

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS – PATHWAYS

The Great Depression Lesson Module

Title: *“The Not-so ‘Great’ Depression” Using Primary Resources to Study the Era of the Great Depression*

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Theme: Economic Transformations

Historical Period: Great Depression & World War II, 1929-1945

<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwii/>

Lesson Module Overview: Through inquiry-based explorations and activities, students will actively engage in their learning about the Great Depression. Students will use many primary resources from the Library of Congress, like photographs, documents, and search engines. The module provides interactive learning through the resources it provides, like role play, reader’s theater scripts, a mystery trunk, and several modes of children’s literature. Students will learn not only about how the Great Depression affected the economics of the past, but they will also engage in learning about the people, from children to Iowans.

Grade Range: Middle Level (6th – 8th)

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THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAY 1

TITLE: *What is the Great Depression and What are the Causes?: Introduction*

Learning Goals:

Knowledge

- Students will be able to name causes of the Great Depression
- Students will begin to understand the name important Historical people in the Great Depression
- Students will develop an understanding of what it's like to live in hard economic times

Skills

- Students will be exploring primary resources of the Great Depression
- Students will be interacting with one another to find out about the Depression
- Students will answer questions about the reading

Dispositions

- Students will see varying perspectives of causes of the Great Depression
- Students will see what happened in the past and evaluate the affects of how the past have affected the future

National Council for Social Studies Themes

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Power, Authority, and Governance: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Materials Needed

Diary of Clara Ackerman:

http://www.uni.edu/iowahist/Social_Economic/Clara_Ackerman/clara_ackerman_diary.htm

Diary of Elmer Powers:

http://www.uni.edu/iowahist/Social_Economic/Powers_Diary/elmer_powers_diary.htm

Library of Congress Primary Resources:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/tshome.html> (#1 – Appendix I)

<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/pages/> (#2 – Appendix I)

White Board & Markers

Computer(s)
 Additional Books
 Additional Websites

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. First, I want to know what the students know about the Great Depression (if anything). This lesson plan is designed for 6th-8th graders, so I would assume they should know something.
2. The activity is designed to work in partners and discuss the topic on hand. First, the teacher must give directions.
3. "This unit we are going to begin talking about the Great Depression. Before I tell you anything, I want to see what you know. You are going to find a partner and tell them everything you know about the Depression. When I say switch you will find a different partner immediately and tell them everything you know, and if you learned anything from your previous partner. We will continue this until I say stop."
4. Students will match up with different partners each time, hopefully learning new information about the Depression.
5. After about 10 minutes or when the students start becoming silent, bring them back together as a group. "Now, let's hear the ideas that everyone thought of." I will write the ideas on the board as the students tell them to me.
6. "Now that we have all these ideas, can anyone think of a way we can categorize each of these ideas?" Hopefully, the students will choose 'Causes' as a category. If they don't I will just add it in there as my own category.
7. "With the categories we came up with and the ideas on the board, you and your partners can write the ideas underneath them."
8. After the students have categorized them, I will circle 'Causes.' "For now, 'causes' is the main category we are going to focus on for the rest of this lesson."

Development

1. Ask the Students: "What are some of the main causes of the Depression that we can decide upon? What are some of the main people that we already know about?"
2. I will write vocabulary words on the board such as: stock market, hoarding money, and Black Friday. These vocabulary words were key reasons as to why the Depression began. Have the students write them down in a journal or word wall (wherever they keep their words). Tell them to define these words now or throughout the rest of the unit.
3. I printed off a webpage article from a Website that focuses on the causes of the Great Depression. Everyone can read this to themselves silently, and we will discuss it afterwards. Discuss what the article says, and compare it to our list at the beginning of the lesson. Article URL:
<http://americanhistory.about.com/od/greatdepression/tp/greatdepression.htm>
4. "Now, we will look at different perspectives of from people who experienced the Great Depression." Begin reading the Diary of Clara Ackerman to the students. After the first paragraph stop and say, "While I read this I want you to see if you can pick up on why Clara think the Great Depression has slowly set in on the United States."

5. Stop every so often after reading and ask the students some ideas that they have jotted down which Clara thinks could have caused the Great Depression. Also ask:
 - a. What is her attitude while writing?
 - b. Does she blame any one person for the Depression?
 - c. What are the differences between prices now and then?
 - d. How does she feel about the new Presidency? What problems does she have with Roosevelt?
6. After reading, tell the students that there is another Diary in the back of the room that they can read. It is the Diary of Elmer Power's and it has information on what it was like to a farmer in the Depression. "When you read this Diary, compare and contrast between Clara and Elmer's attitude towards the Depression." Questions to consider:
 - a. What is his attitude while writing?
 - b. How does the depression affect farmers compared to someone who doesn't farm?
 - c. What does he feel a cause of the Depression could be?
7. Now have the students make a web with all of the causes of the depression. "Now that we are done reading the diary and we have discussed possible causes of Depression, get into groups of 3 or 4 and create a Web. In the middle you will have 'The Great Depression' and stem out the main causes."

Culmination

1. Inform the students that at the back of the room there is a table with more primary resources about the Great Depression.
2. On the table there are books about the Great Depression, picture books on the Great Depression, any old newspaper articles, old tools used in the Great Depression.
The Great Depression: America 1929-1941 by Robert S. McElvaine.
The Bread Winner by Avella Whitmore
3. Also give the students this Website from the Library of Congress that they can look at when given computer lab time: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/search/pages/>
 They are able to look through different states and different newspaper articles to research the Great Depression.
4. Another available source from the Library of Congress is:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/tshome.html> It is the voices of the Dust Bowl, which was considered a cause of the Depression.

Assessment

1. Give each student a slip two write three things they learned about the Great Depression. Make sure that they include one important cause of the Depression.
2. Also may do another formative assessment while the students are answering the questions about the Diary reading.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAY 2

TITLE: *FDR and Rising from the Great Depression*

Learning Goals:

Knowledge

- Students will ask questions to gain information and put together ideas about the Mystery Person's identity.
- Students will begin to understand FDR's influence on American society during and after the Great Depression, including ideas about social security and his fireside chats.
- Students will gain a better understanding of topics and objects from the past through research and class discussion.

Skills

- Students will explore ideas from the past through the research of primary resources.
- Students will write a letter explaining new information, connections to the topics, and questions they have considered, using a friendly letter format.

Dispositions

- Students will begin to evaluate the importance of questions, the reliability of resources (on the web and from books), and the connections present between society and issues from the past and the present.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes:

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Power, Authority, and Governance: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Civic Ideals and Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

Materials Needed

Trunk

Items (may include):

Eleanor Roosevelt photograph (#1 – Appendix 3)

Fala photograph

Quote from speech by Franklin D. Roosevelt

Stamp book

Old radio

Churchill and FDR photograph or letter (#4 – Appendix I)

Wheelchair photograph

Franklin D. Roosevelt photograph (#5 – Appendix I)

Quote by Franklin D. Roosevelt

Computer lab

Stationary

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. Hook the students' interest by bringing the trunk filled with the items representing Franklin D. Roosevelt to the front and center of the room. Announce that this Mystery Trunk holds clues about a leader of the time of the Great Depression.
2. Invite the class to ask questions about the Mystery Person. The students might ask about what kind of leader he was, his family, his accomplishments, etc. If the students get stumped, reveal another piece from the trunk. Invite the students to be creative with their questions, and feel free to give them answers even if there is no item to represent that idea.
3. As each item is pulled out of the trunk, tell a little bit about that piece. For example, if the students ask about his family, reveal the photograph of Eleanor and explain that she was his wife and talk about some of her personal accomplishments.
4. Pass the items around as they are shown to the class—each student will then have the opportunity to make connections between the items and the Mystery Person through holding the items and investigating them.
5. After the students have gone through all of the items and are out of questions, ask the students to make guesses about who the Mystery Person might be. Record the answers on the board for all students to see—the answers do not have to be specific people or names. After some discussion about whom the person might or might not be, pull the photograph of Franklin D. Roosevelt out of the trunk and show it to the class.

Development

1. Have the students return to their seats to discuss more about Franklin D. Roosevelt and his importance in American history and the Great Depression. Discuss that FDR was elected for presidency after Hoover, and talk about his campaign slogans.
2. Ask students to talk at their tables and discuss the idea of social security. Come back together as a class to discuss social security, its importance, and its tie to the New Deal. Also discuss the purpose of the New Deal and why FDR created it.

3. Bring back out the representation of the wheelchair. Tell the class that FDR was diagnosed with polio during his presidency, but tried to hide it throughout the years he was in office. Ask the students, “Why do you think he hid his illness from America.” Facilitate discussion about how ideas have changed today about disabilities and provide examples of other people who have overcome their disability to be successful.
4. Place the old radio in front of the class. Discuss the fireside chats with the class, what they were, their importance, and how people felt about them. Ask the students about how the President communicates with the public today. Then, tell the students that FDR served in office for three terms. Ask the students if they know how many terms a President can serve as of now.
5. Inform the class that FDR is considered by many people to be one of the three greatest Presidents. Ask the students why they think people may have considered this idea. Give them more reasons and ideas of why FDR was so influential and how he became such a great leader.

Culmination

1. Assign each student one of the items from the trunk. Multiple students might have the same item.
2. Give the students the assignment of researching their item they were assigned, they can do the research in the computer lab or the library. They will then write a letter, on the computer or on stationary, to Franklin D. Roosevelt and inform him about what they found out about the item and why they think it is significant. Invite the students to make connections and comparisons about the past and present of this item. Also, the students should be invited to write questions they have for the President.
 - Provide students with resources to use, including sources from the Library of Congress webpage or the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum.
 - Require the students to include the sources they used at the end of their letter or on an attached sheet of paper.
 - Review the friendly letter format with the class.
3. Ask students to volunteer to share their letter with the class and what they learned from their research. Display the letters around the classroom so the students can learn more about FDR, his life, and his presidency.

Assessment

1. Read the letters written by the students. Check for understanding about their topic, considering the sources from which they found their information. In addition, check for the proper use of the format used to write a friendly letter.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAY 3

TITLE: *Working Life during the Great Depression*

Learning Goals:

Knowledge

- Students will understand various programs put in place to help people gain employment.
- Students will understand where in the United States the Great Depression affected most.
- Students will learn about the cost of living in the 1930's.

Skills

- Students will read primary sources and answer questions about them.
- Students will also observe primary sources and answer questions about them.
- Students will participate in whole-class and small group discussions

Dispositions

- Students will develop an empathetic awareness of what people went through during the Great Depression.
- Students will be able to evaluate various perspectives about things that happened in the past.
- Students will develop the ability to think critically about things that happened in the past and how they would be implemented today.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes:

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Time, Continuity, and Change- Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions- Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Power, Authority, and Governance- Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.

Materials Needed

Deck of 52 cards

Six sided number cubes

Computer(s)

Copy of *No Promises in the Wind* by Irene Hunt
 Copy of *The Elderberry Thicket* by J.T. Zeier
 Copies of Primary Sources (#6, #7, #8 – Appendix I)
 Additional resources for student work (websites and books – see Appendix II)
 Paper
 Pencils/writing utensils
 Overhead/Elmo

Lesson Procedure:

Introduction

1. Begin today's lesson by passing out a playing card to each student face down. Tell them not to look at their card until you say it is time.
2. Give each student (or small group of students) a six sided number cube. Tell them that they can now turn over their playing card and each person will then roll the number cube one time.
3. Explain to the students that they will be creating a "family" for class today. If their card is red; they are not married. If the card is black; they are married. The number cube represents how many children they have. If they roll a 6, they will have 0 children. If they roll a 1-5, the number of children is the respective number of the roll.
4. The students then get to choose any state in the U.S. to live in.
5. After they've decided this, the teacher uses an overhead or large map of the U.S. to plot where each student decided to live.
6. Next, number the students off 1-4. Tell the students that instead of living in today's time, they will be living in the 1930's.
7. Call out a number between 1 and 4. Each of these students are now unemployed and have to figure out a way to support their family without income.
8. Students will be told that the average income is \$164/month, that they will need to pay about \$20/month on house payments, \$15/month for a car payment, and \$1/week/person in their family. They must add up their total cost per month and determine how much they will need to make in order to support their families.

Development

1. Show the students the map that shows where in the United States where the depression hit the hardest. Compare this to where the students chose to live. Ask the students what comparisons they see.
2. Ask the students how they felt as they found out they would be unemployed and would have to support either themselves or their families on their own.
3. Ask the students who learned that they would keep their jobs how they felt knowing that they still had their jobs. Have a brief discussion as a class about their responses to this.

4. Ask students if they think that living in a rural area or an urban area would make a difference in this at all.
5. Now ask the students to talk with each other about things that they remember hearing about in the lesson yesterday or things that they come up with on their own that could possibly create more jobs for those that need it. Should the government be involved in this? What government programs could possibly help with this?
6. Ask the students to share with the class some ideas they came up with. Write these on the board.
7. Tell the students that today we will be discussion three of the government plans of the New Deal discussed yesterday more in depth; the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the Public Works Administration (PWA), and the Works Progress Administration (WPA).
8. Give the students the descriptions of each of the three programs. Show them the primary sources for the CCC and Federal Writers' Project. Students may also read through the two children's books for this lesson (*No Promises in the Wind* and *The Elderberry Thicket*). If time in the unit, these would be good books for students to read about the Great Depression. Have excerpts marked to show where students can find information on the lives of those working during this time. One book is from a rural area and the other is from an urban area. Students can also find more information using the "1930's Human Cost, in Pictures" or "Strange Fruit" website listed in Appendix II.
9. Have the students answer the following questions as they read through each one and look at each picture:
 - a. What would you think if this were you in the picture or job description? How would you react to this job assignment?
 - b. Does your "family" qualify for this program?
 - c. Would you want to do any of these jobs?
 - d. Would it be worth it to you to do all this work for such little pay?
 - e. Would any of these work in today's world? Would people respond well to these ideas now?
 - f. Any other thoughts?

Culmination

1. After students have explored the resources, ask them to come together as a class to discuss how they responded to the questions above. Ask what they thought of the resources given.
2. Give the students more information about each of the programs.
 - a. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was a public work relief program that operated from 1933-1942. This was only for unemployed, unmarried men from relief families ages 18-25. They were paid \$30 a month and \$25 of that went to their parents. Workers planted nearly 3 billion trees and constructed more than

800 parks nationwide. They also fixed structures, roads, controlled erosion and flooding, and helped with emergencies. Workers worked 40 hours a week over five days. They had to work for at least six months and could serve as many as four periods or up to two years if employment outside of the corps was not possible.

- b. Public Works Administration (PWA) was a large-scale public works construction agency. It built large-scale public works such as dams and bridges, hospitals, and schools. This did not employ the unemployed workers directly. Streets and highways were the most common PWA projects.
 - c. Works Progress Administration (WPA) employed millions of unskilled workers to carry out public works projects. This included the construction of public buildings and roads and also operated large arts, drama, media, and literacy projects. It fed children and redistributed food, clothing and housing. This provided jobs to those who were unemployed during this time. An offset of this was the Federal Writers' Project (FWP) that supported writers during the Great Depression.
3. Ask the students to get out their work with their "families" for the day. After everything they learned do they think they'd make it through the depression? How would they feel if they were in this situation? Which students have it easier than others? Add to the students ideas as they share with the class.

Assessment

- 1. Collect the students "family" work for a mathematics assessment.
- 2. Also collect and evaluate students' answers to the guided questions for the lesson. Evaluate them to gauge the students' understanding of the topic.
- 3. May also evaluate based on participation in group/partner discussion.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAY 4

TITLE: *Children of the Great Depression*

Learning Goals:

Knowledge

- Students will gain knowledge of how children lived day to day during The Great Depression.
- Students will gain the knowledge of using primary resources to analyze the topic.
- Students will experience presenting in front of a crowd and role play.

Skills

- Students will be able to analyze primary sources (photographs and letters) for evidence of difficulties children faced during the Great Depression.
- Students will compare and contrast children's experiences in the Great Depression
- Students will compare and contrast living during the Great Depression and living now.
- Students will present on their groups photograph.
- Students will participate in a role play activity about The Great Depression.
- Students will complete a verbal interview and record information.

Dispositions

- Students will learn to think critically about children's lives during The Great Depression.
- Students will learn to evaluate multiple perspectives and grasp life in the past.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes:

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy. Studying the past makes it possible for us to understand the human story across time. Children in early grades learn to locate themselves in time and space.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

Individuals, Groups & Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Civic Ideals & Practices: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic. An understanding of civic ideals and practices is critical to full participation in society and is an essential component of education for citizenship, which is the central purpose of social studies.

Materials Needed

- Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression*, by Kate Lied
- Children of the Great Depression* by Russell Freedman
- Dry Erase Marker
- White Board
- Primary Resources: Photographs (#9, #10, #11 – Appendix I)
- Pencils
- Paper

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. Start off the lesson by reading the book, *Potato: a Tale from the Great Depression*, by Kate Lied and the book *Children of the Great Depression* by Russell Freedman. Make sure to check for understanding during the readings. After reading the books as a group, make a list on the board of some characteristics of the children in the books. Lead a discussion on what life was like for children and their families during The Great Depression.
2. Next have students split into five groups at five different tables. Give each group a photograph of children in The Great Depression era. Have the students analyze the photo, and lead the students through inquiry questions about these images. Questions:
 - What is this a picture of?
 - Who is in this picture?
 - What can you infer from looking closely at this picture?
 - What questions would you like to ask the people in this picture?
 - How do you think these kids felt in this photo?
3. Have each group take notes on their answers to these questions. Next ask each group to show the class their image and give their insights of the photo. This will show the students the different situations children were in during The Great Depression.
4. To close the discussion, lead a class activity of adding to the previous list of ideas on the board. To start adding to the list ask, "What was it like to be a child during the Great Depression?" Leave this list up in the classroom for future reference during the unit.

Development

1. Split the class into four groups. Have each group come up and choose a document to read and study. Each document is a Reminiscence of the Great Depression written by different adults who were children during The Great Depression.
2. Each group will be in charge of reading their story and developing a role play about the story.
3. Allow the students sufficient time to read and expand the story into a role play situation.
4. After each role play, the other students will try to guess what their story is about. The teacher may ask questions like, "How did it feel to put yourself in his/her shoes?" (Appendix III)
5. To close this activity, allow students to compare these stories to the previous made list about characteristics of children in The Great Depression.

Culmination

1. Designate a table in the classroom to be the “history table.” Fill it with artifacts from the theme being discussed for the current unit. Some artifacts for The Great Depression that will be included are depression dishes, an icebox, ice tongs, and a steam iron. I will also put primary resources like documents and photographs on the table, for example diary entries, and letters.
2. Encourage students to look and analyze these primary sources during appropriate times of the day and to make connections with these materials to what they have recently been learning.
3. Have an extra credit station where students can seek out someone who lived during The Great Depression and interview them about their experiences. Make a worksheet of questions for the students to ask their interviewee. Questions:
 - How old are you?
 - What do you remember about the Great Depression?
 - Where did you live during the Great Depression?
 - How old were you during the Great Depression?
 - Were you able to go to school?
 - How did you get to school or work during the Great Depression?
 - Who was in your family then?
 - What was the hardest part of living then for you?
 - What did you usually eat during a day?
 - What did you do for fun?

Assessment

To assess what the students learned, ask them to spend some time journaling about what they learned about children of The Great Depression? Write questions on the board for them to guide their writing. Questions:

- Were children happy during The Great Depression, why or why not?
- How did The Great Depression affect children?
- What did you learn about children during this time, and how do they compare to children today?

Use these writings to influence your planning for future lessons.

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

DAY 5

TITLE: *The effects on Iowans and Employment*

Learning Goals:

Knowledge

-The students will be able to understand the effects of the Great Depression on Iowa's communities and citizens.

Skills

-Students will explore and analyze primary sources, such as photos.
-Students will participate in a role-play activity (Reader's Theatre) about the struggles of people during the Great Depression.

Dispositions

-Students will begin to understand the complexity of historic events, learn about multiple perspectives of those events, and develop their own beliefs on the subject.

National Council for the Social Studies Themes:

<http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands>

Time, Continuity, and Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.

Materials Needed

Photo: "Men's dormitory at night at the homelessmen's bureau, Sioux City, Iowa" by Russell Lee (#13 – Appendix I)

Photo: "The only home of a depression-routed family of nine from Iowa" by Dorothea Lange (#14 – Appendix I)

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. Divide the students into four groups. Each of the groups will be given 1 of the 2 photos listed above.
2. Ask the students to analyze the photos.
 - a. What do you see?
 - b. What mood do you think it trying to be set?
 - c. What do you think the place is?
 - d. What would you see, hear, smell, taste in that place?

3. Have a group discussion, sharing each photo and the students' ideas about it.
4. Share some background information about the photos. The first is a picture of the male shelter in Sioux City. The second is of a family of 9 who lost their home and had to live in their car.
5. After telling the students, how did their ideas change?
6. On the board, make a list of things the students know about the Great Depression.

Development

1. In the class of 24 students, divide them into 4 groups of 6 students.
2. In the groups, the students will be assigned (or choose) a part of the Reader's Theatre to read (Appendix IV).
3. Each group will read through the script, paying close attention to the attitudes and feelings of the characters.
 - a. Do you notice a reoccurring theme with each stop that the Historian makes on his trip? If so, what is it?
 - b. What attitude/mood does each of the characters portray?
4. Once the read-through is done, have the students discuss in their small group what they learned from the script.

Culmination

1. Bring it back to a large group discussion, allowing the students to lead the talk.
2. Let them share their personal feelings, and how the story made them feel. What type of life would it have been?
3. Add any new knowledge to the list on the board.

Assessment


1. Each student will create a postcard or write a letter as a person living during the Great Depression. They will include at least 5 facts or ideas that they learned about the effects on Iowa.
 - a. The facts can be demonstrated through pictures if a postcard is chosen.


APPENDIX I: IMAGES AND GRAPHIC MATERIALS FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

1. Database

This resource expresses voices of the Dust Bowl, which were considered a cause of the Depression. Below is a screenshot of the resource.

The Library of Congress

 AMERICAN MEMORY



Voices from the Dust Bowl
The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin
Migrant Worker Collection
1940-1941

American Folklife Center, Library of Congress

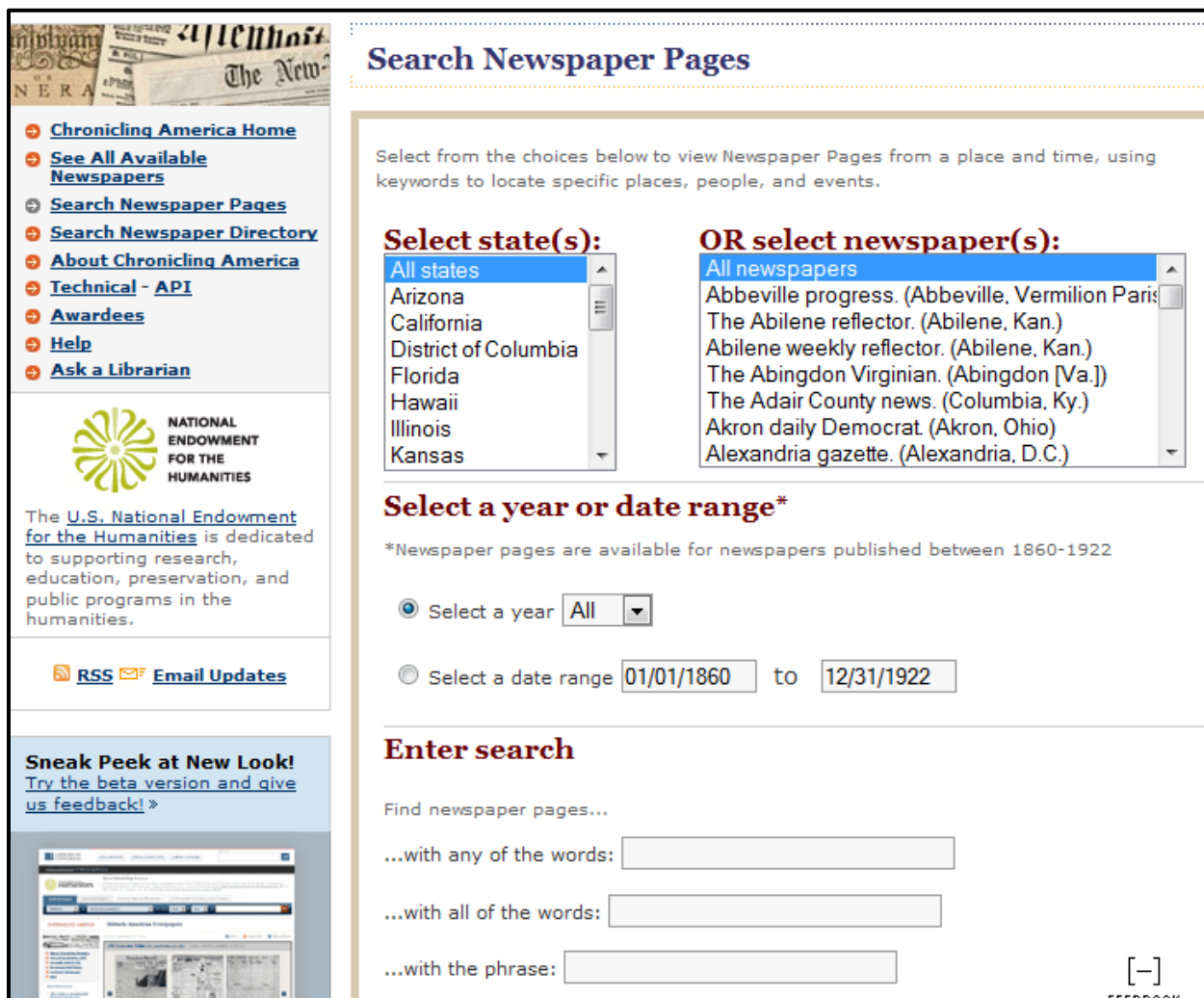
Search by Keywords | **Browse by** [Song Text](#) | [Audio Titles](#) | [Photographs](#) | [Performers/Interviewees](#)

Voices from the Dust Bowl: The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Migrant Worker Collection is an online presentation of a multi-format [ethnographic field collection](#) documenting the everyday life of residents of [Farm Security Administration](#) (FSA) migrant work camps in central California in 1940 and 1941. This collection consists of audio recordings, photographs, manuscript materials, publications, and ephemera generated during two separate documentation trips supported by the Archive of American Folk Song (now the Archive of Folk Culture, [American Folklife Center](#)).

Todd and Sonkin, both of the City College of New York (currently the City College of the City University of New York), took disc recording equipment supplied by the Archive of American Folk Song to Arvin,

2. Search Engine

This resource provides a way for students to look through different states and different newspaper articles to research the Great Depression. Below is a screenshot of the resource.



Search Newspaper Pages

Select from the choices below to view Newspaper Pages from a place and time, using keywords to locate specific places, people, and events.

Select state(s):

- All states
- Arizona
- California
- District of Columbia
- Florida
- Hawaii
- Illinois
- Kansas

OR select newspaper(s):

- All newspapers
- Abbeville progress. (Abbeville, Vermilion Parish, La.)
- The Abilene reflector. (Abilene, Kan.)
- Abilene weekly reflector. (Abilene, Kan.)
- The Abingdon Virginian. (Abingdon [Va.])
- The Adair County news. (Columbia, Ky.)
- Akron daily Democrat. (Akron, Ohio)
- Alexandria gazette. (Alexandria, D.C.)

Select a year or date range*

*Newspaper pages are available for newspapers published between 1860-1922

☒ Select a year

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3. Image

Head-and-shoulders, black-and-white portrait of Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt, July 20, 1933.



4. Image

Photograph of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill on the Russia Embassy entryway, November 28 – December 1, 1943.



5. Image

Head-and-shoulders, black-and-white portrait of Franklin D. Roosevelt, facing left, December 27, 1933.



6. Image

CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) workers in Prince George's County, Maryland in 1935.

**7. Image**

Relief client near Oil City, Oklahoma in 1937.



8. Document

Instructions to WPA Staff.

Comprises instructions prepared by Sidney Robertson Cowell for Work Projects Administration staff working on categorizing and documenting the traditional music collected as part of the Northern California Folk Music Project, including background on the project, forms for data collection and research on songs and performers, and bibliographies.

-8-

CALIFORNIA FOLK MUSIC PROJECT

COLLECTION OF TRADITIONAL MUSIC IN CALIFORNIA

Instructions to workers

The purpose of this undertaking is to collect and preserve the old-time music now in circulation in California, particularly the songs which are fast disappearing and which, for the most part, have never been printed or even written down, but have been passed on from one performer to another by rote. "California" folk music is understood to mean any traditional music, -- song or dance tune, -- now current in California; items from other states which deal with California life or history may be included. The investigation is not of course to be limited to performers whose native language is English. The minority groups in California have much to add that is of great interest.

We want to preserve a song:

- 1) If it was widely current at any time, known to and sung by many people;
- 2) If it has been known to several generations in a family;
- 3) If it is an account of a true happening, with local details and place names, even if it was not known widely; or if it tells about the early days in general (lumber camps, mining camps, the crossing of the plains; crimes, catastrophes; any local trade;)
- 4) If it is a special favorite and particularly good fun to sing.

We want to know what instruments are found in this region, and where any unusual ones may be examined; also names and addresses of performers on any folk instrument, particularly fiddlers who play for dances in the old fashion, and 5-string (not tenor) banjo players. Please note general type of instrument, and mention any odd feature about construction or performance which struck you particularly.

Local pride in the preservation of the cultural things that belong to the old days should be stimulated wherever possible, particularly in the minority groups. Remember that the "Anglo-Saxon" music which we are inclined to think of as the only "American" kind is a relatively recent importation on this continent, exactly as the Hungarian, Finnish and Armenian folk musics are. The Portuguese and Spanish have been in California three times as long as the "Americans".

It is a good idea to spend much time making friends among the older people who are likely to know songs or to have friends who know them. Don't feel that time spent in conversation about things apparently quite unconnected with songs is wasted, for it will make you seem less a stranger. A few minutes of general conversation (don't scorn the weather as a topic!) should

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always precede any explanation of the reason for your visit. A casual friendly, unhurried manner is disarming; a busy, efficient one creates suspicion.

When you find someone who knows a few songs, explain that the University of California is interested in seeing that they aren't lost, and ask him if he'd feel like making out a list of the titles, just to see how many songs he can remember, and which ones. If he will dictate the words to you, tell him you'll make up a typewritten booklet of them and give him a copy. Do not mention recording on disks until specifically told to do this by the Supervisor.

Never judge a folk-singer by the tonal beauty of his singing. If the tune is fairly definite and the words reasonably clear that is all that is necessary for our purposes. Often the singing that sounds most curious to our ears is the oldest and most valuable to preserve. It is important for the collector to realize that in the mind of a true folk-singer the song is of every importance, the singer of none at all. Never admire a performance, only the story of the song or the line of the melody.

Sometimes it is necessary, in order to keep your singer's goodwill, to take down songs that aren't particularly interesting, simply because they are favorites of his. Often, too, it is necessary to take down one that has been published, though the singer does not know this because he, probably, learned it by rote. Don't scorn such songs, their variation from the printed version is very interesting to students, and they should be noted down carefully. In every case we want the singer's own version of words and tune, so never correct him.

In going to call on "foreign" Californians it is almost always necessary to go in company with someone known to your performer, -- someone in whom he has confidence and whom you have interested in your project ahead of time. This should be a person able to understand your work in its historical and social aspects, so that if your performer suspects you of attempting to exploit his music commercially, your sponsor for the contact will be able to reassure him effectively. Never ask foreigners directly for the date of their arrival in the United States. Even when they are in this country legally they are often uncertain of their status and this query may ruin your contact. Usually the approximate date is easy to determine indirectly.

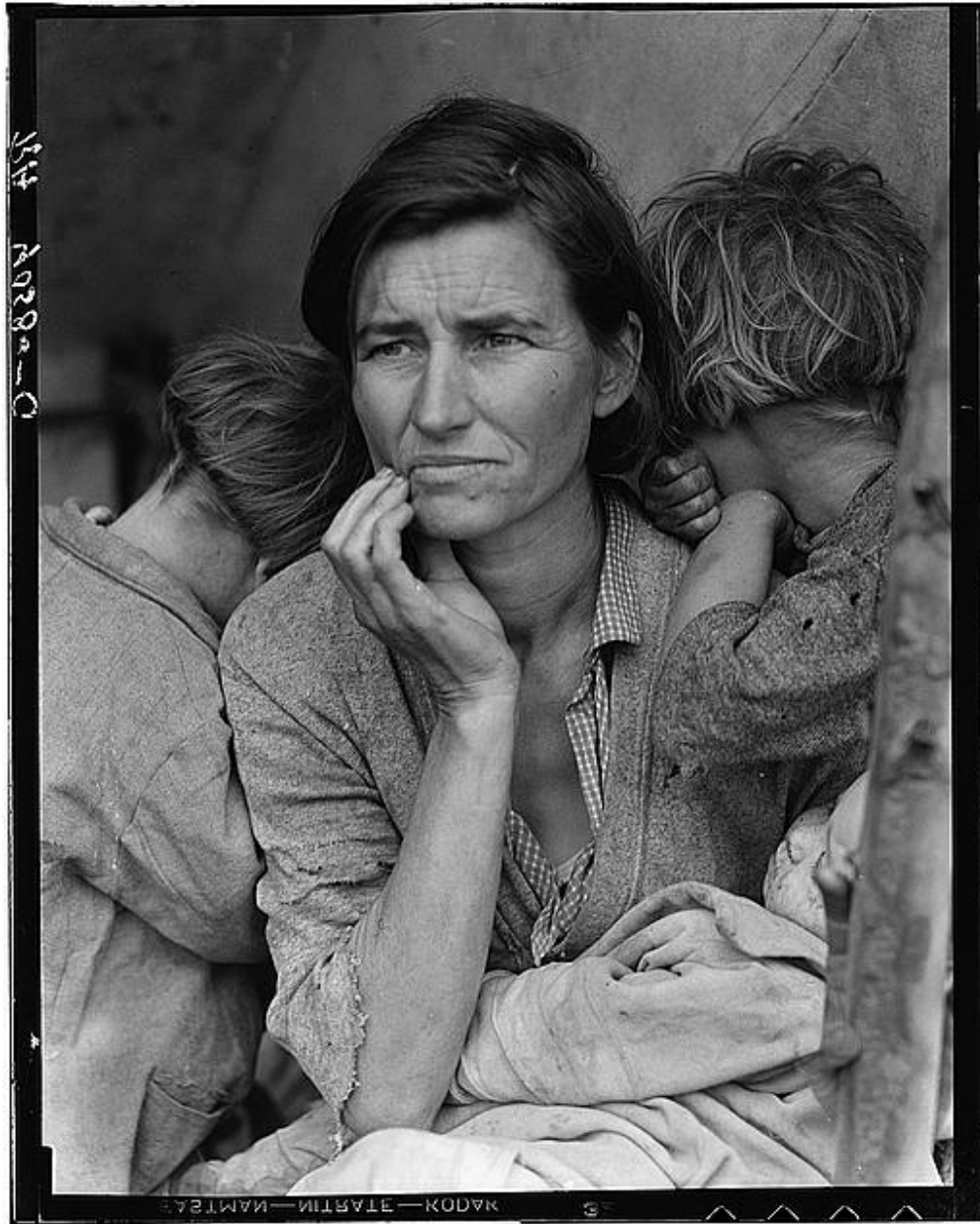
Your call should always have the aspect of a social visit, not a business one. Remember that 'foreign' manners are usually more formal and in general more consistent than ours, so be on your best behavior! Don't press people; treat them as collaborators. On the other hand, don't allow a performer to feel that he is doing you a personal favor by allowing you to take down his songs. The undertaking requires hard and concentrated work from both of you, and the best attitude for you is to assume that he will be glad to make the effort to get a more complete record of the history of old-time things, just as you are.

-10-

The interview forms which follow should be studied carefully to clarify in your mind the various things we are interested to know. You are not expected to fill these out in full for every performer, but insofar as any of this information is obtainable in general conversation, without more than a few direct questions, it should be included on these forms. A performer's interest should not be exhausted in answering questions since it is infinitely more important to record his music. Never fill out these forms in the presence of the performer.

9. Image

Florence Thompson with three of her children in a photograph known as "Migrant Mother." February 1936.



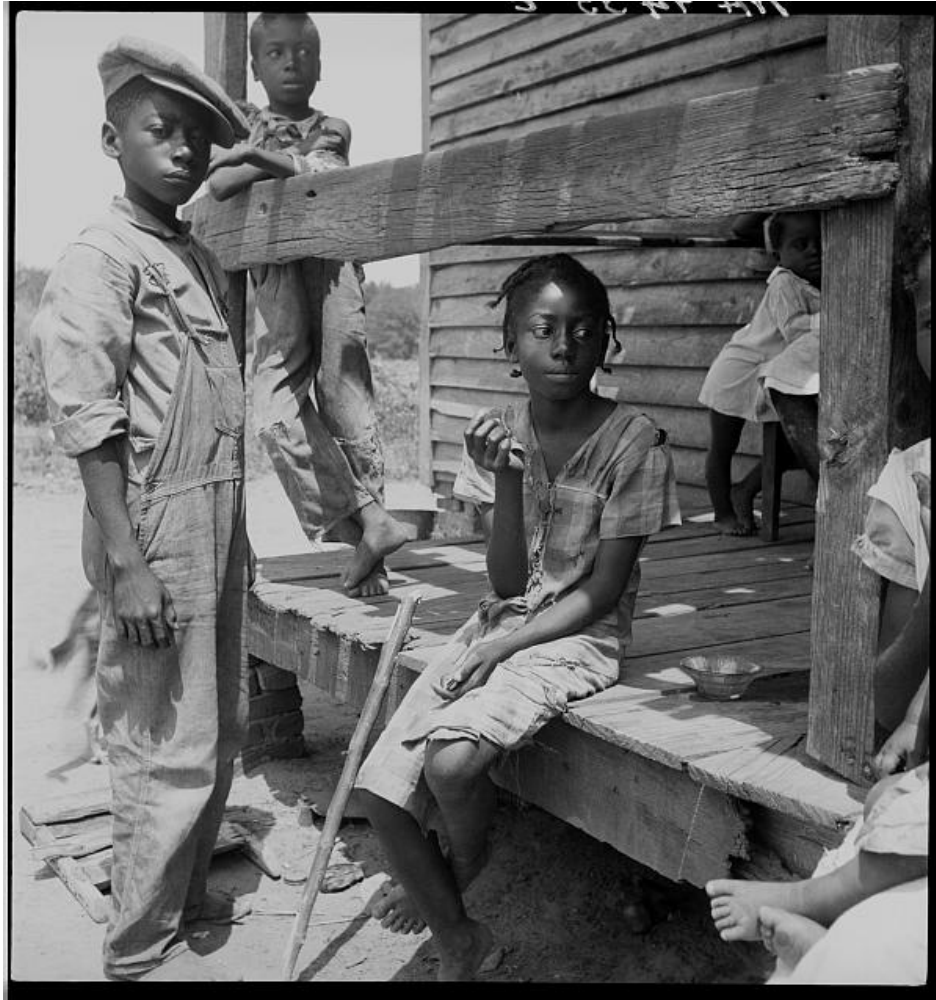
10. Image

Part of an impoverished family of nine on a New Mexico highway. Depression refugees from Iowa. Left Iowa in 1932 because of father's ill health. Family has been on relief in Arizona but refused entry on relief roles in Iowa to which state they wish to return. Nine children including a sick four-month-old baby. No money at all. About to sell their belongings and trailer for money to buy food. "We don't want to go where we'll be a nuisance to anybody".



11. Image

Young children of one family sit on their front porch, taking a break from work. 1932



12. Image

“The only home of a depression-routed family of nine from Iowa” by Lange, Dorothea, photographer. © Aug 1936



13. Image

“Men's dormitory at night at the homeless men's bureau, Sioux City, Iowa (for unattached men). Unemployment is the primary cause of their being here. This unemployment has been the direct cause of broken homes, through divorce and incompatibility. Most of the men are willing to work if they could find it. Average age fifty-two. Most of the men are from the urban districts.”
by Lee, Russell, 1903-1986, photographer. © Dec. 1936



APPENDIX II:

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND WEBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

Bibliography of Children's Literature

- Freedman, R. (2005). *Children of the Great Depression*. Clarion Books.
- Hoover, D. (2007). *A Good Day's Work: An Iowa Farm in the Great Depression*. Lanham: Evan R. Dee, Publisher.
- Hunt, I. (1979) *No Promises in the Wind*. Chicago, IL: Follett Publishing Company.
- Kalish, M. (2007). *Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm during the Great Depression*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Lied, K. (2002). *Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression*. National Geographic Children's Books.
- McElvaine, R. S. (1993). *The Great Depression: America 1929-1941*. Times Books.
- Whitmore, A. (2001). *The Bread Winner*. Groundwood Books.
- Zeier, J.T.(1990). *The Elderberry Thicket*. Antheneum Books.

Webliography of Supporting Online Resources for Students

Des Moines Register

The Des Moines Register provides videos, interviews, photos, timelines, etc. about the Great Depression in Iowa.

<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/section/depression&template=photolanding>

Explorations in Iowa's History

This website is a great source of diaries from adults who lived during The Great Depression.

www.uni.edu/iowahist/Social_Economic/social.htm

Iowa Public Television

The Iowa Public Television site offers many links within the website to demonstrate the severity and effects of the Great Depression on the state of Iowa.

http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000060

National Archives

This website gives a lot of great basic and valid information on The Great Depression.

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/picturing_the_century/galleries/greatdep.html

Strange Fruit

This is a website that gives protest music that was popular at this time. Students can read the lyrics to the song and also listen to it using the computer.

<http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/audioBrother.html>

The 1930's Human Cost, In Pictures

This is a collection of pictures that give information on the CCC during the Great Depression. The information is given in little blurbs which is student friendly.

<http://www.pbs.org/teachers/connect/resources/7375/preview/>

Top 5 Causes of the Great Depression

This journal article by Martin Kelly discusses the possible causes of the Great Depression. Five of the top causes are listed with a brief summary and explanation.

<http://americanhistory.about.com/od/greatdepression/tp/greatdepression.htm>

Webliography of Supporting Online Resources for Teachers

About the Great Depression

This website gives information that is not only about the great depression in the United States, but also how it affected the whole world. It also gives charts and maps of where the depression hit the hardest in the United States and where funds from the government went to most.

<http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/depression/about.htm>

Ames Historical Society

This website offers photographs and information about the Great Depression and the effects on farming in the rural areas.

<http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/depression.htm>

Bringing History Home

This link provides a list of resources about the Great Depression, including timelines, inflation calculators, essays, etc.

<http://www.bringinghistoryhome.org/fourth/unit-2/select-websites>

A Case of Unemployment

This website gives information about unemployment in the 1930's. It gives in depth information about the unemployment trends of this time.

<http://ingrimayne.com/econ/EconomicCatastrophe/GreatDepression.html>

Top 10 New Deal Programs

This website gives information about the top ten New Deal Programs during the Great Depression. It gives brief information about each one.

http://americanhistory.about.com/od/greatdepression/tp/new_deal_programs.htm

The People History: Money and Inflation 1930's

This website gives information on what things cost in the 1930's. It tells the inflation rate between the 1930's and 2005. It also tells the cost of food, house costs, average income, car cost, clothes, furniture, and electrical prices.

<http://www.thepeoplehistory.com/1930s.html>

APPENDIX III: DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY (LESSON 4)

#1 Marie Beyne Gillis Tubbs Remembers Her Father's Music

The business of my father (Theodore J. Beyne) was at a standstill. Since his hobby was playing the violin in the newly formed Grand Rapids Symphony Orchestra, he had time to search within himself for things to do. He began to compose beautiful music—three symphonies, quartettes, violin, piano and cello concertos and other piano music.

My first memory of hearing his music played was at the beginning of the Depression at the band shell at the city's John Ball Park. His orchestral arrangement of Hoagy Carmichael's "Star Dust" was performed by the WPA orchestra, which had been formed to provide employment for out-of-work musicians. How clearly I remember, out of the depths of dark feelings springing from closed banks and no work, the wonderful sensation that comes from something more than "bread alone." And I remember his pleased reaction (he was overwhelmed) at the audience's appreciation shown with lots of applause. "Depression go hang for the moment."

#2 Phyllis Bryant Remembers Her Christmas Doll Bed

In 1929 I was six years old, but I remember quite a few things from that era, especially growing up and never having too much.

What sticks mostly in my mind was losing my money in the bank. I didn't quite understand why that bank had to close and take my money, which probably was only a few dollars. When they started paying off a few years later, my check was eleven cents. It helped when my brother gave me his, which was eighteen cents, and my older sister's, which was twenty-three cents. I was really in the money then.

Beans were a common meal and were often given to us by a farmer friend. What helped them along was the hot homemade bread. We usually had lots of homemade cookies and cakes, too. But it was kind of great, going to family reunions and eating their "store bought" cookies and bread. My mother would cook for hours and hours on a little wood-burning laundry stove. Summers, a three-burner kerosene stove was used. I recall going to the gas station for ten cents worth of kerosene and can still smell the stink of it!

My dad was a carpenter and farmer and did lots of things to keep us going. We lived in the small village of Imlay City, close to a family that owned a cow. My dad milked her twice a day, fed her and cleaned the stall. In return we got two quarts of milk a day. With all the canning my mother did from our garden, our weekly grocery bill wasn't that big. We only bought the bare necessities....

Christmas was an exciting time, but there were never too many gifts. I got a doll bed one year with a doll and aluminum dishes. It was the best Christmas I remember. (A couple of years later it dawned on me that my dad had made the bed.) We always had homemade candy and popcorn

balls. The lights on the tree were very difficult. If one burned out, the whole string would go out. So there you were with a good bulb trying all the sockets until you found the burned-out one. When there was no money to buy extra bulbs, all you had to do was break the bulb, twist the wires and screw the bulb back in the socket, being very careful if you didn't get all the glass off....

I was in high school in 1937 when the first strike in Flint occurred. I thought that was so terrible—men with good jobs, steady employment and making good money putting their families through that.

#3 Carmen Carter Remembers Turkey Farming

In 1929 Orlo and I had been married two years and had a year old son, Douglas. We were just nicely getting started in the turkey raising business on his parents' farm near Bridgeton. We had about a thousand young turkeys that spring and we bought feed on credit during the growing season and paid for it when we sold the turkeys at Thanksgiving time.

But that year was different. The newspapers were full of news about bank closing, businesses failing, and people out of work. There was just no money and we could not sell the turkeys. So we were in debt with no way out.

But when we read about the bread lines and soup kitchens in the cities, we felt we were lucky because we raised our own food. Our house was rent free, just keep it in repair. Our fuel, which was wood, was free for the cutting. Then our second child, Iris, was born and our biggest expense was doctor bills. However, this too was solved when our doctor agreed to take turkeys and garden produce for pay.

About that time my husband and a friend started operating a crate and box factory near Maple Island. After expenses they were each making about a dollar a day. Food was cheap. Coffee was 19 cents a pound, butter 20 cents, bacon the same, with a five pound bag of sugar or flour about 25 cents.

Gasoline was five gallons for a dollar so for recreation we would get into our 1926 Overland Whippet and go for long rides. We also had an Atwater Kent radio we could listen to when we could buy batteries for it.

I had always liked to write poetry so I decided to submit some to Grit, a weekly newspaper. I was delighted when they accepted them and paid me \$2 each for them. That money bought a large bag of groceries at that time. I continued to write for Grit for several years.

Orlo finally got a job as a mechanic at a garage in Grant. He earned \$15 a week and for us the Depression was over. But it taught us to really appreciate what we had.

#4 Richard Waskin: An Oral History

Richard Waskin talks about life during the Great Depression. His parents were born in Poland. He was born in East Chicago, Indiana. When he was three years old he went back to Poland with his parents. They returned to this country when he was four years old. They came to the Detroit area where he spent most of his life.

Mostly I remember if it hadn't been for my mother who was an excellent seamstress, and she seemed to find jobs here and there with the department stores, I don't know how we would have made it, because my father was a common laborer, a factory worker, and there just wasn't [sic] any jobs at that time.

Sometimes during the winter...when the snow fell in Detroit they called for people that they wanted to shovel the snow, and of course everybody didn't get hired—you just had to go out there and the foreman or whoever would be throwing the shovel and if you happened to catch it you're hired. And so my father would go out there and on occasion he would be hired and earn a couple of dollars or so for the day's work there. Otherwise it was kind of catch or catch can there....

Well, there's one thing that happened with me and perhaps I was fortunate that Detroit had, possibly, a welfare system. Well I know they did, 'cause we had it. One of the things was that I came down with a mastoid which was a very serious thing at that time. It's very rare now because of antibiotics. But my whole side of my head was swollen and they called what they called "a city physician." And at that time doctors made house calls. So he came out and took one look at my head and he called the ambulance immediately and they took me to Children's Hospital cause I was only 11 years old. And they operated on me that night and I must assume that that saved my life at that time. So that was one of things I had to go through.

But another thing as a child that I remember was that you stood in the welfare line somewhere on Michigan Avenue—I don't remember just exactly where—and they were passing out sweaters for children and we were fortunate enough to get me a grey sweater, and I can remember how proud I was of having that sweater and how warm I felt with that thing on.

Shoes, of course, were a problem and many times I remember I wore out the soles down to the pavement, so to speak, and you had to put cardboard in there. But then my father he got hold of some shoe forms--metal ones--and he would buy leather. He would cut out the sole--with nails and a hammer on these shoe forms --he would put new leather on my shoes and probably on my brothers' also....

I went to college, Wayne University, and because I was a champion runner—I happened to be the quarter mile champion. No, excuse me, this was in college. In high school I was west side champ in the city and so more or less recruited by Wayne—they had a pretty good track team them. And they had what they called the NYA, National Youth Administration. This was kind of a Depression department, you might say, and if you did some work for the university they would pay you enough so that you could pay your tuition and get through school that way.

So, being a champion runner I had no trouble getting on NYA and the coach then put me in the athletic office putting in figures for whatever was expenditures, maybe an hour's work a day or so. I pretty much got through college on my own. But that was when I became Michigan university champion in the 440, and I remember it was right here in East Lansing at Michigan State that they had the meet, and I think I have the photograph of me then and I do remember I was only 17 years old and they made a big point of it over the PA system.

APPENDIX IV: READER'S THEATER (LESSON 5)

The Great Depression: Iowa's Challenges during the 1920's & 1930's by Jenna Moser

Characters:

Narrator
Historian
Banker
Farmer
Teacher
Railroad Worker

Narrator: The historian started his journey in 1931 around the state of Iowa to learn about the effects of the Great Depression on Iowa citizens. He talked to many different people in various professions. His first stop was in Le Mars, Iowa, where he met a struggling farmer.

Farmer: "Good afternoon, good Sir! Would you be interested in some milk or cream?"

Historian: "Sure, I would like some milk. How much?"

Farmer: "Three cents."

Historian: "Hmm...Why so little?"

Farmer: "I owe the bank a lot of money on my farm, and I need to pay it back as quickly as possible. If I don't, they will take it away."

Historian: "Why can't you pay for your farm?"

Farmer: "All of the farmers are struggling. About 8 years ago the Federal government promised us high crop prices, so we planted a large amount, but the guarantee was lifted. Now we have a surplus of supply, but the prices are so low. I cannot make enough money to pay my debt and taxes back to the bank."

Historian: "So what will happen next?"

Farmer: "Many of the farmers have taken matters into their own hands. Last week, they broke into the courthouse, took the judge against his will, and threatened to hang him if he took any more family farms away. I do not believe in violence, so I am just doing what I can to stay afloat."

Historian: "It sounds like you are handling it the right way. Best of luck to you, and thank you for the milk."

Narrator: After leaving Le Mars, he was even more interested in the effects of the Depression on the people of Iowa. He traveled down the road to Des Moines, Iowa to speak with some area bankers. As he entered the town, he walked by a local bank. A young man was walking out of the bank carrying a box. He dropped it, and he stopped to help him.

Historian: “I noticed there were pictures in this box. Why are you taking all of your things home?”

Banker: “The bank is closing, and I had to clean out my desk.”

Historian: “I know this is a depression, but isn’t a bank supposed to have a lot of money?”

Banker: “It all started when the Federal government promised the local farmers high crop prices. They planted as much as they could, but the guarantee was lifted a year later. They had taken extra loans for machinery and land, but now are unable to pay the debt due to the surplus and low crop prices. On top of that, the town has raised taxes to pay for the new school facilities that were built before the Depression started. Since we are not collecting the debt that is owed to us, we do not have funds to pay the people who have deposited money into our bank. We have been forced to close our doors, because we do not have enough money.”

Historian: “I am beginning to see how this is effecting not only one population, but all people in our state and country. I am sorry for struggles. I hope that our economy rebounds soon.”

Narrator: As the historian left Des Moines and headed east, he came to a one-room schoolhouse, where a teacher was sitting out in front. As he got closer, he realized that she was crying. He stopped to find out what had upset her.

Historian: “Excuse me, Ma’am. Do you need any help?”

Teacher: I am afraid that I will not be able to feed my children tonight.”

Historian: “What do you mean?”

Teacher: “I had a meeting with my boss today. He asked me to take a cut in pay for my teaching job. If I refuse it, I will get fired, but if I accept it, I will barely have enough money to feed my family. My students will suffer, because I will not have any money to buy supplies for our classroom.”

Historian: “Why does the school district want you to take a pay cut?”

Teacher: “Before the economy started failing, we built a newer building and improved the roads. They are trying to pay for those renovations, so I am going to suffer for it.”

Historian: “I’m so sorry for the troubles that you are having. (He reaches into his satchel and pulls out a package of pencils.) I would like you to have these for your students. I hope your situation improves soon.”

Narrator: With that kind gesture, the historian continues on his way. He comes to a town called Dubuque, Iowa, located on the Mississippi River. Realizing that he had reached the eastern border of Iowa and could go no further, he decided it was time to go home. He heads toward the train station to return to Sioux City. It is now the year of 1934.

Historian: “Hello, Sir. I would like one train ticket to Sioux City, Iowa, please.”

Railroad Worker: “Sure! That will be \$1.50.”

Historian: (He hands him the money.) “Thank you.”

Narrator: A few minutes later, the horn sounds to board the train. The historian climbs the steps to enter.

Railroad Worker: “Right this way, Sir. You can place your luggage under your seat.”

Historian: (Jokingly says...)“You again? Are you the engineer of the train, too?”

Railroad Worker: (Laughing.) “Actually, yes I am!”

Historian: “Where are all of the other workers?”

Railroad Worker: “It is just I today. With all of the layoffs and other railroads closing, our workforce is down to 25 people.”

Historian: “May I ask how many workers you started with?”

Railroad Worker: “We had 600, but in the last three years, we have had to downsize.”

Historian: “It is fortunate that you still have a job. Thank you for your help, and please take this as a thank you. (He hands him a dollar bill.)

Narrator: On his trip home, the historian thought about all he had learned over the last 3 years. The Great Depression affected every person in every town throughout the United States. The struggles of each person were related to one another. It is all an interrelated event in history.

Source: Iowa Public Television

http://www.iptv.org/iowapathways/mypath.cfm?ounid=ob_000060