

America's Economy: Sorrow and Hope: Teacher's Guide

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum Focus: U.S. History

Lesson Duration: Two to three class periods

Program Description

Explore the causes and effects of the Great Depression. Travel alongside the Joads for a look at the difficult journey made by thousands of families during the Dust Bowl. And meet men and women across the United States who weathered the economic hard times and realized the American Dream.

- The Great Depression in America (3 min.)
 - The Story Behind *The Grapes of Wrath* (5 min.)
 - A Future Reborn: Coming to America (10 min.)
 - A Future Reborn: The American Dream (27 min.)
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Onscreen Questions

- What were some causes of the Great Depression?
 - What happened to residents of the Dust Bowl in the 1930s?
 - What economic and social consequences did Americans experience during the Great Depression?
 - How did the American economy improve after the Great Depression?
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Lesson Plan

Student Objectives

- Review causes and consequences of the Great Depression.
- Discuss how FDR's New Deal and World War II affected the nation's economy.
- Write two fictional journal entries describing a time of sorrow and a time of hope at any point from the 1920s to 1940s.

Materials

- *America's Economy: Sorrow and Hope* program
- paper and pens or pencils

Procedures

1. After watching *America's Economy: Sorrow and Hope*, review some of the causes of the Great Depression. (Speculation and the stock market crash of 1929; banks closed and people lost their savings; overproduction caused prices and wages to drop; factories closed and people lost jobs.)
2. Discuss how the Great Depression affected the nation. Ask students: How did their lives of the people shown in the program change during the Depression? In what ways were people in urban and rural areas affected differently? As a discussion aid, you may want to name some of the people featured in the program or write their names on the chalkboard:
 - Jewell Blankenship, Oklahoma
 - Jim Wolford, Arkansas
 - Endicott "Chub" Peabody II, Massachusetts
 - Dave Moore, Michigan
 - Joe Mifsud, Michigan
 - Dick Manoff, New York
3. Review President Roosevelt's "New Deal." Ask students: What was it? What did it provide the nation? How did the program affect the nation's economy?
4. Tell students that another event that greatly affected the U.S. economy was World War II. (You may want to remind the class that the U.S. joined the war after Pearl Harbor was attacked in December 1941.) Ask students to consider the people in the video. How did the war change the lives of those who served in the military? The lives of those who stayed at home?
5. Ask students to consider the program's title, *America's Economy: Sorrow and Hope*. What events caused sorrow for the people in the program? What events inspired hope?
6. Explain that students will write two fictional journal entries, taking the point of view of an American living during the period shown in the program, the 1920s to 1940s. One entry should describe a time of sorrow, the other a time of hope. Encourage students to consider the stories of the real people featured in the program, but remind them that they need to create a fictional person when writing their journal entries. Each entry should include the following:
 - Date and place
 - Identity of the person they are posing as (name, age, role – sharecropper, auto factory worker, immigrant child living in tenement)
 - A description of a sorrowful or hopeful situation or event (leaving farm for California, joining a union, standing in a bread line)
 - Personal thoughts or feelings about the time

7. Ask for volunteers to read their journal entries. After hearing several entries, read the following quote from the program to the class:

“Life is not a clean, upward thrust, and the American dream is not a straight ladder up. Kind of a corkscrew spiral and ups and downs. There’s no place in the world that has had such a profile to its history.” – Dick Manoff
8. Discuss how the lives of the Americans featured in the program reflect this quote. Ask students: What were some of the ups and downs they experienced? How did these events reflect life in our nation during this period?

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- 3 points: Students were active in class discussions; showed a strong understanding of the causes and consequences of the Great Depression and the effects of the New Deal and World War II on the nation's economy; developed thorough, engaging journal entries that reflected the hope and sorrow Americans felt during this period in history.
- 2 points: Students participated in class discussions; showed a satisfactory understanding of the causes and consequences of the Great Depression and the effects of the New Deal and World War II on the nation's economy; developed clear, complete journal entries that reflected the hope and sorrow Americans felt during this period in history.
- 1 point: Students did not participate in class discussions; showed a weak understanding of the causes and consequences of the Great Depression and the effects of the New Deal and World War II on the nation's economy; developed vague or incomplete journal entries about the hope and sorrow Americans felt during this period in history.

Vocabulary

Dust Bowl

Definition: A large region covering the southern Great Plains of the United States that suffered drought, crop failures, and intense dust storms in the 1930s

Context: *The Grapes of Wrath* has become a classic account of the human toll of the Dust Bowl.

Great Depression

Definition: A period of worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929 and extended into the early 1940s, characterized by unemployment, poverty, hunger, and despair

Context At the height of the Great Depression, about 13 million people were out of work—about one out of every four workers in the country.

immigrant

Definition: A person who comes to a country to live there

Context: African Americans, Mexican immigrants, and women were also hard hit by the Depression.



migrant

Definition: A person who moves regularly to find work, especially one who harvests crops

Context: Homeless and jobless, many migrants were left to fend for themselves, living in tents or cardboard shacks without water or electricity.

New Deal

Definition: A series of federal programs introduced by Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s to encourage economic reform

Context: FDR's New Deal aimed at rebuilding the economy, helping the jobless, and preventing future depressions.

sharecropper

Definition: A tenant farmer who is provided with credit for seed, tools, living quarters, and food, who works the land, and who receives an agreed share of the crop's value minus expenses

Context: Four generations had worked the land as sharecroppers.

speculation

Definition: Engaging in a big financial risk in hopes of making a big profit

Context: The Great Depression was caused by overproduction and speculation.

union

Definition: An organization of workers formed to protect its members' rights and to advance their interests, such as wages and working conditions

Context: The United Auto Workers was the strongest union in America.

Academic Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL)

McREL's Content Knowledge: A Compendium of Standards and Benchmarks for K-12 Education addresses 14 content areas. To view the standards and benchmarks, visit

<http://www.mcrel.org/compendium/browse.asp>.

This lesson plan addresses the following national standards:

- U.S. History: Era 7 – Understands how the United States changed between the post-World War I years and the eve of the Great Depression
- U.S. History: Era 8 – Understands the causes of the Great Depression and how it affected American society; Understands how the New Deal addressed the Great Depression, transformed American federalism, and initiated the welfare state
- Geography: Human Systems – Understands the nature, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface



The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has developed national standards to provide guidelines for teaching social studies. To view the standards online, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands/>.

This lesson plan addresses the following thematic standards:

- Time, Continuity, and Change
 - People, Places, and Environments
 - Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
 - Production, Distribution, and Consumption
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Support Materials

Develop custom worksheets, educational puzzles, online quizzes, and more with the free teaching tools offered on the Discoveryschool.com Web site. Create and print support materials, or save them to a Custom Classroom account for future use. To learn more, visit

- <http://school.discovery.com/teachingtools/teachingtools.html>
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DVD Content

This program is available in an interactive DVD format. The following information and activities are specific to the DVD version.

How to Use the DVD

The DVD starting screen has the following options:

Play Video – This plays the video from start to finish. There are no programmed stops, except by using a remote control. With a computer, depending on the particular software player, a pause button is included with the other video controls.

Video Index – Here the video is divided into four segments (see below), indicated by video thumbnail icons. Watching all parts in sequence is similar to watching the video from start to finish. Brief descriptions and total running times are noted for each part. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the remote for TV playback; on a computer, click once to highlight a thumbnail and read the accompanying text description and click again to start the video.

Curriculum Units – These are specially edited video segments pulled from different sections of the video (see below). These nonlinear segments align with key ideas in the unit of instruction. They include onscreen pre- and post-viewing questions, reproduced below in this Teacher's Guide. Total

running times for these segments are noted. To play a particular segment, press Enter on the TV remote or click once on the Curriculum Unit title on a computer.

Standards Link—Selecting this option displays a single screen that lists the national academic standards the video addresses.

Teacher Resources—This screen gives the technical support number and Web site address.

Video Index

I. The Great Depression in America (3 min.)

The stock market crash of 1929 wreaked havoc in the United States. Learn about the Great Depression and how Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal helped revive the country.

II. The Story Behind *The Grapes of Wrath* (5 min.)

See how *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel by John Steinbeck, brought attention to the plight of Dust Bowl refugees who had abandoned their land during the 1930s.

III. A Future Reborn: Coming to America (10 min.)

Listen to the stories of immigrants, farmers, and other American families to learn about the United States through the 1920s.

IV. A Future Reborn: The American Dream (27 min.)

Explore the human side of U.S. history as several Americans recount how their families survived the Great Depression and World War II.

Curriculum Units

1. The U.S. Economy in the 1930s

Pre-viewing question

Q: What economic problems exist in the United States today?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did Franklin D. Roosevelt help the United States recover from the Great Depression?

A: President Roosevelt, often called FDR, established the New Deal, which focused on rebuilding the economy, helping the jobless, and preventing future economic depressions. His plan temporarily closed banks and restructured banking regulations; granted federal funds to struggling industries and relief industries; and put millions of Americans to work in new public works and conservation programs, building or repairing structures and public areas. FDR also created Social Security and federal unemployment insurance to give Americans what he called "freedom from want."



2. Leaving the Dust Bowl

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever had to move from your home?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did World War I agricultural practices affect farmers in the 1930s?

A: Due to high wheat prices and the needs of the World War I troops, many farmers converted grazing land into cropland. The native plants and grasses were stripped away, and returning livestock trampled the unprotected land. In 1934 strong winds began blowing loose soil into huge clouds of dust. The ruined crops and pastures earned the area a new name, the Dust Bowl. Many families were forced to abandon their useless farmland in search jobs elsewhere.

3. Dust Bowl Refugees

Pre-viewing question

Q: What books or movies have influenced your view of the world?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Describe life in California for Dust Bowl refugees.

A: The Dust Bowl refugees experienced harsh conditions and brutal treatment. Locals scorned them, calling them "Okies" because many came from Oklahoma. Corporations controlled most farmland, and with abundant local workers, the scarce jobs paid migrants very little. Many lived in tents or cardboard shacks without electricity or water. And rather than giving surplus produce to the migrants, corporations destroyed it to keep prices high.

4. Farmers and Lost Dreams

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does the term "American dream" mean to you?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How would it feel to lose all your material possessions?

A: Answers will vary.

5. New England's Wealthy

Pre-viewing question

Q: How might being a part of a wealthy family help a person succeed?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How does the Groton School in the 1920s differ from your school today?

A: Answers will vary.



6. Living in Motor City

Pre-viewing question

Q: What inventions and tools have affected your daily life?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Would life in Detroit have been easier for an immigrant or for an African American in the 1920s?

A: Answers will vary.

7. Immigrants in New York

Pre-viewing question

Q: If you had a chance to reinvent yourself, would you take it?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What would have been the most difficult aspect of life for an immigrant in the early 1900s?

A: Answers will vary.

8. The Depression in America

Pre-viewing question

Q: What is the most difficult situation you have faced?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What might you have done to escape poverty during the Great Depression?

A: Answers will vary.

9. Government Relief

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever had to accept help when you didn't want to?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: What did some members of the Groton elite hold against President Roosevelt?

A: They were afraid that Roosevelt was running capitalism into the ground and that he had betrayed them. As members of the upper class, many feared that Roosevelt's liberal ideas and new government policies would ruin their comfortable way of life.

10. California's Promise

Pre-viewing question

Q: What stereotypes or generalizations have you heard about California?

A: Answers will vary.



Post-viewing question

Q: What did California represent to the Dust Bowl farmer?

A: Answers will vary.

11. A College Education

Pre-viewing question

Q: What does college mean to you?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did Chub Endicott's and Dick Manoff's college experiences differ?

A: Graduating from a top preparatory school, Endicott attended Harvard and became a college football star. Dick Manoff attended City College in New York; he saw college as the way to achieve the American dream that Endicott's family was living. It also represented new intellectual freedom.

12. Workers Unionize, Farmers Travel

Pre-viewing question

Q: Have you ever achieved a goal with others that would not have been possible alone?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: Describe unionization that took place in Detroit.

A: For 10 years, Ford Motor Company kept autoworkers separated along racial lines, but a struggle for union recognition brought the workers together in 1941, creating a strong sense of community. A week of strikes finally persuaded Ford to recognize the United Auto Workers union, which became the strongest union in the United States.

13. War Production

Pre-viewing question

Q: How can war help a country's economy?

A: Answers will vary.

Post-viewing question

Q: How did World War II help restore America's faith in the future?

A: World War II was preceded by difficult years that included economic depression and hardships, the stock market crash, and drought and dust storms on the Great Plains. World War II created employment for men and women, as well as a new sense of purpose. The Allied victory restored pride in the United States and elsewhere, giving Americans a renewed faith in the future and the American dream.

