

USA Studies Weekly

1565 to the Present

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GRADE
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The United States Rises to a World Power

At the beginning of the 20th century, Americans looked forward to a time of growth and prosperity. There were many new opportunities for people to find wealth and success. Industry was booming, and America took pride in being a world leader.

In 1917 it was time for the United States to use its power and leadership. A war had been waging for control of Europe for over two years. The Allied Powers (France, Britain, Russia and their allies) were at war with the Central Powers (led by Germany and Austria-Hungary). At first America was neutral, or uninvolved, in the war. The country did not support one side or the other. However, the United States was soon sending both money and supplies to help the Allies fight against Germany. It was clear to Americans that they would have to join the fight. On April 2, 1917, the United States declared war against the Central Powers.

American troops poured into Europe by the thousands. Courageous and strong, the U.S. soldiers played an important role in the war. By the fall of 1918, Germany's chances of a victory had been crushed.

The United States took the lead in the war efforts. U.S. President Woodrow Wilson spent a great deal of time trying to find a way for all of the countries to come to a peaceful agreement and end the war. He wanted to make the

world "safe for democracy." His plan, called Fourteen Points, created the League of Nations. This international organization would settle disagreements between countries. President Wilson believed this was a way to help prevent future wars. Interestingly, the United States would never be a part of this group. Congress never approved the country's participation.

On Nov. 11, 1918, an armistice (agreement to stop fighting) was declared. The countries at war all agreed to stop fighting for a time. Leaders wanted to discuss peace. For six months, the countries at war discussed the issues during the Paris Peace Conference. World War I finally came to an end when the Treaty of Versailles was signed in France on June 28, 1919. Peace wouldn't last long, though. Germany was never truly pleased with the way the war ended. They did not think they were being treated fairly. Within years, that country's anger would lead to the rise of one of the most ruthless world leaders ever, Adolf Hitler.



Connections

Immunization Week Takes Shot at Saving Lives

The United Nations (U.N.) is a group of 192 countries all working together to achieve peace and development in the world. The group's headquarters is located in New York City, New York. One way the group achieves its goals is through health education for the world's people.

Millions of people all over the world die each year from diseases that can be prevented with vaccines. Many people simply do not have access to the medicines they need to prevent diseases such as flu, measles, polio and tetanus. Others may not understand how

the diseases are spread, treated and prevented.

Each year, the U.N. marks Immunization Week throughout 180 countries and territories of the world. During this seven-day period, workers hold vaccination campaigns, training sessions and conferences to educate and treat people in regions of Africa, the Americas, the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe and the Western Pacific.

The United Nations' World Health Organization believes that millions of lives can be saved during the week each year. Now that's a "shot" of good news!





Boom to Bust: The Roaring '20s to the Great Depression

Flappers and Jazz

The 1920s was a colorful time in U.S. history. It was a time of new ideas and changes in the country. Radios were in almost every home. Charles Lindbergh flew the first solo plane flight across the Atlantic Ocean. Skyscrapers shot up all over the country. The people in the United States were changing too. Many of them wanted lives that were different from their parents' and grandparents' lives.

Some young people became free-spirited. Women, who had gained the right to vote in 1920, could now dress and act differently. Instead of long skirts and stockings, many young women wore short skirts and cut their hair. These women were known as flappers. They learned the latest dances and listened to jazz music. The mood of the country was confident. People bought more and more goods using credit (borrowed money). Soon, however, the happy times came crashing down.

Black Tuesday

Tuesday, October 29, 1929, was the end of a prosperous (successful) and optimistic (hopeful) time in the United States. During the 1920s, millions of people had bought shares of stock, or part ownership of companies. Stock prices continued to rise. People borrowed more and more money to buy more shares. On Black Tuesday, the prices of stocks fell sharply. Suddenly the shares were worth nothing. Many people lost everything they owned that day. The stock market had crashed, and the U.S. economy crashed along with it.

The Great Depression

The stock market crash was only the beginning of tough times for the country. Many banks lost money too. People worried that their money in the bank might not be safe, and they rushed to the banks to withdraw their funds. When banks were out of money, they closed their doors. Some of the banks began to go out of business. People who had deposited money in the banks were out of luck. There was no money left.

Many banks tried to get back some of the money people had borrowed. They asked people to pay back loans (money given with a promise to pay it back) immediately. Sometimes the banks took people's homes and farms back when loans weren't paid. People were left homeless and without a way to make money. Many felt the banks were being cruel to them.

Businesses were hurt by the Depression, too. Some lost a lot of money in the stock market crash. Many of them had to cut back employees'

hours and reduce their pay. Many people lost their jobs altogether when businesses closed.

Within a few years, millions of Americans were out of work. Some of these people traveled on railroads from town to town looking for new jobs. Some businesses had more than 1,000 people apply for a single job opening. Farmers who had lost their land traveled all over the country to find work on other people's farms.

The Dust Bowl

To make matters worse, 25,000 square miles in the southwestern Plains suffered terrible drought and severe windstorms. These windstorms were so bad they covered farmland with a blanket of dust. The Dust Bowl affected land in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico and Colorado.

Farmland in these areas had been overplowed and overgrazed by animals for years before. Because the region was also in a drought and there was almost no rainfall for years, there was very little grass and few trees growing on the land. High winds blew the exposed topsoil away. Huge dust cloud storms blew across the land and destroyed everything in their paths.

Small farms were hardest hit. Many of the farmers were already in debt. They had borrowed money for seeds and tools to operate the farms. When crops didn't grow, the farmers couldn't repay the bank. Unfortunately, banks often had to foreclose on the farms. This meant the farmers no longer owned the land. Suddenly, many farm families were left homeless and without a way to support their families.

Worldwide Effects

Though the Great Depression started in the United States, it quickly became a worldwide problem. After WWI, the United States helped many European countries pay their debts. When the American economy failed, there was no money to send to foreign countries. As a result, the western European countries fell into a period of economic depression too. Great Britain and Germany were the hardest hit.

The Great Depression lasted more than a decade. Unfortunately, it would take another great war to bring prosperity back to the world.



Life in a Hooverville

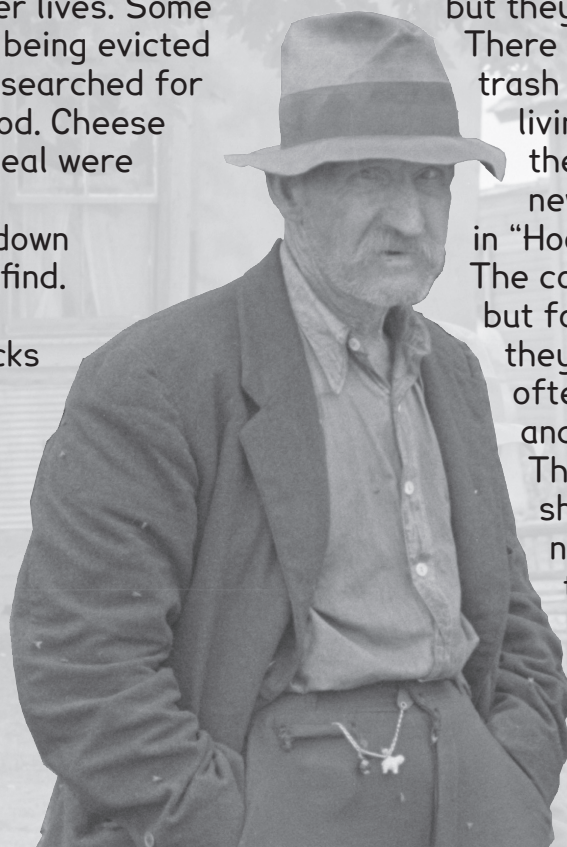
As the Great Depression deepened, so did the troubles of many Americans. Many families who were unable to pay rent or make house payments were forced to leave their homes. Some families who made their living on farms moved to cities, searching for better lives. Some city families even lost their homes. After being evicted (forced to leave), many of these families searched for public bread lines or soup kitchens for food. Cheese sandwiches, watered-down soup and oatmeal were typical free meals.

For shelter, many families shared run-down apartments. But even those were hard to find. Some people resorted to using scraps of lumber and cardboard boxes to build shacks in which to live. Soon, small communities of these shack homes appeared. These new shantytown (shack town) areas were often called Hoovervilles. The name Hooverville was chosen in "honor" of President Herbert Hoover. Many blamed

him for causing the Depression. Many workers sent their families to live with relatives while they stayed behind in the slums to look for work.

Hoovervilles had no electricity or running water, but they were often built near rivers.

There was no garbage removal system, so trash piled up, and rats ran wild. People living there stayed warm by covering themselves with "Hoover blankets," or newspapers. They used the restroom in "Hoover villas" or outside public toilets. The communities were dangerous and dirty, but for millions of out-of-work Americans, they were home. Many Hoovervilles were often raided by local law enforcement and sometimes burned to the ground. The people who were living in the shacks were forced to wander to the next town. Life for Americans during the Great Depression was extremely difficult. Hoovervilles are just a small snapshot of the big picture of the United States during this sad time in history.



Why is Veterans Day celebrated in the United States?

This Week's Question

World War I, the "war to end all wars," officially came to an end on June 28, 1919. However, the fighting stopped months earlier, on Nov. 11, 1918. Therefore, Nov. 11 became known as Armistice Day. The day was set aside for Americans to show their appreciation to the country's World War I heroes. The national celebrations included parades, speeches and public prayer meetings. After later wars in the 20th century, the name of the holiday was changed to Veterans Day. Today in the United States, every Nov. 11 is set aside as a day of "celebration to honor America's veterans for their patriotism, love of country and willingness to serve and sacrifice for the common good."

Migrant Farm Workers in the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, many found themselves out of work. People living in the Great Plains states lost their farms and businesses because of drought and the economic situation in the country. A great number of these people became migrant farm workers.

Migrant workers moved from place to place looking for work on large farms. Over one million people moved to California in the 1930s. These people hoped to find work easily because of the long growing season and variety of crops produced in the state.

There were so many families seeking work that jobs were still scarce (in limited supply) and wages were very low. Even with the entire family working, many migrant families struggled to pay for housing and food. Most families lived in very poor conditions. Life was difficult, dirty and without much hope. Life for many migrant workers all over the United States did not improve much, even after the Great Depression ended.



Name _____

ACROSS

5. shantytown named after Herbert Hoover

6. borrowed money

8. agreement to stop fighting

10. WWI Central Force leader

DOWN

1. uninvolved

2. success or wealth

3. share of company ownership

4. Great Britain, France and Russia in WWI

7. forced to leave

9. in limited supply

3

6

7

10

4

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2

5

8

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anonymous suggestions or concerns about this publication's content.

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As you read this week's lesson, circle or highlight all proper nouns with any color pen or highlighter. This will help you find some of the crossword answers and get ready for this week's test.

Flowcharts

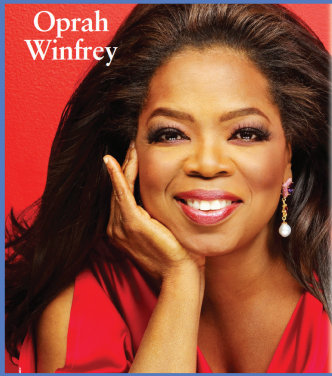
Activity

Read the article called "Boom to Bust: The Roaring '20s to the Great Depression." Create a flowchart by writing complete sentences about the Great Depression in the United States. Be sure to write the events in the order that they happened during the 1920s and 1930s. Check your work for correct punctuation and spelling.

The Great Depression in the United States

Let's Write

Pretend you are a farmer in Texas during the Great Depression. Write a letter to your banker about your difficulties during the economic downturn. Persuade the banker to give you and your family more time to solve your problems before the bank forecloses on your home. Using complete sentences, give at least three reasons why your banker should give your family more time. Support all of your main ideas with at least three facts and details.



A force for good.

ENCOURAGEMENT

Pass It On:
VALUES.COM THE FOUNDATION FOR A BETTER LIFE