

1920-1941: THE GREAT DEPRESSION



CFE 3202V

OPEN CAPTIONED
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
SOCIETY

1990

Grade Levels: 10-13+

25 minutes

1 Instructional Graphic Enclosed



DESCRIPTION

The prosperity of the 1920s leads the nation to overextend itself in production, speculation, and credit buying. The stock market crash causes the failure of banks and businesses that leave one-fourth of the nation unemployed. Private charities and government work to relieve suffering, with little results until the outbreak of World War II, when industrial production begins to expand.

INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS

- To reveal propaganda as a powerful tool of the government.
- To examine business practices that led to the Depression.
- To explore the domino effect of failing businesses on one another.
- To investigate the scope of government expansion during the Great Depression.
- To investigate the political influence gained by labor organizations.
- To explore the need for government intervention and regulation in a capitalist economy.

BEFORE SHOWING

1. Read the CAPTION SCRIPT to determine unfamiliar vocabulary and language concepts.
2. Display and discuss graphs showing the gross national product of the United States for the years 1920 to 1945.
3. Examine what resources are currently available to persons faced with unemployment and poverty.

DURING SHOWING

1. View the video more than once, with one showing uninterrupted.
2. Pause to observe and discuss the actions and expressions of people before and during the Depression.
3. Pause to compile lists of new products introduced in the 1920s.
4. Pause to note New Deal programs shown in the video, as a topic later for class discussion.

AFTER SHOWING

Discussion Items and Questions

1. Discuss how technology benefits society.
2. Discuss “get rich quick” schemes, including their merits and pitfalls.
3. Describe the benefits and dangers of credit purchasing.
4. Examine the “ripple effect” of a failing business on the local economy. Expand this concept to the national economy.
5. Describe the possible effects of a major industry locating in the local community.
6. Define *propaganda*. Discuss how the Roosevelt government used propaganda to affect the spirit of the nation.
7. Discuss the effectiveness of the New Deal and determine its contribution to the end of the Depression.
8. Discuss how the Depression affected Europe. Identify political movements which arose from the ashes of the world’s economics.
9. Determine what effect weather played in worsening the Depression. Identify ways the government worked to prevent future disasters.
10. Discuss the role of local banks in a country’s economy. Explain why low deposits and frequent runs on funds on hand could create economic havoc.

Applications and Activities

1. Research and add to the lists of products new to the 1920s compiled DURING SHOWING. Note the prices. Compare these to modern conveniences and their costs.
2. Report on Thomas Edison's inventions.
3. Compare working conditions and productivity data during the 1920s with current statistics.
4. Hypothesize how technology will increase productivity and leisure time in the future.
5. Examine the rise of leisure time activities in the 1920s. Compare these to modern pastimes.
6. Analyze the impact of increased productivity on the price of goods and wages for industrial workers. A notable example is Henry Ford's Model A automobile.
7. Research the effects of advertising and installment credit upon the economy of the 1920s. Locate examples of advertisements in newspapers or periodicals from the 1920s.
8. Role-play how easy it is to become overextended on a credit card and the consequences thereof. Apply this concept on a nationwide basis to explain one of the major causes of the Depression.
9. Investigate and report on the leading business figures of the 1920s, such as J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Andrew Carnegie, and J. D. Rockefeller.
10. Read excerpts from Horatio Alger's "rags to riches" novels. Discuss the impact of such stories on the U.S. economy.
11. Create a mini stock market in class, with bid and purchase of stock.
 - a. Explain the concept of buying stock on margin.
 - b. Precipitate a crisis in the stock market and chart the value of the stocks as students try to sell off their stock.
12. Compose entries in a diary, role-playing a teenager whose parents have lost their savings and source of income.

13. Demonstrate the consequences of repossession when loans cannot be repaid. Explain how repossessed goods are sold at auction to pay the loan balance.

14. Justify President Hoover's conservative efforts in fighting the Depression.

15. Analyze the election of 1932, comparing the candidates and their platforms.

16. Explore current programs to help the homeless in the local community. Compare these programs to those of the Depression era.

17. List the major New Deal programs and their intents.

18. Investigate protests for government action to end the Depression. Stage a protest against some school or government policy.

19. Make posters showing the protests of the unemployed in the 1930s. Pretend to interview a farm protester, questioning his activities.

20. Interpret the conflict between the executive and judicial branches of government over some New Deal programs.

21. Locate Depression era public works projects in the local community. Document and photograph the projects for a class display.

22. Explain how the Great Depression differed from previous depressions.

23. Emphasize that the Great Depression was worldwide. Investigate the effects of the Depression in other nations, especially in Europe.

24. Imagine the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl. Write an account of a farm family that struggles to keep their farm, then has to relocate.

25. Graph the progress of the national economy throughout the Depression.

26. Examine the increasing political power of labor unions. Identify which laws helped their growth.

27. Evaluate the importance of government spending as a way of stimulating the economy, especially that of supplying the armed forces for World War II.

28. Discuss government agencies that still exist to prevent future depressions. Include:
- a. Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
 - b. Securities and Exchange Commission
 - c. Federal Trade Commission
 - d. Federal Reserve Board

INSTRUCTIONAL GRAPHICS

One instructional graphic is included with this lesson guide. They may be enlarged and used to create transparencies or copies.

- NEW DEAL PROGRAMS

WEBSITES

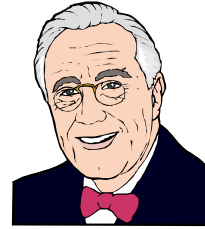
Explore the Internet to discover sites related to this topic. Check the CFV website for related information (<http://www.cfv.org>).

SUMMARY

The prosperity of the 1920s gave Americans a strong belief that the economy would continue growing and growing. People hoping to become rich are fed a speculating frenzy across the nation. Technology continued to improve the working and personal lives of most Americans. Businesses expanded beyond the means of consumers to buy their products. Advertising and credit buying kept the economy in high gear until the fateful stock market crash of 1929. Banks began to fail as depositors withdrew funds. Many depositors lost their life savings. Businesses began to reduce output, laying off workers or reducing the work hours of those who kept their jobs. Creditors repossessed possessions at an alarming rate. Especially hard hit were farmers who didn't benefit much from the prosperity of the twenties. Private organizations and charities offered the only sources of support for the unemployed and their families. As the unemployment problem worsened, municipal and state governments began relief programs. During the early years of the

Depression, the Hoover administration did little to offer aid to the unemployed. President Hoover believed that the economy could correct itself, and the Depression would soon end on its own. Franklin Roosevelt's campaign promises to end the Depression helped him win the election in 1932. Congress passed many New Deal laws that helped to restore confidence in the banking system and made people hopeful for the future. New Deal agencies were numerous and confusing. People felt that the government was doing something to try to end the Depression. During the 1930s there were arguments over the role of the government in the economy and the increasing powers of the executive branch. Despite Supreme Court decisions to weaken the powers of several New Deal agencies, the federal bureaucracy grew large and powerful. This governmental apparatus did manage to care for the needs of many unemployed, offering them jobs and relief that allowed them to keep their homes and families intact. The government was not able to affect the economy enough to stop the Depression. The Depression ended only when the materiel needs of the armies in World War II stimulated industry into full production.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL



DIRECTIONS: On the lines, write the full name of each New Deal program. Then in the blank squares, write the initials of the New Deal program that would benefit each person or group. Choose from the list below. Programs may be used more than once.

WPA	NIRA	AAA	HOLC	NLRB	CCC
FERA	FSA	FDIC	SSA	REA	NYA

Farmers	→	
	→	
Retired people over 65	→	
College students	→	
Union members	→	
State agency that cares for the poor	→	
Out-of-work men and women	→	
Stockholders in corporations	→	
Men and women with bank savings accounts	→	
Artists, actors, and writers	→	
Young men from poor families	→	
Homeowners with past-due mortgages	→	
Manufacturers	→	