

Getting Happy - Life in the Great Depression

11th Grade US History

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Unit Description & Scope

This unit focuses on the human toll of the Great Depression and average Americans' responses to it. It covers the years 1929-1939 socially and 1929-1932 politically. It should follow a unit on the 1920s and precede a unit on the New Deal. It will take a minimum of five traditional class periods, though is flexible and can be scaled up or down as time permits.

Unit Overview

- Causes of the Great Depression - direct teaching with student scenario
- Dust Bowl & Life on the Road - multi-format sources study
- Life in the Great Depression - multi-format sources study
- Pop Culture Responds - song study
- The Political Response (Hoover & bridge to FDR) - direct teaching with sources embedded

Essential & Guiding Questions

- Why did the Great Depression begin and have such a far-reaching effect?
- How did the average American experience the Great Depression? What identity factors (ex. Race, gender, region, profession, etc.) affected a person's Great Depression experience and how?
- Why did popular culture of the era tend to be optimistic and escapist?
- What was the effect of music on the way Americans experienced the Great Depression?
- What role does music continue to play in helping us cope with difficulties?
- Why did President Hoover not take a more active role in fighting the Depression?
- What was the effect of the Depression and the Bonus Army on the election of 1932?

Standards

- [CA Historical and Social Science Analysis Skills](#) (pages 40-41)
 - Chronological and Spatial Thinking
 - 1. Students compare the present with the past, evaluating the consequences of past events and decisions and determining the lessons that were learned.
 - Historical Research, Evidence, and Point of View
 - 4. Students construct and test hypotheses; collect, evaluate, and employ information from multiple primary and secondary sources; and apply it in oral and written presentations.
 - Historical Interpretation

- 1. Students show the connections, causal and otherwise, between particular historical events and larger social, economic, and political trends and developments.
 - 2. Students recognize the complexity of historical causes and effects, including the limitations on determining cause and effect.
 - 3. Students interpret past events and issues within the context in which an event unfolded rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values.
- [CA Content Standards for 11th Grade US History](#) (page 50)
 - 11.6 Students analyze the different explanations for the Great Depression and how the New Deal fundamentally changed the role of the federal government.
 - 11.6.22. Understand the explanations of the principal causes of the Great Depression and the steps taken by the Federal Reserve, Congress, and Presidents Herbert Hoover and Franklin Delano Roosevelt to combat the economic crisis.
 - 11.6.3 Discuss the human toll of the Depression, natural disasters, and unwise agricultural practices and their effects on the depopulation of rural regions and on political movements of the left and right, with particular attention to the Dust Bowl refugees and their social and economic impacts in California.
- [CA History-Social Science Framework Essential Questions](#) (page 396)
 - Why was there a Great Depression?
 - How did ordinary people respond to the Great Depression?

Mental Health Skill

- *While there are no set of standards for mental health education, the following advice comes from HelpGuide.org, which is a non-profit organization in collaboration with Harvard Medical School.*
- [Coping with Depression](#)
 - Tip #2: Develop a Wellness Toolbox
 - #9 Listen to music

A Note on Technology

- *This unit of study was created with Google Classroom in mind as a way to disseminate information and files to students. It assumes 1:1 technology access, either through students' access to a Chromebook or other computer full time or through the use of laptop carts that teachers can check out for a given day. If the technology is not present to run the lessons as originally designed, teachers can present the sources on a projector or use in-class desktop computers to set up source "stations" that students rotate through.*
- *Similarly, this unit provides support note structures for struggling learners. They can be directly assigned to individual students through Google Classroom (rather than to the entire class.) However, if a technology access is limited for the lesson, teachers can provide printed copies for students who need them.*

Lesson 1: Causes of the Great Depression

- Essential Question:
 - Why did the Great Depression begin and have such a far-reaching effect?

- Objective:
 - Students will be able to explain why the stock market crashed and how the crash caused bank failures which economically devastated Americans who had not invested in the market.
- Time:
 - 1 traditional lesson period
- Materials:
 - [Warm up presentation](#)
 - [Causes of the Great Depression lecture presentation](#)
 - [Lecture support notes](#)
 - This file has support notes for all three lectures in this unit
 - [Simulation directions](#)
 - [Printables for Bank Simulation](#)
 - Play money
 - 4 \$10,000 bills
 - 10 \$1,000 bills
 - Stock certificates
 - Radios
- [Warm-Up](#): “I’m in the Market for You” by Louis Armstrong
 - Play “I’m in the Market for You” by Louis Armstrong while displaying the lyrics
 - Ask students to answer the following three questions in a warm-up journal
 - Describe the music.
 - Describe the lyrics. How does Armstrong use language of the stock market to discuss his relationship with the subject of the song?
 - What does the song say about America’s involvement with the stock market?
- Lesson : Direct teaching on the Causes of the Great Depression
 - Using the [lecture presentation](#), directly teach about the definition and causes of the Great Depression
 - During the lecture, bring students to the front of the room as you explain how overproduction led to the market crash
 - Use the [directions for the simulation here](#)

Lesson 2: The Dust Bowl & Life on the Road

- Essential Question:
 - How did the average American experience the Great Depression? What identity factors (ex. Race, gender, region, profession, etc.) affected a person’s Great Depression experience and how?
- Objective:
 - Students will be able to create a thesis statement explaining how the Dust Bowl affected farmers in Oklahoma and connecting it to their decision to move to California.
- Time:
 - 1 traditional lesson period
- Materials:
 - [Warm up presentation](#)
 - [Dust Bowl lecture presentation](#)

- [Lecture support notes](#)
 - This file has support notes for all three lectures in this unit
- [Dust Bowl sources presentation](#)
- **Warm-Up:** “Do-Re-Mi” by Woody Guthrie
 - Play “Do-Re-Mi” by Louis Armstrong while displaying the lyrics
 - Ask students to answer the following three questions in a warm-up journal
 - Describe the music. What does Guthrie make his harmonica sound like?
 - Describe the lyrics. How does Guthrie play on the word “Do”?
 - What is Guthrie’s warning about California?
- Lesson : Direct teaching & sources investigation
 - Begin with about 10 minutes of direct instruction on the Dust Bowl using the [lecture presentation](#)
 - Direct students to open the [sources lesson](#) posted on Google Classroom.
 - Explain that students will see and hear a variety of sources from the people who lived through the Dust Bowl. They should take brief notes on the sources (in a manner that fits with the teacher’s pre-established routines) and answer the summary questions for each set.
 - Monitor students as they work through the sources
 - With 10 minutes left in class, direct students to answer the summary questions in their notes. This should take about 2 minutes.
 - Summary Questions: How did the Dust Bowl affect farmers in Oklahoma and how did they respond to it? How were Latino and Filipino migrant farmers in California affected by the arrival of farmers from the Dust Bowl? How did the folk music of Woody Guthrie reflect the troubles and experiences of the Dust Bowl?
 - Have students share their answers in small groups. This should take about 3 minutes.
 - With 5 minutes left in class, conduct a class-wide discussion about the summary questions, encouraging students to refer to the sources to provide evidence for their statements.

Lesson 3: Life During the Great Depression

- Essential Question:
 - How did the average American experience the Great Depression? What identity factors (ex. Race, gender, region, profession, etc.) affected a person’s Great Depression experience and how?
- Objective:
 - Students will be able to create an outline using evidence from sources that describes the similarities and differences of various American’s experiences with the Depression.
- Time:
 - 1-2 traditional lesson periods
 - 1 day: Teachers may need to edit the source list down to fit all the sources into a single lesson period
- Materials:
 - [Warm up presentation](#)
 - [Sources presentation](#)
- **Warm-Up:** *The Furnished Room & Migrant Mother*

- Day 1: Show the warm up slide *The Furnished Room*
- Ask students to answer the following three questions in their warm-up journals:
 - What do you see?
 - What is the man thinking? The woman?
 - What is the artist saying about whose problem the Depression is?
- Day 2: Show the warm up slide *Migrant Mother*
- Ask students to answer the following three questions in their warm-up journals:
 - What do you see?
 - Describe what the woman is thinking.
 - This picture has very often been used to sum up the Great Depression. Why do you think it has become so powerful in American memory?
- Lesson: Sources investigation
 - Direct students to access the [sources presentation](#) on Google Classrooms
 - Explain that students will look at, read, and hear various sources showing life in the Great Depression.
 - *All sources are internally hyperlinked in the presentation.*
 - As a class, work together through the Art and the Music
 - Display the art in class. Have small groups of students discuss each piece of artwork. Call on 2-3 students per drawing to give their interpretation of the art. When done, students should answer the questions on the final slide of the art presentation
 - Play the songs for the class, while displaying the lyrics. After each song, instruct students to discuss in small groups. Call on 2-3 students per song to give their interpretation of the music. When done, students should answer the questions on the final slide of the music presentation.
 - Students should look at the photos and complete the readings individually, including the questions on the final slides of the presentations.
 - *Teachers can alternate between individual and group sources or complete all the group sources first and then let students work individually.*
 - When students are finished, they should move on to the outline activity at the end of the presentation file.
 - With 10 minutes left, bring the class back together to discuss the sources and share out their thesis statements and evidence they used in the outline.

Lesson 4: Pop Culture Responds

- Essential Question:
 - Why did popular culture of the era tend to be optimistic and escapist?
 - What was the effect of music on the way Americans experienced the Great Depression?
 - What role does music continue to play in helping us cope with difficulties?
- Objective:
 - Students will be able to participate in a seminar discussion about why Depression era music was escapist, how that music affected Americans' mood during the Depression, and reflect on what role music plays in their life when they are feeling down.
 - Students will recognize music as a potential tool to cope with rough times in a healthy way.
- Time:

- 1-3 traditional lesson periods
 - 1 class period: The number of songs can be trimmed to fit ½ class period, the songs can be played to the entire class and discussed as a group (with no group presentations) and the seminar can take place in the second half.
 - 2 class periods: The songs can occupy the first day's lesson with the song presentations and the seminar taking place the second day.
 - 3 class periods: Students can spend a third day presenting songs they listen to when they are having a bad day and reflect on why they chose that particular song. *This can be skipped in the interest of time, but it is recommended that teachers make time for it.*
- Materials:
 - [Warm up presentation](#)
 - [Music presentation](#)
 - [Seminar guiding questions presentation](#)
- Lesson: Music analysis (3 day version. See note above about how to edit it down if
 - Day 1: Song Analysis and Begin Presentations
 - *The lesson below is constructed as a small group activity, but can be taught as either individual work, small groups, or as a large class with a lot of teacher direction. Teachers should make this decision based on the needs of the individual class, how much guidance they need, and how the class is usually managed.*
 - [Warm-Up](#): “We’re in the Money” by Rosemary Clooney
 - Play “We’re in the Money” by Rosemary Clooney while displaying the lyrics
 - Ask students to answer the following three questions in a warm-up journal
 - Describe the music. How does it make you feel?
 - Describe the lyrics.
 - The Depression was not over when this was written. Why do you think it denies the existence of breadlines and poverty even though the Depression was still occurring?
 - Instruct students to open the [Great Depression music presentation](#) on Google Classrooms
 - Divide students into 6 groups and assign each group songs as follows:
 - Group 1: “Get Happy” by Judy Garland
 - Group 2: “Pennies From Heaven” by Bing Crosby
 - Group 3: “Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries” by Ethel Merman
 - Group 4: “Happy Feet” by Paul Whiteman
 - Group 5: “Wrap Your Troubles in Dreams” by Bing Crosby
 - Group 6: “Pick Yourself Up” by Ginger Rogers & Fred Astaire
 - Instruct students to listen to their songs in their groups, reading the lyrics on the presentation while they listen. After listening, students should discuss each song, using the discussion guide in the presentation. Lastly, students should make a short presentation about their song to give in front of the class, following the presentation guidelines in the file.
 - Circulate, monitor, and assist students as they work on their song.

- Begin the class presentations before the end of the period.
 - Day 2: Finish Presentations and Seminar
 - [Warm Up](#): “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland
 - Play “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” by Judy Garland while displaying the lyrics
 - Ask students to answer the following three questions in a warm-up journal
 - Describe the music. How does it make you feel?
 - Do you find the lyrics to be uplifting or despairing? Why?
 - Why do you think this song was particularly popular during the Great Depression?
 - Finish presentations on the songs from the Great Depression
 - When finished, show students the seminar guiding questions presentation
 - Instruct students to answer the questions in their journals individually.
 - After a few minutes, have students pair up and share their responses.
 - As the conversation winds down, bring the whole class together to discuss the [seminar questions](#).
 - Facilitate the seminar discussion according the classroom procedures and norms already established.
 - With a few minutes left in class, assign homework:
 - Students should find a song (appropriate to the class norms of acceptable language, etc.) that they enjoy listening to when they are feeling down. They should bring in the song so they can play it for the class and discuss why they enjoy listening to it / how it helps them feel better.
 - Day 3: Sharing our songs
 - [Warm Up](#): *Choose a song you personally like to listen to when feeling down*
 - Type the lyrics into the warm up presentation, along with 3 questions.
 - Play the song for the class while displaying the lyrics and questions for students to answer in a warm-up journal
 - Generally poll students about what songs they like to listen to when they are feeling down
 - Pair up students with generally different songs/song genres. Instruct students to share their songs with each other.
 - With about 15 minutes left, ask students for volunteers who would like to share their song with the whole class.

Lesson 5: The Political Response: The Hoover Administration and FDR’s Election

- Essential Question:
 - Why did President Hoover not take a more active role in fighting the Depression?
 - What was the effect of the Depression and the Bonus Army on the election of 1932?
- Objective:
 - Students will be able to explain why Roosevelt won the election of 1932 with such large margins.
- Time:
 - 1 traditional lesson period
- Materials:

- [Warm up presentation](#)
- [Lecture presentation on Hoover's administration](#)
- [Lecture support notes](#)
 - This file has support notes for all three lectures in this unit
- [Handout of Bonus Army Flyer](#) (class set)
- [Warm-Up: "Hard Times are Still 'Hoover-ing' Over Us" photo](#)
 - Show the photo "Hard Times are Still 'Hoover-ing' Over Us"
 - Ask students to answer the following three questions in their warm-up journals:
 - What do you see?
 - What do the signs mean?
 - Why did Americans blame Hoover for the Depression?
- Lesson: Direct instruction on Hoover's administration and source analysis
 - Using the lecture presentation, directly teach about
 - Herbert Hoover's response to the Great Depression
 - The Bonus Army
 - The election of 1932
 - When finished with the Bonus Army, display the flyer for the Bonus March (embedded in the lecture presentation)
 - Hand out [the flyer](#) on paper, which is easier for students to read.
 - Have students journal their answer to the analysis question individually, then share with a small group, and lastly share out as a class.
 - When finished, play the song "Happy Days are Here Again" (the Ben Selvin version) while displaying the lyrics (embedded in the lecture presentation.)
 - Have students journal their answer to the analysis question individually, then share with a small group, and lastly share out as a class.