



The Reality of Life in the 1930s: A Lesson Plan for Grades 4 and 8, Adaptable for High School Use

This lesson plan was developed by Donna Sherman, 4th and 5th grade teacher at Hammond Hill Elementary School in North Augusta.

Focus

Students will examine what it was like to live in the 1930s by using a variety of resources (art, music, literature, people, photographs, videos dealing with history).

Objectives

Students will:

- review the elements of art
- use various resource materials to complete the “Then” and Now” worksheet and record the resources used
- study the paintings *Bargain Basement* and *Southern Landscape* and complete a Venn diagram comparing the lifestyles depicted in the two paintings
- work in teams to conduct an interview of classroom visitors who lived during the 1930s and report their findings to the class

Learner Outcomes

Students will:

- use a variety of resources such as print, video, and the Internet to research a topic
- evaluate and synthesize information for use in the writing process to record information accurately
- conduct an interview and record information
- share information and findings in written and oral forms
- use Venn diagrams to compare and contrast two paintings or pieces of literature
- gain an understanding about life during the Great Depression

Time requirement

Five instructional periods

Materials

- Video tapes and VCR equipment
- Variety of resources that provide information about the 1930s
- Transparencies of *Bargain Basement*, by Lamar Dodd, and *Southern Landscape*, by Benny Andrews
- Copies of Venn diagram, “The United States in the 1930s” and “Then and Now” activity sheets, and interview worksheets
- Overhead projector

Teacher Resources

- Caldwell, Erskine, and Margaret Bourke-White. *You Have Seen Their Faces*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1995.
- Stanley, Jerry. *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp*. New York, N.Y.: Crown Publishers, 1993.

- Stean, R. Conrad. *The Great Depression*. Newburyport, Mass.: Children's Press, 1993.
- Sterling, Mary Ellen. *The 20th Century: The Thirties*. Teacher Workbook. Huntington Beach, Calif.: Teacher Created Materials, 1996.

Video Recordings

- *Benny Andrews: The Visible Man*. Chappaqua, N.Y.: L&S Video, 1996.
- *1929–1941: The Great Depression*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1990.
- *America in the Thirties: Creating the Safety Net*. Princeton, N.J.: Films for the Humanities and Sciences, 1990.

Preparation

The teacher will:

- contact persons who lived during the 1930s for class interviews
- gather books and materials on the Great Depression
- copy worksheets
- make transparencies of some photos, worksheets
- arrange a field trip to the Morris Museum of Art as a culminating activity

Vocabulary

- sharecropper: a person who farms land for the owner in return for a part of a crop
- Dust Bowl: the area covering the Great Plains of the U.S. that underwent a severe drought in which farmlands were turned to dust
- Great Depression: a time of mass unemployment during which banks closed and savings were wiped out
- hoboes: refers to homeless people or drifters who traveled surreptitiously on railroad cars
- New Deal: the program introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt for rebuilding the American economy in 1933
- Okies: a term derived from Oklahoma and derogatorily used as a label for the Dust Bowl migrant farmers; the "Okies" embraced the word as a symbol of their determination and pride
- swing: new jazz dance style introduced by Benny Goodman and his band

Terms Specific to the Great Depression

- Hoover Flag: an empty pocket turned inside out
- Hooverize: to economize for a good purpose; termed after President Hoover, who had coordinated relief efforts for refugees in Belgium
- Hoovervilles: communities of homeless people who camped along roadsides looking for work
- Route 66: highway to California; used by the Okies
- on the dole: people who were dependent on government relief programs

Procedures

The teacher presents an overview of the Great Depression using a variety of resources.

Compare statistics and information about the 1930s with similar information about life today. Distribute the "Then and Now" worksheet to each student for the comparison activity.

Invite several people who lived through the Great Depression to the class.

Divide the class into as many teams as there are guests. Each team will conduct an interview.

Pass out interview sheets to the teams and have each team ask questions of their person. During the next class period have the team prepare and present the finding to the class.

Assign a student to introduce the person who lived through the 1930s to the team that will conduct the interview. (The brief introduction could include information about the individual's life today.)

Have the students study the paintings *Bargain Basement*, by Lamar Dodd, and *Southern Landscape*, by Benny Andrews. Guide students as they gather information from paintings about life during the 1930s. Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the rural and urban lifestyle depicted in the two paintings.

Culminating activity: a field trip to the Morris Museum of Art to view the paintings *Bargain Basement* and *Southern Landscape*. Book you field trip online or by calling 706-724-7501.

Assessment

“Then and Now” worksheet

Venn diagram

Team oral history interview reports

Extension: Artist Research

Students will view a videotape about Benny Andrews. Do a “Then and Now” comparison between Benny Andrews's childhood and his adult life.