

The Great Depression

In the late 1920s America seemed invincible. People were making money and the economy was booming. But in 1929, just six months after the inauguration of Herbert Hoover as the U.S. President, the stock market crashed and the economy plummeted.

To make things worse, the southern plains in western Kansas, Oklahoma, and the Texas Panhandle were suffering the most terrible drought in memory. In 1931, the drought and strong winds caused dust storms to roll across the country. The dust was black — blotting out the sun and making the air unbreathable. The region became known as the Dust Bowl. People (and animals) couldn't live in the dust so they started to move. Soon there were Dust Bowl refugees — families who packed up their belongings to head west to California.

By 1932, 12.5 million men and women were unemployed. People were lining up on bread lines to get food, and malnutrition was becoming a serious problem among children. People blamed President Hoover, so they elected Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933. Roosevelt came up with the New Deal, a series of economic reforms to help the American economy recover. For the first time, the government took an active role in fixing people's lives. Roosevelt passed emergency legislation to solve the banking crisis, and he set up the Works Progress Administration, or WPA, to provide jobs for more than 3.5 million unemployed people. The WPA built more than half a million roads as well as 150,000 schools, parks, dams, and other public projects.

In order to escape the sad realities of life, many people turned to movies and radio for much needed escape and entertainment. The 1930s became known as the Golden Age of Radio, with popular shows like "Dick Tracy" and "The Shadow." The WPA sponsored artists and musicians to provide cheap or free shows to entertain people. Roller-skating, and even board games, became very popular (it was during this time that Monopoly was invented). Despite their heartaches and their despair, Americans were imaginative and resourceful.

The New Deal gradually pulled America out of the Depression, though it has been said that the country did not completely recover until World War II.

What do you think?







1. What were three main causes of the Great Depression?
2. How did the Great Depression impact life in America (at least five impacts)?
3. What was the New Deal? Who created it?
4. Describe the WPA and its impact on the United States?
5. Though life in the United States did improve, which event led to a complete recovery?

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| Photo |  |  |  |  |  |  |
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| Describe the photo | | | | | | |
| How does the photo show life during the Great Depression? | | | | | | |
| Who is being affected? What emotions are being conveyed? | | | | | | |
| Write a title that expresses the mood of the photo. | | | | | | |