

History
UNFOLDING

THE GREAT DEPRESSION



Samples are provided for evaluation purposes. Copying of the product or its parts for resale is prohibited. Additional restrictions may be set by the publisher.

MindSparks
CHALLENGING STUDENTS TO THINK HISTORICALLY

Contents

Introduction	2
Lesson 1	The Approaching Disaster	4
Lesson 2	Hard Times	8
Lesson 3	The New Deal	12
Lesson 4	FDR and His Critics	16
Appendix	Image Close-ups	21

Introduction

The Great Depression

For more than ten years, the vast majority of Americans lived daily with fear and uncertainty. Millions endured hunger and real misery. And all this suffering began at a time when the nation had nearly convinced itself that such troubles were a thing of the past. That decade, the 1930s, was the time of the Great Depression. Arriving as it did on the heels of an era of unprecedented abundance, the Depression was a shock and a trauma. It was also a turning point. For the nation did rally. Millions of unrecorded heroes faced, coped with, and triumphed over adversity. And public officials took on much greater responsibilities for regulating the industrial economy and providing relief for society's weakest members.

The twelve illustrations in this booklet cannot by themselves reveal all the causes, the complexity, or even all of the drama of this important episode in American life. However, they can provide a set of keys that will help your students understand that era as it was seen and experienced by those who lived through it.

The illustrations are presented in four lessons. Each lesson uses three of the illustrations to explore one broad topic or key aspect in the overall story of the Great Depression. Briefly, the four lessons are as follows:

The Approaching Disaster

The illustrations here help to set the context of the story by focusing attention on the prosperity of the twenties, its incompleteness, and the shock its collapse triggered, even for the well-off.

Hard Times

The illustrations in this lesson convey the sheer human drama and the widespread suffering caused by poverty, hunger, and (for many) the experience of being uprooted and forced to travel the open roads in search of work or relief.

The New Deal

The New Deal was a vast and varied public effort to cope with the Depression, get the economy moving again, and make the permanent reforms necessary to prevent a repeat of the disaster. The illustrations here focus on examples of all three of these aspects of the New Deal.

FDR and His Critics

The decade was dominated by one man, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. His personality was as crucial to understanding the era as his policies. To some he was a great hero. To others he was a misguided, perhaps even dangerous, meddler. But everyone recognized the impact and importance of his leadership. The illustrations in this lesson show FDR as those who lived through the Depression decade viewed him.

Using Photos, Cartoons, and Other Visuals to Teach History

Many textbooks are full of colorful visuals. However, all too often these visuals function primarily as window dressing. They make the text more entertaining, or at least more palatable. Only occasionally do the visuals in textbooks do more than offer simple pictorial reinforcement of ideas already presented in the text. In many cases, they pander to the visual orientation of the young while doing little to help young people master the challenges of the visual media that dominate their lives.

By way of contrast, our approach to using visual materials emphasizes their unique strengths as historical documents. The lessons in this booklet focus students on the visual symbols and metaphors in editorial cartoons, the dramatic qualities of certain photographs, the potential of many images to make abstract ideas more specific and concrete, the implicit biases and stereotypes in certain images, their emotional power, and their ability to invoke the spirit of a time and place. In the process, we make every effort to strengthen students' visual literacy skills in general, as well as their ability to think critically and engage in spirited but disciplined discussions.

How to Use This Booklet

The booklet is divided into four lessons, with three illustrations per lesson. Each lesson consists of the following:

A BACKGROUND INFORMATION SHEET This page provides brief summaries explaining the three illustrations on which the lesson is based and their relevance to the lesson's objectives.

DIGITAL IMAGES The booklet's PDF allows you to project the images for use in your class discussions.

DISCUSSION-ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each sheet displays one illustration. It includes a sequence of questions to help you plan an all-class discussion while using the projected images. The questions take students step by step through an analysis of the illustration. If you wish, you may reproduce these pages and hand them out. In addition to the discussion questions on the illustration itself, one or two follow-up activities are suggested. Some of these can be made into individual assignments. Others will work best as small-group or all-class activities.

The Great Depression

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will better understand the prosperity of the 1920s and its incomplete nature.
 2. Students will get a sense of the shock caused by the 1929 stock market collapse and the onset of hard times.
-

The Approaching Disaster

Use the background information on this page to help your students better understand the three illustrations making up this lesson. The questions and activities presented in the rest of the lesson can be used to help students clarify meanings and debate important issues.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Illustration 1

The hen laying the golden egg in this cartoon is the Ford Motor Company. In the 1920s, Ford pioneered in new assembly-line methods of production and turned out cars that millions of average Americans could buy. These consumers also found a large number of other appliances and goods increasingly affordable. This cartoon reflects the sense many Americans had in the 1920s that a golden age of consumer-based prosperity had arrived.

Illustration 2

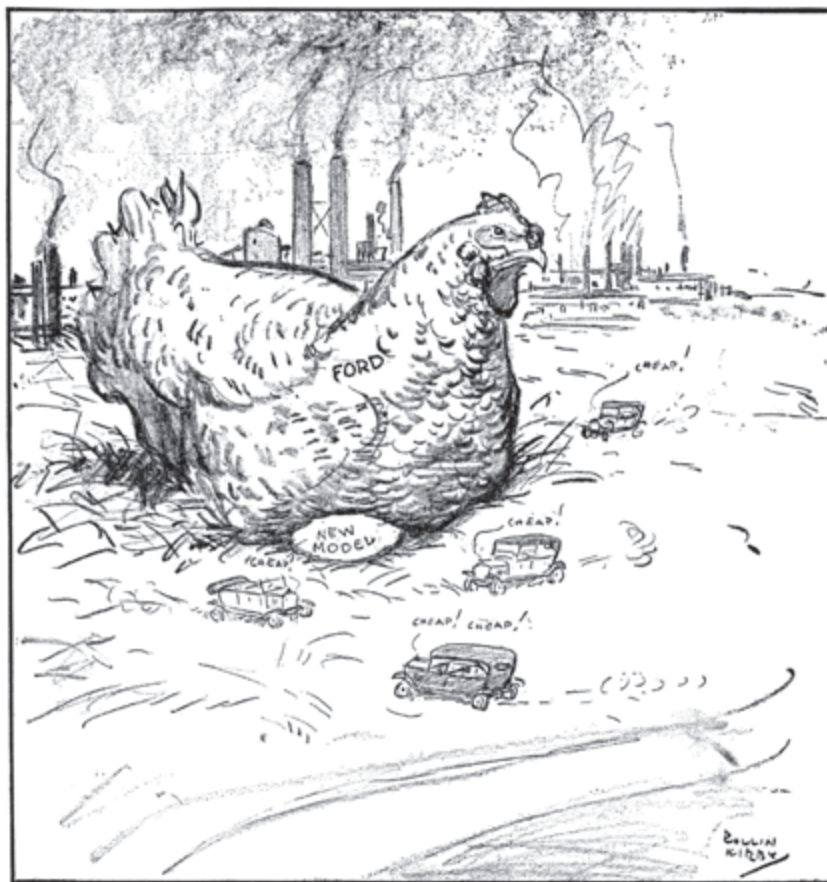
The prosperity of the 1920s brought into existence a large and growing middle class. But not all Americans benefited from the good times. With the end of World War I, a vast international market for the American farmer's produce shrank. In the industrial sector, the large-scale corporation could sometimes control markets and prices, or at least cope adequately with short-term problems. Farmers had no real control over prices. And their growing output only placed constant downward pressure on the prices they could get for their crops. This stark cartoon by D.R. Fitzpatrick highlights the farmer's vulnerability and isolation in the booming U.S. economy of the 1920s.

Illustration 3

The dramatic collapse of the stock market in October of 1929 did not cause the Great Depression. But it was still the start of hard times for thousands of ordinary Americans who had gone into debt in order to invest in what seemed a sure thing. In a scene showing the plight of one man, this photo conveys dramatically the turning-point nature of the crash. It also suggests the psychological shock experienced by those Americans who had placed such faith in the industrial order and its consumer culture.

Lesson 1 – The Approaching Disaster

Illustration 1



Rollin Kirby/The World

HATCHING

Discussing the Illustration

1. The giant hen in this cartoon is actually a symbol. That means it stands for some other thing or idea. From what is written on the hen and from the rest of the cartoon, can you explain what the hen stands for?
2. Henry Ford developed an assembly-line method for producing cars. Because of this, the Ford Motor Company began making many cars at low cost. How did this new technique suddenly make cars affordable for millions of average Americans?
3. What other new products sold to Americans in the 1920s helped to make that decade a time of growing wealth and comfort for millions of Americans?
4. This cartoon uses the old tale about the goose that laid the golden egg to make a point about the Ford Motor company and its effect on American life. What is that point? From the details in the cartoon, do you think the hen laying the “golden eggs” here is a symbol only for the Ford Motor company or for all of U.S. industry? Explain your answer.

Follow-up Activities

1. In the library, read what history textbooks or other written sources say about Henry Ford and his early life. Also find out more about his efforts to improve the way cars were manufactured. Finally, read about how Ford dealt with his workers as his company grew larger. Write a brief essay or prepare a short talk to give in class about Henry Ford and this cartoon. Based on what you have learned, explain what this cartoon helps to show about Henry Ford and his importance in U.S. history. Also explain any important aspects of Henry Ford's life that you feel are not illustrated in any way in this cartoon.
2. The 1920s were a time of growing prosperity in America. They were also years when many social ideas and attitudes were changing. In the library, find old magazines and books about the 1920s. Where possible, make copies of advertisements you think illustrate the changing social attitudes of this prosperous decade. Use the copies of the ads to create a bulletin board display on the 1920s.