

Grade 07 Social Studies Unit 11 Exemplar Lesson 01: Economic Depression

Hill County Component, based on the Heart of Texas Tales website

CSCOPE Background Information:

The term the Great Depression is applied to the decade following the stock market crash of 1929. The crash and subsequent depression were caused by over-production on the part of businesses, over spending by the consumers, and over speculation in the stock market. With World War I over, industry converted to a peace time footing in the 1920s and began producing more new consumer goods than ever -- pre-packed or processed foods, electric household items such as refrigerators, stoves, coffee pots, toasters, etc., and Ford's cheap automobiles. Those that had money began to splurge on these modern products that made life easier. New methods of buying (credit) and advertising resulted in a sellers' market. Investors could buy stock on the margin, that is they put a little down and then sell when the price of the stock rose thus only needing a little money to make a sizable profit.

Business goes through a normal cycle of expansion and contraction; however, this time the boom or expansion turned into a bust. Those that could afford to buy had reached a saturation point (a limit on just how much they could spend), and the downward spiral began. When goods do not sell, layoffs begin. Investors began to pull their money out of the stock market to keep from losing it, resulting in big sell-offs and falling prices. Panic set in and the market crashed. The spiral became a plunge. Reductions in consumer spending resulted in more lay-offs, missed mortgage payments, and withdrawal of money from banks as this country joined the depression that had already affected much of the world.

Two groups of people had not reaped any of the benefits of the Roaring Twenties. The unskilled worker in the factories and the farmer were still struggling. Wages were low because of the overabundance of available labor, which consisted of the unskilled resident labor force and many immigrants that were fleeing dictatorships and economic hardships in native countries. In addition, farmers who had recovered somewhat during the war, continued to produce more crop products than ever; therefore, prices for farm products continued to fall. By 1932 the unemployment rate was 25%.

Unlike the rest of the country, Texas did not suffer as much as other states because it was not as industrialized. Many people were already poor but had small farms for food. The success of the oil industry and the industries that supported it provided some stability for at least that segment of the state's economy, but the farmer's plight became even worse. The drought of the thirties hit the farmers hard. Fields that had been plowed produced no cover crops and were left barren exposed to the harsh dry winds. The resulting Dust Bowl was devastating both economically and emotionally for Texans.

This lesson deals with these hardships and how Texans dealt with the Great Depression that finally ended with the jobs that were created as the United States moved into World War II.

Content Delivery-Economic Depression

Hill County Component

Interactive Lecture/Discussion. Teacher provides students with the following background information, **tying into the Texas Unit on the Economic Depression the various negative and positive outcomes of the Economic Depression that were experienced in Hill County:** (*Comparing and Contrasting critical thinking skills should be stressed.*)

I. Some specific Hill County examples of negative outcomes of the Depression that are treated on the Heart of Texas Tales website include:

- **Many folks had to close their business**, or alter it dramatically, as in the case of the Buchers' Jewelry business that they had to move from downtown out to their home on a farm. ([People: Clyde Barrow Gang, Outlaws](#))
- **Folks** facing unemployment and poverty **turned to acts of desperation**, including robbery and murder. (Bonnie & Clyde Gang from [People: Clyde Barrow Gang, Outlaws](#))
- **Folks could no longer afford the luxury of going on shopping trips** to Dallas and Waco, which negatively impacted the success of the Interurban Electric Railway. ([Everyday Life: Interurban Electric Railway](#))
- Because the non-electric railway service was primarily a rural freight line, **the railroad began to suffer** with the decline of agriculture during the Dust Bowl and Depression. World War II briefly increased demand for shipping and transportation, but after the war and the end of gas rationing, the need for public transportation declined. ([Everyday Life: Railroads Come to Town](#))
- **Delay of the building of Whitney Dam.** ([Events: Whitney Dam Construction](#)) In the early 1900's, Texas experienced a number of devastating floods resulting in deaths and destruction due to rivers overflowing from heavy rainfalls. Because of this, the United States government began funding the building of dams along Texas rivers in the 1930's.

But (likely due to the Depression), funding approval for the dam was delayed until 1941, when interest in it was revived after a record-setting flood in 1936 left more than 2,000 people homeless in Waco. Then with the advent of World War II, the funding was taken away because all resources were needed for the war effort.

Construction on the dam finally began in May 1947, and the dam started operation in 1953.

II. Some specific Hill County examples of positive aspects of the Depression that are treated on the Heart of Texas Tales website include descriptions of how certain Hill County residents 'weathered' the Depression:

- **Grimes Garage** ([Everyday Life: Grimes Garage](#)) - Fred Grimes was a master at promoting his business. The first sign advertising the garage was carved on a large stone on Pikes Peak by Fred himself. As customers began to mention that they had seen it, Fred decided to increase advertising. He collected 6-foot lengths of 1" x 12" pine boards and painted "GRIMES GARAGE HILLSBORO TEXAS" on them. He and his wife then drove Highway 81 from the Oklahoma border to south Texas. Every few miles they'd pick out a likely roadside tree, find the owner of the land, and pay a silver dollar for the right to nail one of the signboards to the tree.
- **Andrews Café** ([Everyday Life: Andrews Café](#)) – The Café enjoyed such fame far and wide that travellers between Dallas and Waco – Austin made it a point to stop there to eat. In the midst of the Depression, air conditioning was installed there in the early 1930's, one of Hillsboro's first

businesses to do so. The café was open 24 hours a day. Dishes were washed in a copper conveyor dishwasher, the first and only dishwasher at that time in Hill County.

- **Tris Speaker** from Hubbard was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame ([People: Tris Speaker Hall of Famer](#)) in the mid-1930's. While people were suffering the effects of the Depression, they were able to escape it a little by following baseball games on the radio and reports in the news of Tris Speaker's fame and great career.
- **Battle of the Benches & Bond's Alley** - The elderly and unemployed men of the communities spent many an hour "sitting, spitting, and whittling" and discussing the news of the day and the effect on their troubled lives. This provided them a therapeutic outlet for their worries. ([Events: Battle of the Benches](#)) and ([Events: Bond's Alley Festival](#), 1st paragraph)
- **"Cotton is King"** - ([Everyday Life: Cotton is King](#)) During the 1920's and 1930's, about eighty percent of the land in the county was in cultivation, much of it in cotton being used for cash crops. Hill County was the 2nd highest-producing county of cotton in Texas, and cotton fabric was being shipped from here all over the world.

TEKS:

7.1 History. *The student understands traditional historical points of reference in Texas history. The student is expected to:*

- 7.1A Identify the major eras in Texas history, describe their defining characteristics, and explain why historians divide the past into eras, including...Texas in the Great Depression and World War II.
- 7.1B Apply absolute and relative chronology through the sequencing of significant individuals, events, and time periods.

7.7 History. *The student understands how individuals, events, and issues shaped the history of Texas during the 20th and early 21st centuries. The student is expected to:*

- 7.7B Define and trace the impact of "boom-and-bust" cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries such as farming, oil and gas production, cotton, ranching, real estate, banking, (the hotel industry, the railroads) and computer technology.
- 7.7E Analyze the political, economic, and social impact of major events, including World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II, on the history of Texas.

7.8 Geography. *The student uses geographic tools to collect, analyze, and interpret data. The student is expected to:*

- 7.8A Create and interpret thematic maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases representing various aspects of Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries.

7.9 Geography. *The student understands the location and characteristics of places and regions of Texas. The student is expected to:*

- 7.9C Analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas.

7.10 Geography. *The student understands the effects of the interaction between humans and the environment in Texas during the 19th, 20th, and 21st centuries. The student is expected to:*

- 7.10A Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and analyze the positive and negative consequences of the modifications.

7.13 Economics. *The student understands the interdependence of the Texas economy with the United States and the world. The student is expected to:*

7.13B Analyze the impact of economic concepts within the free enterprise system such as supply and demand, profit, government regulation, and world competition on the economy of Texas.

7.21 Social studies skills. *The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired through established research methodologies from a variety of valid sources, including electronic technology. The student is expected to:*

7.21A Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about Texas.

7.21B Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions.

7.21C Organize and interpret information from outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps.

7.21D Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants.

7.21H Use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.

7.22 Social studies skills. *The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:*

7.22B Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, and proper citation of sources.

7.22C Transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate.

7.22D Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.