

The Great Depression

Overview

Through a variety of sources – a power point presentation, class discussion, photographs, music, and more - students will learn about the causes of and situations experienced during the Great Depression.

Grade

8

North Carolina Essential Standards for 8th Grade Social Studies

- 8.H.1.1 - Construct charts, graphs, and historical narratives to explain particular events or issues.
- 8.H.1.3 - Use primary and secondary sources to interpret various historical perspectives.
- 8.H.1.4 - Use historical inquiry to evaluate the validity of sources used to construct historical narratives (e.g. formulate historical questions, gather data from a variety of sources, evaluate and interpret data and support interpretations with historical evidence).
- 8.H.1.5 - Analyze the relationship between historical context and decision-making.
- 8.H.2.1 - Explain the impact of economic, political, social, and military conflicts (e.g. war, slavery, states' rights and citizenship and immigration policies) on the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.3 - Explain how individuals and groups have influenced economic, political and social change in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.H.3.4 - Compare historical and contemporary issues to understand continuity and change in the development of North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.G.1.1 - Explain how location and place have presented opportunities and challenges for the movement of people, goods, and ideas in North Carolina and the United States.
- 8.E.1.1 - Explain how conflict, cooperation, and competition influenced periods of economic growth and decline (e.g. economic depressions and recessions).

Essential Questions

- What were the causes and effects of Black Thursday, Black Tuesday, and the Great Depression?
- What hardships did the Great Depression bring to North Carolina?
- In what ways did FDR work to alleviate depression hardships?
- What were the various programs that comprised the New Deal?
- What can primary sources tell us about life during the Great Depression?

Materials

- The Great Depression Power Point, available in the Database of Civic Resources (in PDF format)
 - To view this PDF as a projectable presentation, save the file, click "View" in the top menu bar of the file, and select "Full Screen Mode"
 - To request an editable PPT version of this presentation, send a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- The Great Depression PPT Picture Notes handout, attached
- Primary source images from the Great Depression (10 example images are available on slides 14-23 of the Great Depression Power Point)
- Examining Images of the Great Depression handout, attached
- Brother Can You Spare a Dime, lyrics attached and recording at http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/music/1930s_music_01.html (link is not working but this might be an alternative link <http://www.metrolyrics.com/brother-can-you-spare-a-dime-lyrics-bing-crosby.html>)

- News Paper Headlines from the Great Depression, attached
- Comparing Today's Crisis to the Great Depression, article attached

Duration

60+ minutes

Procedure

Warm-Up: Rags to Riches!

1. As a warm up, display slide 2 of the Great Depression power point, available in the CEC's Database of Civic Resources. The warm-up instructs students to respond to the following creative writing prompt:
 - Last year, you invested in a solar panel company, purchasing approximately 100 shares in the company. Since that investment, the US government has passed legislation encouraging the use of "green energy." Thus, the demand for solar panels has more than doubled. Due to the rise in demand, the shares of stock that you purchased in the solar panel company continue to gain value and when reviewing your portfolio this morning, you discovered that your shares have grown to be worth over 2 million dollars! You are R-I-C-H! In a paragraph or more, tell me all about your plans. What will you do with 2 million dollars?
2. Once students have had ample time to write, allow them to share out loud. Encourage them and build excitement regarding their good fortune.
3. Next, project slide 3 and tell students you want them to continue imagining their great life as a millionaire. However, tell them to imagine that instead of the year 2009, they are a millionaire in 1929. Even though two million dollars might have gone a lot further in 1929 than 2009, tell students you are afraid you have some very bad news for them. Project slide 4 and explain what occurred on the days in 1929 that became known as Black Thursday and Black Tuesday. Discuss:
 - Continuing to imagine that this is your reality, how would you feel knowing you had lost all of your money? How would you feel knowing that all of your family and friends had lost everything as well, and that there is no one you can turn to?
 - Predict what the effect of Black Thursday and so many banks shutting down will be. (Facilitate student consideration of a failing economy, businesses shutting down, unemployment rising, factory cutbacks on production leading to lay- offs, less consumer spending, factories closing, homelessness and hunger rising, etc.)
4. As an overview of the Great Depression, continue with the "Great Depression Power Point," stopping after slide 14. Teachers can optionally provide the attached "Great Depression PPT Picture Notes" to students and instruct them to take notes in the first column and draw a picture illustrating learned themes in the second column. After going through the slides, review through further discussion:
 - What caused the Great Depression? (Discuss how many Americans were buying **stocks on margin**, meaning they would only pay a down payment, purchasing the remainder on credit, assuming the rise in the stock would cover the dept plus reap a profit; however, when stock prices dropped in 1929, panic began to build and investors sold shares rapidly; others withdrew money from the bank to cover debt; so much selling and withdrawing with no buying and depositing crashed the economy. With the creation of "credit", many people were unable to pay for needed items since they had so many items they'd already purchased on credit to pay off.)
 - What hardships did the Great Depression bring to NC? Of these, what do you think would be most difficult to endure?
 - If you had been living during this time period, what do you think would have been the most frightening?

- Why did North Carolina fare better than many other states during the Great Depression? (a drought hit the Great Plains, withering crops and creating a “**Dust Bowl**”; devastating dust storms forced thousands of families to move to CA where few found work)
- Many have suggested that the financial crisis of 2008-2009 is the worst since the Great Depression, though not as severe. What comparisons can you make to current situations and those present during the Great Depression? This provides a good opportunity for not only making financial connections, but also to begin discussing the obsession many Americans have with “stuff”, purchasing expensive name brands and items that may not be necessary, even when they don’t have the cash and instead use credit.)

Examining Primary Sources: Images of the Great Depression

5. Next, tell students they are going to further explore the Great Depression through photographs from the time period. Tell students that in small groups, they will be responsible for examining a photograph provided, answering questions about that photograph, and creating an artistic poster that will share the photograph and their thoughts on it with classmates.
6. Give each group a copy of a photograph (10 images are provided on slides 16-25 of the Great Depression PPT and can be printed from there; teachers should determine how many of the 10 images they want to use, and should also feel free to find additional images should they desire. Sites such as <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/gdphotos.html> offer many images.) Also, give students a copy of the attached “Examining Images of the Great Depression” handout, a piece of chart paper, and markers. (As a paper saving alternative, rather than providing a handout teachers can project slide 13 of the Great Depression PPT, which also contains the questions.)
7. Instruct students to work together to examine their image using the questions provided as a guide. Once students have devised conclusions regarding the image and answered all of the questions provided, instruct them to paste their photo on the chart paper and to creatively display their answers to the questions as well as the caption they created for the photo. Students should be given artistic license to design their photo and the information they want to share about it, but remind them the goal of the final poster is to share their thoughts on the photo with other classmates. Once finished, have students post their chart paper somewhere in the room.
8. Once all groups have displayed their posters, allow students to do a gallery walk, spending approximately one minute at each poster to view the photograph and read the group’s thoughts on that image. After students have rotated around the room to view all of the photographs, teachers may want to project and further discuss particular images. For example:
 - Image on slide 16: Once students have discussed, tell them that this image is actually of a North Carolina family during the 1930s who are sewing drawstrings into small cotton bags for holding tobacco. Explain to students that during the Great Depression, individuals and families throughout the tobacco-growing regions of the American South earned much-needed income by performing small jobs such as this.
 - Image on slide 17: In this image, the daughter of a sharecropper picks cotton in the cotton fields of Statesville, North Carolina in 1939.
 - Image on slide 18: This image also comes from NC and was taken in Iredell County in 1933.
 - Images on slides 20 & 21: These are pictures of **Hooverville’s**. Explain to students that Hooverville’s were where homeless workers and their families gathered to live, building shacks out of discarded lumber, boxes, and metal. These “shantytowns” were nicknamed Hooverville’s, after **President Hoover** who took office in 1929.
 - Image on slide 22: Discuss the role of local government with students when addressing this image. How did local governments play a part in assisting citizens during the Depression? Ask students how they would feel if they were one of the jobless men walking by and reading this sign.

- Image on slide 23: As students view this simple yet striking image, ask them to infer how they believe this man feels as he leans against the wall. Encourage them to begin to imagine his situation and life during the Great Depression.
9. Upon examining the photos individually, discuss overall:
 - What did you learn about the Great Depression after viewing these photographs?
 - Of all these photographs, if you had to pick one person who was in the toughest situation, who would you choose and why?
 - What do you think would have been most challenging or frightening about living during the Great Depression?
 10. **Optional creative writing assignment:** Project the photograph on slide 24, which is by Dorothea Lange, and ask students to again quietly examine the image, then respond to the following:
 - Every person has a story to tell, be it one of happiness or hardship, wealth or poverty. Look closely at this image. What is she thinking and feeling? Notice the expression on her face...the creases that shape her forehead...What was going through her mind the moment this picture was snapped? Did she have fears? Worries? Hopes? Dreams? If so, what were they? Assume that you are able to read minds. Tell her story in this moment.
 11. As a culmination to the lesson, hand out or project the attached lyrics to “Brother Can You Spare a Dime” and instruct students to follow along as you play the recording. A simple internet search will provide options for playing the song. For example, the following link offers a YouTube video of Bing Crosby’s recording of the song paired with a slide show of Depression era images: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eih67rIGNhU>. (Since many school districts block YouTube, teachers should download the file from a home computer. If showing the images in addition to playing the lyrics, teachers should choose the “full screen” option so that students cannot read the comment thread.) Afterwards, discuss:
 - What did you feel and visualize as you listened to and read the lyrics to that song?
 - How would you characterize the mood of the song?
 - What two historical events are referenced by the lyrics? (WWI and the Great Depression)
 - What is the message of the song? What is the artist trying to convey?
 - In what ways does the singer portray the situation many found themselves in during the Great Depression?
 - How does the song address the “American dream”?
- Optional: For additional information regarding the song and its relevance today, see NPR’s “A Depression Era Anthem for Our Times:” <http://www.npr.org/2008/11/15/96654742/a-depression-era-anthem-for-our-times>

Optional Homework: In the News: Examining Headlines from 1929

12. Cut apart the attached *Newspaper Headlines from the Great Depression* and distribute them among students (one headline per student.) Explain that the headlines provided are actual headlines from newspapers in 1929. Tell students that for homework, they are to use what they learned in class, their inferences regarding the headline, and their own creativity to write a short article that could realistically accompany the article in a 1929 newspaper. Tell students to consider the following questions as they plan their article:
 - What conclusions can you make about 1929 based on this headline? What evidence leads you to this conclusion?
 - Based on this primary source, what caused the Great Depression? Could it have been prevented? Explain.

Additional Activities

- See the Carolina K-12's "F.D.R. and the New Deal" lesson plan and power point accompaniment, available in the Database of Civic Resources or by sending a request to CarolinaK12@unc.edu
- Read the children's book *Uncle Jed's Barbershop* out loud to students. The book is set during the 1900s and details struggles faced during the depression. Have students create their own children's book based on the Great Depression for donation to local elementary Social Studies classes.
- Compare the American financial crisis of the late 2000s to the Great Depression; for example, assign the attached *Comparing Today's Crisis to the Great Depression* and discuss

The Great Depression – PPT Picture Notes

Notes	Draw a picture representing this information.
<p>Black Thursday:</p> <p>Black Tuesday:</p>	
<p>The Great Depression – Definition/Summary:</p> <p>Effects:</p>	
<p>Causes of the Great Depression:</p>	
Notes	Draw a picture representing this information.
<p>Boom to Bust:</p>	

Conditions Worsen:

Hooverilles:

Dust Bowl:

Growing Up During the Great Depression:

Examining Images of the Great Depression

Image # _____

1. Begin by simply pointing out what you see in this image. What objects strike you first? What do you notice about the people, clothing, facial expressions, etc. in the image?
2. What do you think the setting of the image is? Where and when might this photo have been taken? (Identify evidence from the image for your response.)
3. Describe what the people are doing.
4. How do you imagine the people in this image feel? What is their current life situation like? What evidence makes you think this?
5. If you were describing this photo to someone who had not viewed it, what would you say is most significant about the image? What can it teach us about life during the Great Depression?
6. Who may have taken this photograph and why?
7. Using all of this information, create a caption for your image. (Explain to students that a caption is a short description/explanation of the image.)

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob,
When there was earth to plow, or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job.
They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and glory ahead,
Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?
Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad; now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?
Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;
Once I built a tower, now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?
Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,
Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,
Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,
And I was the kid with the drum!
Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.
Why don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?
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Say, don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?

Thursday, October 24, 1929, Page 1, Col. 1

PRICES OF STOCKS CRASH IN HEAVY LIQUIDATION, TOTAL DROP OF BILLIONS

PAPER LOSS \$4,000,000,000

2,600,000 Shares Sold In The Final Hour In Record Decline

MANY ACCOUNTS WIPED OUT

Thursday, October 24, 1929, Page 2, Col. 1

SAYS STOCK SLUMP IS ONLY TEMPORARY
Professor Fisher Tells Capital Bankers Market Rise Since War Has Been Justified.

ECONOMIC REASONS CITED

"Public Speculative Mania," He Declares, is Least Important Cause of Price Inflation.

Saturday, October 26, 1929, Page 2, Col. 5

CAUTION ADVISED BY STOCK BROKERS
Letters to Clients Warn Against Hysterical Selling and Favor Some Buying

TONE IS OPTIMISTIC

Narrow Trading is Predicted for a Time Till the Market Recuperates

Tuesday, October 29, 1929, Page 1, Col. 6

STOCK PRICES SLUMP \$14,000,000,000
IN NATION-WIDE STAMPEDE TO UNLOAD;
BANKERS TO SUPPORT MARKET TODAY

Source (not working, however, this might be an alternative <http://www.rarenewspapers.com/view/556647?imagelist=1>): The Crash by Mark Underwood

Comparing Today's Crisis to the Great Depression

by Chris Tyler

Comparisons between the current financial crisis and the Great Depression are becoming less common these days as the economy seemingly makes strides towards recovery. However, with growing unemployment, rising business failures, climbing bankruptcies and a growing epidemic of foreclosures progress is difficult to gauge.

Most economists say the nation has moved into a recovery phase. But with more than 4 million homes on the market to sell or vacant it's difficult to comprehend how a recovery could truly be underway. The hope of a recovery might be a more accurate conclusion.

Another 4.2-million homes have been foreclosed inflicting massive damage on the national economy with at least another 6-million foreclosures forecast. Protests at town hall meetings aim more at the frustration and anger of Americans with Congress and government failures than Health Care. The battle lines between free market proponents and those calling for more financial controls are blurring as the economy suffers.

Still, headlines draw parallels to the Great Depression. Here are the updated facts as gathered by Housing Predictor researchers between the current crisis and the Great Depression.

Description	Present Day	Depression Era
U.S. Population	* 304 million	1930 - 122 million
Homes in U.S.	* 129 million	* 20.7 million
Home Ownership Rates	66.7% down from 69.1% at the height of the boom	48%
Homes in default at least 90 days	9.2% of all U.S. residential mortgages	43.8% at the height
Homes Foreclosed	4.2 Million already foreclosed A total of 10 million forecast through 2012	At the height of the Great Depression roughly 10% entered the foreclosure process. At the end of 1932 some 2.4 million mortgages were in foreclosure. Millions were foreclosed but the final count could not be found by researchers, who combed old economic journals and newspapers in thorough efforts to tabulate the number.
Real Estate Wealth	\$17.5 trillion estimated December 2008	\$89.7 billion
Home Mortgage Debt	\$12.2 trillion - 2008	\$16.3 billion
* According to the U.S. Census Bureau		

Analysis:

Although the size of the current economic crisis is much larger in scale than the Great Depression in the sheer volume of foreclosures and dollars, increases in population, economic growth and the record high number of homeowners need to be taken into account. A combination of failures, corruption on the part of bankers, politicians, manipulations on Wall Street and lack of regulatory controls triggered the current crisis.

Declining economic activity and mortgages, which should have never been made led to record foreclosures, and are the driving force of the economic turmoil. Further government intervention by the Fed, Treasury and the White House may go a long way in aiding the current crisis. However no clear cut plan has yet been outlined by government officials. Government leaders seem at a loss to understand the magnitude of the crisis.

There have been six economic depressions in the U.S. since 1837, and all were overcome by some level of government intervention. The current crisis will take years to overcome and hopefully won't end up as another Great Depression.

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Source: <http://www.housingpredictor.com/comparison.html>