



Teaching Guide

SEGMENT 2, WEBISODE 12

Please note: Each segment in this Webisode has its own Teaching Guide



Segment Overview

The Great Depression greatly affected the everyday lives of ordinary people and brought a sense of national and personal despair, fear, and failure. In the midst of a severe decline in business, falling prices, and high unemployment, politicians and business leaders tried to reassure the country. According to President Herbert Hoover, “While the crash only took place six months ago, I am convinced we have passed the worst.”

But by 1932, thirteen million workers (one out of every four) had no jobs. Banks closed, saving accounts disappeared, and families lost their farms, homes, and businesses.

As Americans struggled to cope with economic hardships, they looked to the federal government for assistance, but the Hoover administration was incapable of alleviating the crisis.

Following the end of the Great War, veterans were promised a bonus to compensate for their low pay as soldiers. However, they could not collect this money until 1945. In May 1932, the Bonus Army—nine thousand veterans and their families—marched to Washington to ask to borrow on their bonuses early. President Hoover ordered the United States Army to remove those who camped around the Capitol. The unprecedented sight of armed soldiers forcibly dispersing veterans with tear gas and guns shocked the nation and further eroded support for the Hoover administration.

Teacher Directions

1. Ask the students, in their small teams, to brainstorm a list of ways in which their lives would change if the Great Depression happened today. Be sure students realize that there was no unemployment insurance or Social Security and that bank accounts were not protected or insured in the early 1930s. Encourage students to consider the depression’s effect on their housing, food, family life, education, and future prospects.
2. Teams share their lists in a class discussion.



Let's Discuss



History Sleuth

Teacher Directions

1. Give each student or pair of students a sentence strip. Introduce the impact of the Great Depression by reading the first person account of Dynamite Garland in *Hard Times, An Oral History of the Great Depression* by Studs Turkel.
2. Ask the students to summarize the account into a one or two sentence statement that Dynamite might make about her childhood during the Great Depression (i.e. I wore socks on my hands for gloves and lived on fried Chinese noodles. I can't stand 'em today.)
3. Write the sentence on a sentence strip and tape it on the chalkboard. This is the first line of a class-written poem called "Voices of the Great Depression."
4. Read additional first person accounts of the Great Depression. Students discuss the accounts and then write on their sentence strip a one or two sentence summary impression that becomes a line of a class poem: "*Voices of the Great Depression.*"
5. The class puts the sentence strips together to create a class poem, "Voices of the Great Depression."

Teacher Directions

Suppose President Hoover visited your class today.

- What would you say to him about his policy "though the people support the government, the government should not support the people"?
- How is the government's role in the life of the people today different from Hoover's day?



What do you Think?

Teacher Directions



Moving Toward
Freedom



Connections

1. Explain to the students that during the Great Depression, many Americans feared that capitalism would collapse, and some people looked to communism for answers. American Communist clubs formed in many cities. A few leftists like Edmund Wilson were willing to “...strike hands with our true comrades, the Communist Party,” but most Americans believed in the endless potential of their democratic nation, its economic system, and themselves.
2. Students write and present a brief speech supporting capitalism rather than communism as the best economic system.

Teacher Directions

Use the following activities with your students.

Language Arts — Students read *No Promises in the Wind* by Irene Hunt, *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred Taylor, and *A Jar of Dreams* by Yoshiko Uchida. Partner Discussion Guides are available from the Johns Hopkins University Talent Development Middle School Program.

Science/Library — During the Great Depression, children and adults did not get proper nutrition or adequate medical care. Students investigate the results of this lack on the long-term health of those who grew up or lived during the Great Depression.

Art/Library — Students read about Dorothea Lange and the impact of her photographs on social reform. Using web sites and the library, students create a display of Lange’s photographs.

Music — Students listen to the music of Woody Guthrie and other social activists who used music and song to bring reform.

Local History — Students research the effects of the Stock Market Crash and the Great Depression on their community.

Art — Students illustrate the class poem with photographs from the Great Depression years or their own artwork.