

# Great Depression of the 1930s

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## Recommended Citation

Hovan, Pamela, "Great Depression of the 1930s" (2014). *Lesson Plans*. Paper 21.  
<http://via.library.depaul.edu/tps-lesson-plans/21>

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## Great Depression of the 1930's

[Dust bowl farmers of west Texas in town by Dorothea Lange](#)

**Title:** Great Depression of the 1930's

**Type of Teaching Unit:** Lesson plan with activities

**Grade Levels:** 7-10

**Time Frame:** Two weeks

**Subject Matter:** American History, Folklore, Economy

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**Lesson Plan Description:** This teaching unit researches the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl Era. Teamed groups of students will research the American Memory website; journal ideas and together create storyboards to share with the entire class. Students are encouraged to find adults who grew up in this era and evolve these storyboards into a Power Point presentation or a play that could be performed for other students, faculty, family, etc. The final project will be digitally imaged into a CD-ROM format.

### **Curriculum Standards:**

**National History Standards: Era 8: Standard 1B** The student understands the causes and consequences of important resistance and revolutionary movements of the 20th century. (National Center for History in Schools, c1996).

**Illinois State Goal 15:** Understand economic systems, with an emphasis on the United States.

- 15.A.4d. Explain the effects of unemployment on the economy.
- 15.B.4b Analyze the impact of current events (e.g., weather/natural disasters, wars) on consumer prices.
- 15.D.4c Describe the impact of worker productivity (output per worker) on business, the worker and the consumer.

**Illinois State Goal 16:** Understand events, trends, individuals and movements shaping the history of Illinois, the United States and other nations.

- 16.B.5b (US) Analyze how United States political history has been influenced by the nations economics, social and environmental history.
- 16.C.4c (US) Describe how American economic institutions were shaped by industrialists, union leaders and groups including Southern migrants, Dust Bowl refugees, agricultural workers from Mexico and female workers since 1914.

## **Lesson Plan with Activities:**

"Brother, can you spare a dime?" became the catch phrase during the Great Depression. Many Americans felt hopeless about unemployment and the inability to sustain themselves. They had suffered the stock market crash, had lost their jobs and homes and at the same time families in the Midwest were forced to flee the Dust Bowl area of the United States. Students will explore these events beginning with the immediate time period which preceded the Great Depression. They will also research the lives of individuals who endured these hardships and examine Americans perseverance during the most "depressed" time in U.S. history.

### **Lesson One: What preceded the Great Depression?**

a.) Using the computer lab, students will research and take notes on the economic and social conditions of the late 1920's using [The American Folklife Center](#).

b.) Working in groups of 4, students will then share information and create a written storyboard of the most important facts in 1928 and 1929. Complete for homework.

**Lesson Two: What is the Stock Market Exchange?**

- a.) One student from each group shares storyboard ideas on 1928 and 1929.
- b.) Students will watch a 17 minute video on the Stock Market, "**Stock Market: What Goes Up...?**".
- c.) Students will begin discussing the purpose and function of the Stock Market in the late 20's. Selected vocabulary will be noted for future quiz.

**Lesson Three: The Crash** a.) Using the Smart Board, material from [Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era](#) will be reviewed in class to scope the depth of the Stock Market crash. Students will take notes and highlight new vocabulary.

- b.) Students will view and take notes on a 10 minute videotape clip from, "The Great Shake-Up", examining the relationship between the stock market and the national economy in 1929.
- c.) Homework includes research on individuals who survived "The Crash".

**Lesson Four: The Crash -- Part Two.**

- a.) Quiz on vocabulary words and take an essay defining "what is an economic depression?"
- b.) Discuss and share notable individuals lives who witnessed this era.
- c.) Students will share their research in groups of 4 and continue their storyboard for 1929-1930. Storyboards should be completed for homework including facts on "how this happened".

**Lesson Five: The Great Depression.**

- a.) Students will display storyboard with overview by one member in each group.
- b.) Introduction to the Great Depression will be viewed on the Smart Board from the website, [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project](#). Several stories cited with Depression stories and lifestyles will be examined by the class and read aloud.
- c.) Students will begin reading text on the Great Depression Era. Review for test.

**Lesson Six: Great Depression -- Part Two.**

- a.) Students will view and take notes on the last

segment of the videotape on the Great Depression Era. Vocabulary words will be highlighted. b.) In the computer lab, students will research and take notes on this tragic time period.

c.) Storyboard material is researched on the Great Depression of the United States.

**Lesson Seven: Great Depression -- Part Three.**

a.) Test on Stock Market Crash and beginning of the Great Depression.

b.) Students (groups of 4) will gather materials to continue creating a storyboard of this time period.

c.) Students will present best of materials and information gathered. All are taking notes and highlighting vocabulary words. Homework is researching dust storms and possible interview of a family or individual who lived during this era.

**Lesson Eight: Introduction to the Dust Bowl.**

a.) Students will review dust storms in the United States and take notes from their textbook on the "Dust Bowl" disaster in 1935. Vocabulary words are noted.

b.) 15 minutes of the non-fictional videotape, "Grapes of Wrath and the 1930's" will be viewed by students. Notes and highlighted vocabulary words will be collected. The main focus will include how the economy failed farmers and rural living.

c.) Introduction to the Dust Bowl states and viewing the movie, "Grapes of Wrath", is extra credit.

**Lesson Nine: The Dust Bowl in United States History.**

a.) Students continue in groups to compile a storyboard on the Dust Bowl. They create The Dust Bowl Map Activity.

b.) Students use the Smart Board to review the website, [Voices from the Dust Bowl](#). Notes are taken with vocabulary highlighted. Scavenger hunt activity is designed. Storyboards will finish with the Dust Bowl disaster. Questions are due for homework.

**Lesson Ten: Dust Bowl -- A new beginning.**

a.) The Scavenger Hunt is designed on the Smart Board.

b.) Students meet in groups to design the last page of their storyboards.

## **ASSESSMENT:**

**Students Storyboards:** As part of the class project, students continually updated their group storyboard to continue a timeline in history from 1929-1936.

**Student Interviews:** Students who researched families or individuals acquired first hand knowledge and familiarity of living in the late 1920's and early 1930's.

**Student PowerPoint Presentation** and Activities: Allow students to find slides and information from the **American Memory Collection** to complement textbooks and videotapes.

**TECHNOLOGY USED:** Laptop Computer, LCD projector with Smart Board, Computer lab, PowerPoint, Video recordings.

**RESOURCES:** **[American Memory Collection](#)**  
**[American Folklife Center](#)**  
**[American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers Project](#)**  
**[America from the Great Depression to World War II](#)**  
**[Prosperity and Thrift: The Coolidge Era](#)**  
**[Voices from the Dust Bowl](#)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Student Activity – Dust Bowl Map

This map shows the states that were considered dust bowl states and the areas affected by dust storms. Answer the following questions using the map below.

1. Which state had more of its total land in the Dust Bowl area? \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Which state had the least of its total land in the Dust Bowl area? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What do we call the region of the United States affected by the Dust Bowl? \_\_\_\_\_.
4. What is a popular name for the area of North Texas affected by the Dust Bowl? \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Which state should be included in the Dust Bowl, even though it is not named on this map? \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Which natural disaster would not affect these states? Blizzards? Tornadoes? Hurricanes? Dust storms? \_\_\_\_\_.
7. The great “Dust Bowl” area covered \_\_\_\_\_ million acres in south-central plains during the winter of 1935-1936.
8. To which coastal state did many “Dust Bowl” survivors flee? \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Dust Bowl dirt was carried as far away to the gulf coast of which state? \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Dust storms blew from all directions with incredible force and were measured with winds up to \_\_\_\_\_ miles per hour.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## THE GREAT DEPRESSION OF THE 1930'S

### SCAVENGER HUNT

Directions: Find the following information using your vocabulary notes.

1. Throughout the 1920's farmers were in a \_\_\_\_\_, their prices falling lower and lower.
2. Herbert Hoover predicted a day "when \_\_\_\_\_ will be banished from this nation."
3. On September 3, 1929, \_\_\_\_\_ reached an all-time high and everyone was happy.
4. Interest payments, paid quarterly or semi-annually, are known as \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Corporations issued two kinds of stock: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
6. On October 24, 1929, stock prices crashed when " \_\_\_\_\_ " buyers could not come up with more money.
7. "Black Thursday", October 24, 1929, was a dark day at the \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Many \_\_\_\_\_ lost their jobs at the Stock Exchange.
9. The stock market crashed on " \_\_\_\_\_ ", October 29, 1929.
10. The crash upset the entire working \_\_\_\_\_ of the United States.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ fell by 15 percent, but employed people felt lucky to keep their jobs.
12. Without profits or money, families could not pay their bank \_\_\_\_\_ on their houses.
13. In \_\_\_\_\_ areas farmers had to cut back food production to raise prices.
14. Lasting throughout the thirties, the Great Depression occurred almost the simultaneously with the \_\_\_\_\_ of the southern plains.
15. On April 14, 1935, Black Sunday, in the southern plains, struck the worst \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Wind so violent, stripped away the topsoil to expose a rocklike layer of \_\_\_\_\_, soil in which neither wild grass nor a farmer's crop could grow.
17. A strange \_\_\_\_\_ disease labeled "dust pneumonia" became an epidemic of the Dust Bowl survivors.
18. Many southern plain farmers defeated by the dust storms moved west to California. These Dust Bowl refugees were looked upon as \_\_\_\_\_.
19. Although more Dust Bowl migrants came from Oklahoma than from any other state, many came from Texas, New Mexico, Kansas and Colorado; these people were still called \_\_\_\_\_.
20. Okies built camps along the banks of the irrigation ditches and they were called \_\_\_\_\_.