

**Sample Time Line:**

|             |   |             |   |
|-------------|---|-------------|---|
| 3 August    | 1923—Coolidge is sworn in as president  |             | Hoover meets with Congressional leaders to discuss public works plan  |
| 13 August   | 1923—U.S. Steel inaugurates 8-hour day  |             |   |
| 18 March    | 1924—Soldiers' Bonus bill   | 31 March    | 1930—Congress adopts Public Buildings Act   |
| 26 February | 1926—Revenue Act becomes law  | 4 April     | 1930—Congress votes 300 million to build state roads  |
| 11 February | 1927—McNary-Haugen bill   | 4 June      | 1930—Hawley-Smoot Tariff bill passed  |
| 2 February  | 1929—Federal Reserve Board forbids its member banks to make loan to anyone who wants to buy stock on margin                 | October     | 1930—Unemployment at 4,500,000; Hoover says Federal government must remain aloof  |
| 4 March     | 1929—Hoover becomes president   | 2 December  | 1930—Hoover recognizes problem and asks Congress for \$150 million for constructing public works                                    |
| 15 June     | 1929—Congress passes Agricultural Marketing bill  | 11 December | 1930—Bank of United States (a private New York bank with 60 branches and 400,000 depositors) closes; 1300 bank closures in one year |
| 22 October  | 1929—President of New York's National City Bank states "I know of nothing fundamentally wrong with the Stock Market"        | 2 January   | 1931—5 million unemployed   |
| 23 October  | 1929—Steady decline in stock market; signs of panic in New York Stock Exchange  | 27 February | 1931—Congress overrides Hoover's veto and passes Bonus Loan bill  |
| 24 October  | 1929—Black Thursday; collapse of New York Stock Exchange; 13,000,000 shares sold  | 3 March     | 1931—Hoover vetoes Muscle Shoals bill   |
| 29 October  | 1929—Black Tuesday—it's too late!   | 22 July     | 1931—Kansas farmers produce a bumper crop of wheat; prices collapse   |
| 13 November | 1929—\$30,000,000,000 lost in value of stocks on New York Exchange; Chicago Market collapses                                | October     | 1931—827 more United States banks close   |
| 31 December | 1929—Hoover delivers his annual message to Congress and declares that confidence in Nation's business has now been restored | 27 February | 1932—Glass-Steagall Banking Act   |
| 2 January   | 1930—Economy sinking; prices falling; national income collapsing; unemployment at 4 million;                                | 21 July     | 1932—Hoover signs Relief and Reconstruction Act   |
|             |   | 22 July     | 1932—Federal Home Loan Bank Act   |
|             |   | 8 November  | 1932—Roosevelt wins election; 13 million are unemployed   |

## Causes of the Depression

### Part A.

Below are eleven recognized causes of the Great Depression. In your groups, first brainstorm evidence from your time line or textbook to support each of the possible causes of the Depression. Second, rank in order the following causes of the Depression, with 1 representing the strongest factor and 11 the weakest.

- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Maldistribution of income and purchasing power
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. Overexpansion of agricultural production
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. Overproduction of industry
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. Automation
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. Unregulated banking practices
- \_\_\_\_\_ f. American tariff policy
- \_\_\_\_\_ g. Impact of European and world economy
- \_\_\_\_\_ h. Monopolistic pricing
- \_\_\_\_\_ i. Philosophy and policies of the Hoover administration
- \_\_\_\_\_ j. Overexpansion of credit
- \_\_\_\_\_ k. Stock market speculation and crash

Write a thesis showing how your three or four most important causes are related.

### Part B.

To conclude the lesson, identify three points at which some specific intervention might have slowed, halted, or reversed the Depression. Write a short essay defending your selections.

## New Deal Reforms

### Part A.

Complete the following activity in preparation for a writing activity on key reforms of the New Deal.

1. Identify the major purpose of each of the agencies created by the act of Congress.
2. Categorize New Deal reforms according to a common scheme by labeling each as Relief, Recovery, or Reform. In other words, did the measure bring immediate assistance to those in dire need, help to restore the economy to health, or aim to prevent a similar disastrous depression in the future?
3. Devise at least two additional schemes for categorizing the New Deal programs. Be prepared to justify your classifications.

|   | <b>First 100 Days</b> | <b>Purpose</b> |
|---|-----------------------|----------------|
| a. Emergency Banking Relief Act                   | March 9, 1933         | _____          |
| b. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)              | March 31, 1933        | _____          |
| c. Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) | May 12, 1933          | _____          |
| d. Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA)              | May 12, 1933          | _____          |
| e. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)               | May 18, 1933          | _____          |
| f. Home Owner's Refinancing Act (HOLC)            | June 13, 1933         | _____          |
| g. National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA)        | June 16, 1933         | _____          |
| h. Public Works Administration (PWA)              | June 16, 1933         | _____          |
| i. Glass-Steagall Banking Reform Act (FDIC)       | June 16, 1933         | _____          |

### New Deal Measures from 1933-1939

|   |                   |       |
|---|-------------------|-------|
| j. Civil Works Administration (CWA)                           | November 9, 1933  | _____ |
| k. National Housing Act (FHA)                                 | June 28, 1934     | _____ |
| l. Authorization for Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) | June 6, 1934      | _____ |
| m. Resettlement Administration                                | April 30, 1935    | _____ |
| n. Works Progress Administration (WPA)                        | May 6, 1935       | _____ |
| o. Wagner Act (NLRB—National Labor Relations Board)           | July 5, 1935      | _____ |
| p. Social Security Act  | August 14, 1935   | _____ |
| q. Soil Conservation Act                                      | February 29, 1936 | _____ |
| r. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA)                            | June 25, 1938     | _____ |

**Part B.**

New Deal Essay Questions

1. Roosevelt's New Deal differed from Hoover's administration in that the New Deal was willing to use government power to adjust the contending claims of major interest groups. Assess the validity of this generalization.
2. To what extent did the measures of the New Deal reflect a coherent economic philosophy?
3. The New Deal did not radically alter American business, but conserved and protected it. Assess the validity of this statement.
4. Despite superficial similarities, the domestic programs of the New Deal constituted a fundamental departure from those of the Progressive Era. Assess the validity of this generalization.
5. The New Deal secured the support of labor and agriculture after 1932 as the Republican party had secured the support of industry and commerce since 1920—with special-interest programs giving financial aid, legal privileges, and other types of assistance. Assess the validity of this statement, giving attention to both periods (1920–32 and 1932–40).

## The Dust Bowl

### Part A.

Study the charts below. Use the information provided to answer the questions that follow. Be prepared to discuss your responses.

The Dust Bowl: Sections of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas

|   |             |             |             |             |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | <b>1910</b> | <b>1917</b> | <b>1929</b> | <b>1931</b> | <b>1933</b> |
| Price of wheat per bushel in Dust Bowl          | \$ .91      | \$2.06      | \$ .99      | \$ .34      | \$ .71      |
|   | <b>1915</b> | <b>1920</b> | <b>1925</b> | <b>1930</b> | <b>1933</b> |
| Number of tractors in southwestern Kansas       | 286         | 1,333       | 3,501       | 9,727       | 11,655      |
|   | <b>1915</b> | <b>1920</b> | <b>1925</b> | <b>1931</b> |             |
| Percent of land in wheat in southwestern Kansas | 9.9%        | 13.6%       | 17.8%       | 38%         |             |

1. Describe the trends in
  - a. wheat prices
  - b. tractor farming
  - c. wheat planting
2. How do the three correlate?

**Part B.**

| Haskell<br>County, Kansas          | 1930        | 1931        | 1932      | 1933      | 1934      | 1935      | 1936      |
|------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Inches of<br>precipitation         | 24.3        | 12.5        | 16.5      | 11.2      | 11.0      | 12.0      | 12.8      |
| Acres of winter<br>wheat harvested | 171,280     | 181,525     | 47,552    | 17,900    | 78,997    | 47,390    | 34,215    |
| Yield in bushels                   | 1,712,800   | 3,448,975   | 332,864   | 89,500    | 394,985   | 189,560   | 171,075   |
| Market value of<br>wheat           | \$1,061,936 | \$1,034,693 | \$99,859  | \$71,600  | \$343,637 | \$181,978 | \$181,340 |
| Total farm<br>income               | \$1,411,028 | \$1,279,355 | \$330,436 | \$420,105 | \$513,390 | \$549,757 | \$421,244 |

1. Rainfall in 1930 was about average. How would you describe the succeeding years?

Describe the effects you would expect in an agricultural region.

2. Analyze the statistics about the harvest of 1931.

3. Contrast the statistics for 1930 with those for 1936.

**Part C.**

"In '34 I had I reckon four renters and I didn't make anything. I bought tractors on the money the government give me and get shet o' [rid of] my renters. You'll find it everywhere all over the country thataway. I did everything the government said—except keep my renters. The renters have been having it this way ever since the government came in. They've got their choice—California or WPA."

". . . the dust storms that swept across the southern plains in the 1930s created the most severe environmental catastrophe in the entire history of the white man on this continent . . . Not even the Depression was more devastating economically."

"Across the nation the only states that had fewer residents at the end of the decade than at the beginning were all on the plains. South Dakota's drop was the highest rate in the country, at 7.2 percent followed by North Dakota, Kansas, and Oklahoma. In net loss through migration—outflow minus inflow—Oklahoma was the easy leader: 440,000. . . . Almost a million plains people left their farms in the first half of the decade, and 2.5 million left after 1935. Not all were dusted out, but all were uprooted—a generation of human tumbleweeds, cut loose from the soil."<sup>1</sup>

The opening chapters of *The Grapes of Wrath* deal with life in the Dust Bowl. What historical facts does the novel reflect?

<sup>1</sup> Sources: Hurt, Douglas R. *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History*. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981 and Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, 24, 48-49, 58.

**Part D.**

***The Grapes of Wrath and the "Okie" Migrants***

**August 1936** *San Francisco News* asked a young California writer, John Steinbeck, to investigate and report on migrant conditions in California. He visited various Hoovervilles and the Arvin Sanitary Camp, also called Weedpatch. There he met the capable and compassionate camp manager, Tom Collins.

**September 1936** Steinbeck visited Weedpatch again.

**October 1936** *San Francisco News* printed Steinbeck's articles.

**October 1937** Accompanied by Tom Collins, Steinbeck took a trip to research the migrant experience by actually living it.

**February 1938** In a letter to a friend, Steinbeck wrote:

"I must go to Visalia. Four thousand families, drowned out of their tents are really starving to death. . . . The newspapers won't touch the stuff but they will under my byline. The locals are fighting the government bringing in food and medicine. I'm going to try to break the story hard enough so that food and drugs can get moving. Shame and a hatred of publicity will do the job to the miserable local bankers. . . ."2

**March 1938** In a letter after another trip, Steinbeck wrote:

"It is the most heartbreaking thing in the world . . . I break myself every time I go out because the argument that one person's effort can't really do anything doesn't seem to apply when you come on a bunch of starving children and you have a little money . . . I want to put a tag of shame on the greedy bastards who are responsible for this but I can best do it through newspapers."<sup>3</sup>

Later, he commented:

"I'm trying to write history while it is happening and I don't want to be wrong."<sup>4</sup>

**May-December 1938** Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath*.

1. Describe John Steinbeck's attitude toward the migrants.

<sup>2</sup> Jackson J. Benson, *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck* (New York: The Viking Press, 1984), 368.

<sup>3</sup> Benson, 370-371.

<sup>4</sup> Benson, 375.



2. How did he prepare himself to write about the migrants' lives?
  
3. Why is it difficult to "write history while it is happening?"
  
4. How accurately does *The Grapes of Wrath* reflect this description of the Okie experience?

"The large growers . . . were glad to see this new labor pool arrive. They had over 200 commercial crops on their farms, most of them needing hand labor for brief periods: peaches and prunes, lemons and oranges, lettuce and asparagus, cotton and flax, all to be picked and boxed or baled. Their former supply of cheap Mexican workers had been cut off in 1929 by immigrant restrictions . . . Most of the farms provided temporary lodging—tents or rude cabins—but with only three state inspectors and 8,000 camps to inspect, the quarters were bound to be generally poor. Any family entering this stoop-and-pick life could expect to work about half the year and earn \$350 to \$450, only 50 per cent of what the California Relief Administration estimated to be a subsistence level. It was take it or leave it; strikes for higher wages were squelched and radical organizers beaten, shot, and jailed. With only 175,000 workers needed at peak seasons and at least two or three desperate migrants for every job, the growers could name the terms."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 52-53.