

# **The Great Depression and New Deal**

## *Backwards Planning Curriculum Units*

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# How To Use This Unit

Backwards planning offers an innovative yet simple approach to meeting curriculum goals; it also provides a way to keep students engaged and focused throughout the learning process. Many teachers approach history instruction in the following manner: they identify a topic required by state and/or national standards, they find materials on that topic, they use those materials with their students, and then they administer some sort of standard test at the end of the unit. Backwards planning, rather than just starting with a required instructional topic, goes a step further by identifying exactly what students need to know by the end of the unit—the so-called “enduring understandings.” The next step involves assessment: devising ways to determine whether students have learned what they need to know. The final step involves planning the teaching/learning process so that students can acquire the knowledge needed.

This product uses backwards planning to combine a PowerPoint presentation, activities that involve authentic assessment, and traditional tests (multiple-choice and essay) into a complete curriculum unit. Although the materials have enough built-in flexibility that you can use them in a number of ways, we suggest the following procedure:

1. Start with the “essential questions” listed on slide 2 of the PowerPoint presentation (these also appear in the teacher support materials). Briefly go over them with students before getting into the topic material. These questions will help students focus their learning and note taking during the course of the unit. You can also choose to use the essential questions as essay questions at the end of the unit; one way to do this is to let students know at the outset that one of the essential questions will be on the test—they just won’t know which one.
2. Next, discuss the activities students will complete during the unit. This will also help focus their learning and note taking, and it will lead them to view the PowerPoint presentation in a different light, considering it a source of ideas for authentic-assessment projects.
3. Present the PowerPoint to the class. Most slides have an image and bullet points summarizing the slide’s topic. The Notes page for each slide contains a paragraph or two of information that you can use as a presentation script, or just as background information for your own reference. You don’t need to present the entire PowerPoint at once: it’s broken up into several sections, each of which concludes with some discussion questions that echo parts of the essential questions and also help students to get closer to the “enduring understandings.” Spend some time with the class going over and debating these questions—this will not only help students think critically about the material, but it will also allow you to incorporate different modes of instruction during a single class period, offering a better chance to engage students.
4. Have students complete one or more of the authentic-assessment activities. These activities are flexible: most can be completed either individually or in groups, and either as homework or as in-class assignments. Each activity includes a rubric; many also have graphic organizers. You can choose to have students complete the activities after you have shown them the entire PowerPoint presentation, or you can show them one section of the PowerPoint, go over the discussion questions, and then have students complete an activity.

5. End the unit with traditional assessment. The support materials include a 20-question multiple-choice quiz; you can combine this with an essay question (you can use one of the essential questions or come up with one of your own) to create a full-period test.

6. If desired, debrief with students by going over the essential questions with them again and remind them what the enduring understandings are.

We are dedicated to continually improving our products and working with teachers to develop exciting and effective tools for the classroom. We can offer advice on how to maximize the use of the product and share others' experiences. We would also be happy to work with you on ideas for customizing the presentation.

We value your feedback, so please let us know more about the ways in which you use this product to supplement your lessons; we're also eager to hear any recommendations you might have for ways in which we can expand the functionality of this product in future editions. You can e-mail us at [access@socialstudies.com](mailto:access@socialstudies.com). We look forward to hearing from you.

Dr. Aaron Willis  
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# The Great Depression and New Deal



The 1920s had been characterized by exceptional economic growth, the development of a consumer society, an expansion of the middle class, and rapid social change. While many Americans revealed these “ballyhoo” years, ominous signs showed an impending financial catastrophe. The resulting depression—and the government and society’s response to it—revealed much about the American character, broke new ground in terms of social legislation and centralized control of the economy, and changed the way in which people conceptualized what the role of federal government should be—all legacies which persist to this day.

Many Americans were unable to eat regularly during the Depression years unless they could get a free meal from a charity soup kitchen or breadline. Gangster Al Capone funded the Chicago soup kitchen shown in this slide.

## **Essential Questions**

- What underlying issues and conditions led to the Great Depression?
- What economic conditions led to the stock market crash of 1929?
- Why were the policies of the Hoover Administration ineffective in dealing with the problems of the Depression?
- Why did the New Deal seek to solve the problems of the Depression through public works, rather than the dole?
- What impact did the New Deal have on arts and letters in the 1930s?
- How did President Franklin D. Roosevelt change the role of the presidency in American history?
- How successful was the New Deal in solving the problems of the Depression and restoring American prosperity?

# Fundamental Causes of the Depression

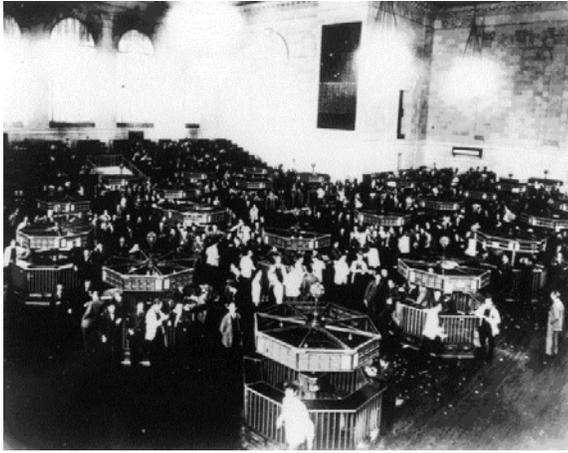
- Drop in farm prices
- Massively uneven distribution of income
- “Get rich quick” schemes in real estate and especially in stocks
- Overextension of credit
- Increased inventories of goods
- Immediate cause: October 1929 stock market crash



Many consumers in the 1920s bought items such as this ironer on credit

- During the 1920s, few farmers shared in the prosperity that supposedly extended nationwide. This discrepancy in farm prices was a warning sign that the economy was in serious trouble.
- Although many viewed the 1920s as an “era of prosperity,” the vast majority of people in America were middle class or poor. Since most of the real wealth in the country lay in the hands of only a few people, most citizens didn’t have the cash to purchase goods.
- Many believed that speculation in real estate—and especially in stocks—would result in easy money. People also bought stock “on margin,” putting down 10 percent of the stock’s value and then owing the rest to a broker. If the stock continued to climb in value, the investor was safe. However, if the value of the stock declined the broker would make a “margin call,” demanding payment for the rest of the amount owed. If the investor couldn’t pay the other 90 percent, the broker would sell the stock, hoping to recoup his losses. As the market as a whole declined in value, this process became a vicious circle, further driving down stock prices.
- Many consumers in the 1920s overextended themselves financially due to the easy availability of credit. New consumer goods such as washing machines, radios, automobiles, and refrigerators appealed to consumers, even though they might not have had the financial resources to buy them. The ability to pay in installments put these goods in the reach of more people. However, this also led to industries showing only “paper profits,” thereby further creating the illusion of prosperity.
- As more people bought products with money they didn’t have, manufacturers continued to produce more and more goods. Soon the supply of goods far exceeded demand, and unsold items piled up in producers’ warehouses.
- The October 1929 stock market crash signaled the start of the Depression. While the U.S. economy did not completely and immediately collapse, the crash marked the beginning of a major decline.

## The Day the Bubble Burst



The trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929

- October 29, 1929
- More than 16 million shares traded in one day
- Stock market lost \$30 billion
- Beginning of the “Great Depression”

While the fundamental causes of the Depression took years to lead to financial calamity, many point to a single day when the Depression began: October 29, 1929, when the stock market crashed. On that day, more than 16 million shares were traded (a record at the time) and the market lost \$30 billion—nearly the amount the U.S. had spent fighting World War I. While the market had rapidly increased in value from 1927–1929 (approximately 140 to 360 points), it fell nearly more than 100 points in the months after the crash. As the Depression worsened, the market hit a low of approximately 40 as the election of 1932 loomed, and did not approach the 100 mark again until after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s inauguration.

By the time Roosevelt took office, stocks had lost 80 percent of their total value. Confidence in the market declined sharply as former investors felt betrayed and unwilling to buy stock. Since they refused to purchase shares, much-needed investment and expansion did not occur, which further hampered economic recovery.

## Banking System Collapse

- Banks invested heavily in the market
- Collapse of market led to bank failures
- Many depositors panicked, leading to even more bank failures



Worried depositors wait outside a bank hoping to withdraw their savings

While many investors lost their money in the market, many other people found their savings wiped out because banks had irresponsibly invested depositors' money in the market as well. Therefore, when the crash occurred banks also lost millions.

Banking was already a risky business, with more than 600 banks failing every year from 1920–1929. Following the stock market crash, however, bank failures jumped dramatically. Between 1930 and 1933, nearly 10,000 banks failed nationwide, with 4000 failing in 1933 alone.

Unfortunately for these banks' depositors, there was no national "safety net" to protect their money. While some states did have insurance programs for bank deposits, bank failures in the period before the crash had essentially wiped out those programs, leaving depositors completely unprotected.

# Great Depression and New Deal: Backwards Planning Activities

## Enduring understandings:

The Great Depression was the worst economic calamity in American history  
Several flawed economic and political policies contributed to the stock market crash  
The Depression affected Americans of all economic and social strata  
The New Deal demanded significant spending on the federal level to combat the Depression  
The New Deal sought to solve the problems of the Depression by providing public works projects, as well as by promoting the arts  
The New Deal changed the role of government in American life  
The reach and impact of the New Deal affected American life from the 1930s into the 21st century

## Essential questions:

What underlying issues and conditions led to the Great Depression?  
What economic conditions led to the stock market crash of 1929?  
Why were the policies of the Hoover Administration ineffective in dealing with the problems of the Depression?  
Why did the New Deal seek to solve the problems of the Depression through public works, rather than the dole?  
What impact did the New Deal have on arts and letters in the 1930s?  
How did President Franklin D. Roosevelt change the role of the presidency in American history?  
How successful was the New Deal in solving the problems of the Depression and restoring American prosperity?

## **Learning experiences and instruction:**

<b>Students will need to know...</b>	<b>Students will need to be able to...</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fundamental causes of the Depression</li> <li>2. Main reasons for the stock market crash of October 1929</li> <li>3. How the Depression affected ordinary Americans</li> <li>4. How the New Deal sought to solve the immediate problems of the Depression</li> <li>5. How the New Deal transformed American society and the economy</li> <li>6. How President Franklin D. Roosevelt's leadership style affected the nation's attitude in dealing with the problems of the Depression</li> <li>7. How the Depression and New Deal affected women and minorities</li> <li>8. How the Depression and the government's response affects current American economic policy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read and interpret primary source documents from the Depression era</li> <li>2. Make conclusions and inferences about various policies and philosophies from the Depression and New Deal periods</li> <li>3. Identify key persons involved in developing economic and political policies during the New Deal</li> <li>4. Recognize emerging trends in American society during the 1930s</li> <li>5. Determine how the New Deal affected American life in the long term</li> <li>6. Determine how the New Deal affected policy and decision making throughout the 1930s and 1940s</li> </ol>

### **Teaching and learning activities that equip students to demonstrate targeted understandings:**

- An overview of essential questions and basic understandings
- Class discussion of questions posed in the PowerPoint presentation
- Introduction of common terms and ideas in the essential questions and related projects
- Providing students with primary source materials from which they will complete the unit's related projects
- Students conduct research in groups to be used later in individual and cooperative projects
- Informal observation and coaching of students as they work in groups
- Delivering feedback and evaluations on projects and research reports
- Student creation and presentation of their projects
- A posttest on the presentation, made up of multiple-choice questions and one or more essential questions as essay questions

# Project #1: The New Deal in Your Town

## Lesson overview:

In this lesson, students research New Deal–era projects located in their community or geographic area and speculate on the impact and effectiveness of those projects on easing the hardships of the Depression. Using their research, student groups create Web pages in which they analyze those projects and make conclusions as to their importance in revitalizing local economies. (Note: If your class does not have access to Web page editing software, you may elect to adapt the lesson by substituting a multimedia presentation or conventional poster presentation. You may, however, wish to consider a free program such as Nvu (<http://www.nvu.com/>) for building Web pages. In addition, many Microsoft Office programs such as Word, PowerPoint, or Publisher can be used to create basic Web pages.)

## Lesson objectives:

Having completed this lesson, students will:

- Understand the impact of the New Deal on local communities and their economies
- Develop research skills targeted at gathering information on local history
- Synthesize this information and make conclusions regarding the effect of New Deal programs on their towns or geographic areas

## Time required:

Five to seven class periods, depending on the time needed for research

## Materials needed:

Computer(s) with Internet access, Web editing software or multimedia presentation software, sources of local historical information (if available), and a scanner or digital camera (if needed)

## Methodology:

Begin the lesson by discussing New Deal relief programs and how they attempted to provide jobs as well as revitalize cities and towns hit hard by the Depression. If you are aware of programs that had a specific or significant local impact, highlight those in the class discussion.

The PowerPoint presentation references several New Deal programs you may wish to focus on, including the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), National Youth Administration (NYA), Civil Works Administration (CWA), and Public Works Administration (PWA).

At the end of the discussion, explain to students that they will be working in groups to research and collect information regarding local New Deal projects and how those projects affected the local economic revitalization.

(Note: You should base the size of each group on the size and ability of the particular class participating in the project. You may also wish to assign tasks to individual students in each group; for example, one student might focus on finding related photos, another might concentrate on writing a script for the Web page, etc.)

Once you've introduced the project, allow students to research and collect information about various local New Deal programs. Since differences in location may require students to narrow their research, you might suggest that they focus their Internet searches in a way as to limit the results to local projects. You should also encourage students to conduct "conventional" research and explore things such as newspaper microfilm archives, oral histories, or other local history resources.

You may wish to have students collect and sort information using a graphic organizer, such as the four-column chart on the next page.