Life in Kansas During the Great Depression

Teacher’s Guide

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Introduction

The Great Depression was a devastating period in Kansas’ history. Over the course of these lessons, students will learn about what life was like for Kansans throughout the state. Students will see that factors like age, race, gender, place, occupation, and wealth had a huge impact on how people experienced the 1930s.

Kansas Standards & Benchmarks for History, Government, & Social Studies

1. Choices have consequences.
   a. The student will analyze the context under which choices are made and draw conclusions about the motivations and goals of the decision-makers.
   b. The student will use his/her understanding of choices and consequences to construct a decision-making process and to justify a decision.

2. Societies experience continuity and change over time.
   a. The student will recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impaction individuals, institutions, communities, states, and nations.
   b. The student will investigate an example of continuity and/or change and connect that continuity and/or change to a contemporary issue.

3. Relationships between people, place, idea, and environments are dynamic.
   a. The student will recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.
   b. The student will use his/her understanding of these dynamic relationships to create a personal, community, state, and/or national narrative.

Learning Objectives

By the end of these lessons, students will be able to...
1. Investigate how factors like place, beliefs, race, gender, and culture can influence an individual’s life
2. Debate how the Great Depression affected different groups of Kansans
3. Defend their arguments using historical evidence

Extensions & Take Homes

Each section includes optional questions or activities that can be assigned as homework. The teacher can decide how this homework looks i.e. work sheet, essay, and/or discussion.

The only take-home assignment built into the trunk is the final assignment at the end of Lesson Four.
Lesson 1: Daily Life During the Great Depression

Introduction
The Great Depression did not affect everyone in Kansas equally. For some people, the 1930s meant minor adjustments to life, while for others it marked the complete destruction of life as they knew it. During this lesson, students will begin to explore what life was like for different groups of Kansans during the 1930s using objects and Daily Life cards. Students will build upon the information they gather during this lesson over the course of the subsequent lessons.

Kansas Standards for History, Government, & Social Studies
1. Relationships between people, place, idea, and environments are dynamic.
2. Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Benchmarks
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
   a. Recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.
   b. Analyze the context of significant relationships and draw conclusions about a contemporary world.
   c. Recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impact on individuals, institutions, communities, states, and nations.
   d. Investigate an example of continuity and/or change and connect that continuity and/or change to a contemporary issue.

Materials
- Pen/pencil
- Daily Life Worksheets (3 types; 1 for each student)
- Daily Life Cards (1-28)
- Health Text Book (1)
- Math Textbook (1)
- Egg beater (1)
- Activity book (1)

Procedure
1) Before class, set the objects and Daily Life cards out
2) Divide the class into groups so that there is around 4-5 students per group
3) Give each student a worksheet that corresponds with one of the following categories
   a. Students at the University of Kansas (a university in Lawrence, Kansas)
   b. Family Living in Rural, Western Kansas (in the heart of the Dust Bowl)
   c. Family Living in Lawrence, Kansas (an eastern, Kansas city)
4) Introduce the activity to the students.
a. Example: Over the course of 4 lessons, you will be working in groups to create fictional family or (group of friends) that might have lived in Kansas during the Great Depression. At the end of the lessons, your group will write and present either diary entries or letters as individuals from your family/group. This type of writing is known as historical fiction. Historical fiction is a type of literature, film, television, etc. that uses a historical time period as the setting for a fictional story.

During this first activity, you will be gathering information about what life was like during the Great Depression for Kansans. Your goal is to start creating a family (or group of friends for the KU students) that fits the category you were assigned using the materials provided. While you must work as a group, each of you should take responsibility for one individual. You will write your diary entry or letter as that person.

5) Let the groups begin exploring the materials. In order to keep order and encourage discussion, have each student grab one item and go back to his or her groups to discuss it. When they are done, s/he can grab a new one.

6) As the students work, walk around to each group to aid them as needed. There are prompts on the worksheets to help students, which you can use to help students as well. Some additional questions are:
   a. How did the Great Depression and/or Dust Bowl affect your family? Did their lives change drastically?
   b. Does anyone have to make a difficult choice? What were the consequences?

7) After, have each group briefly share what they learned during this activity and a brief description of their families. Facilitate a discussion of the daily life in Kansas during the 1930s.
   a. Discussion Prompts
      i. How was life different for people living in cities like Lawrence versus more rural places?
      ii. How different would your life be if you lived during the 1930s?
      iii. How has what you learned changed how you think of the Great Depression? Did anything surprise you?

Extension/Take Home
How is your family different from the family you created? OR How is your group of friends different from the group you created? Bring into class 3 examples of how they are different and 3 examples of how they similar.

Vocabulary
- Historical Fiction: A type of literature, film, television, etc. that uses a historical time period as the setting for a fictional story.
Lesson 2: Budgeting During the Great Depression

Introduction
This lesson will give students insight into how limited money was for many Kansans during the Great Depression by having them create a grocery list using money budgeted for food using the family (or college student) they started creating during the previous lesson. Budgeting was an essential practice for many families who needed to keep a close eye on how they spent their money. This activity will test students’ creativity and make them consider what is really essential.

Kansas Standards for History, Government, & Social Studies
1. Choices have consequences.
2. Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Benchmarks
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:
   a. Analyze the context under which choices are made and draw conclusions about the motivations and goals of the decision-makers.
   b. Use his/her understanding of choices and consequences to construct a decision-making process and to justify a decision.
   c. Recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impact on individuals, institutions, communities, states, and nations.
   d. Investigate an example of continuity and/or change and connect that continuity and/or change to a contemporary issue.

Materials
- Budgeting During the Great Depression Worksheets (3 types; 1 for each group)
- What People Ate During the Great Depression Packet (1 for each group)
- The Average Cost of Food in Kansas City in 1936 List (1 for each group)
- Pencil/Pen

Procedure
1) Have students get into the same groups they were previously in and introduce today’s activity.
   a. Example: Historians often use math to understand history. The cost of food, a person’s paycheck, and the number of people living in an area can all reveal a lot about a time period. In this lesson, you will practice budgeting, an important practice during the Great Depression as well as today. A budget is simply a plan for how you will spend your money. Your group must make a grocery list using the money you have budgeted for food.
Each group has specific instructions for completing this activity so make sure you read the instructions on your worksheet. You have a list of food and their prices as well as recipes and stories in your What People Ate During the Great Depression packet to use as inspiration for what you should buy. When you look at the prices of the food you will notice they are a lot lower than what we spend on food today. That is due to inflation. Inflation is the increase in how much things cost based on how much money and credit is available.

2) Hand out the appropriate worksheet and a packet to each group

3) As they work, help facilitate their discussions by asking questions. Some possibilities are:
   a. What items do you think are most important to have?
   b. Can you think of any creative ways to save money?

4) Things to note
   a. Each worksheet has slightly different instructions based on its category
   b. Students should support their choices with historical evidence from the recipe packet and the previous lesson.

5) Have each group present the situation they were given and how they decided to create their list. If there is a board, encourage them to write their list on the board. After, facilitate a discussion of budgeting during the Great Depression.
   a. Discussion Prompts
      i. What was it like trying to create a grocery list with your food budget?
      ii. Does your family make grocery lists before they go shopping? How is it similar or different from the one you created today?
      iii. Did you have to choose between buying one thing over another? How did you make your decision?
      iv. How did your budget affect how you created your list?

Extension/Take Home
• With parent permission, go to the Bureau of Statistic’s website to use the inflation calculator. Calculate how much some of the foods from the grocery list would cost today. Are you surprised by the results?
  o http://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm
• Compare and contrast: Does food cost more or less today? When you go to the grocery store, pay attention to how much food costs in comparison to what you calculated 1930s food cost. Which food costs more then it did in the 1930s? Which costs less? Are you surprised?

Vocabulary
• Budget: a plan for how you will spend your money
• Inflation: a continuing rise in the general price level usually attributed to an increase in the volume of money and credit relative to available goods and services- Merriam-Webster Dictionary
Lesson 3: The New Deal in Kansas

Introduction
While some people did not welcome government assistance, New Deal agencies had a major impact on Kansans during the Great Depression. A lot of agencies came and went during Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency, so during this activity you will focus on four of the major ones: the Works Progress Administration, the National Youth Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Farm Security Administration. Students will continue developing their family by looking at some of New Deal programs and considering which would have benefited their family or group.

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1. Choices have consequences.
2. Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Benchmarks
By the end of this lesson, students will be able to…
a. Analyze the context under which choices are made and draw conclusions about the motivations and goals of the decision-makers.
b. Use his/her understanding of choices and consequences to construct a decision-making process and to justify a decision.
c. Recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impact on individuals, institutions, communities, states, and nations.
d. Investigate an example of continuity and/or change and connect that continuity and/or change to a contemporary issue.

Materials
• New Deal Worksheet (1 type; 1 for each student)
• New Deal Packet (1 full page and 3 half sheets; 1 for each group)
• New Deal Cards (1-20)
• Pencil/Pen

Procedure
1) Before class, lay out the New Deal cards on a table.
2) Have students get into the same groups they were previously in and introduce today’s activity.
   a. Example: In this lesson, you will continue building your families by looking at some of the New Deal programs they might have benefited from. You can use the New Deal Packet and the New Deal Cards to see what programs and projects were happening in Kansas. On your worksheet, write down pick projects
you think would benefit your family member or KU student and why. Make sure you fill one out for each person.

3) Hand out worksheets and a packet to each group.

4) As they work, help facilitate their discussions by asking questions. Some possibilities are:
   a. How will these programs change your family’s daily life? Are the programs giving them jobs or enriching their lives?
   b. How does your family members’ race/gender/place/age/etc. affect which programs they can use?

5) Have students present what programs they chose and why as well as any updates they have made to their family/group. After, facilitate a discussion about the New Deal in Kansas.
   a. Discussion Prompts
      i. Are there any programs you think shouldn’t have been offered? Why?
      ii. If you were the president, what programs would you have created? How would you justify these programs to Congress and the people?

**Extension/Take Home**
Write a proposal for a New Deal project you would create if you were president. Include why you would create it, who it would benefit, and how.
Lesson 4: Applying What You Learned

Note: If you would like, students can develop their presentation outside of class instead of during the class period.

Introduction

This final lesson is the application of everything the students have learned during the previous three lessons. A practice in creativity, students will create their own piece of historical fiction in order to teach their classmates what they have learned about the Great Depression.

Kansas Standards for History, Government, & Social Studies

1. Relationships between people, place, idea, and environments are dynamic.
2. Societies experience continuity and change over time.

Benchmarks

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

a. Recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.
b. Use his/her understanding of these dynamic relationships to create a personal, community, state, and/or national narrative.
c. Recognize and evaluate continuity and change over time and its impact on individuals, institutions, communities, states, and nations.
d. Investigate an example of continuity and/or change and connect that continuity and/or change to a contemporary issue.

Materials

• Pencil/Pen if needed
• Paper if needed

Procedure

1) Have students break into their groups and introduce today’s activity.
   a. Example: Today you are going to write your diary entry or letter for your families/groups. Make sure you use what you learned during the other lessons. While you should be creative, your presentation needs to be realistic. You should work as a group, but each of you is responsible for writing and presenting a letter/diary entry. Each presentation should be at least 1 page in length or 2 minutes long.

2) Once everyone is finished working, have each group go up and give their presentations. After, facilitate a discussion about what students learned over the course of each lesson.
   a. Discussion Prompts
i. How have these lessons changed how you think about the Great Depression?

ii. How was life different for each of the groups you’ve learned about?

iii. How has life in Kansas changed since the 1930s? How has it stayed the same?

3) At the end of class, hand out the homework assignment. Due date and length is to be determined by the teacher.

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT**

Write a paper comparing and contrasting the lives of two of the three groups you learned about over the course of these lessons (Lawrence, Rural, KU). Include examples.
Lesson 1: Text for the Daily Life Objects & Cards

#1: During the Great Depression, KU students couldn’t always afford to live in dorms, Greek houses, or apartments. Many students rented or worked for rooms in the homes of Lawrence families. Some slept in offices on campus. One student lived in the basement of a church in exchange for work and before that he lived in a car, similar to the one in the picture, in order to save money.

#2: During the Great Depression many young men, and some women, left home to find jobs or to simply to not burden their families. These drifters would stop at different homes along their journey to see if anyone would be willing to give them food in exchange for work. Drifters, or hobos, actually created a system of communicating with each other by writing symbols in chalk that meant different things. On the front of the card are examples of some of these markings.

#3: KU students took on whatever jobs they could find in order to make a living and continue school.

- Orry C. Walz worked in mortuary and then at the church where he also lived.
- A football player named Brickmann worked as the chief of police at night.
- Marjorie Nelson Smyth had jobs at a bookstore, as a maid and nanny for a professor.
- A student named Nottingham found and sold cockroaches for 2 cents a piece to entomologist at another college and made $3.50 a week!
- James Patterson was a secretary for one of his teachers, but said the jobs more of an excuse for the teacher to pay him than hard work.
- Mary Jane Williams Knisley had a job in an advertising building her freshmen year, worked in an office and a restaurant during her sophomore year, and as a secretary one summer.

While they were busy, these students tried their best to get good grades because they did not want their hard earned money to go to waste.

#4: During the 1930s, there were rules that prevented married women from working in schools, government, and large companies. Other businesses would not hire two people from the same family. In order to get past these rules some couples married in secret or waited until they could afford it. Some women put off getting married so they could continue supporting their parents and siblings. For some of these women this meant they never got married.

#5: During the 1930s, it was uncommon for women to work and was considered embarrassing for a wife to work. In 1936, one poll revealed that 82% of Americans didn’t think women should work if their husbands had a job. However, during the Great Depression, some women had to enter the workplace in order to make enough money for her family to get by. While some thought women were taking jobs from men, in reality women were often stuck with unskilled or part-time jobs that did not pay much.

#6: Without a lot of money to spend, KU students found inexpensive ways to have fun. Some would work sporting events so they could watch the games or just sneak in. Campus programs like plays, recitals, and lectures were popular as well as parties and dances.

#7: Due to drought and bad farming practices, acres of farming land turned into fields of dirt during the 1930s. Without prairie grasses to hold the soil down winds would blow all of the dirt up creating dust storms. Some of these storms were so bad they were called black blizzards. These storms could block out the sun and make it impossible to see in front of you.

#8: During the Dust Bowl, huge hordes of rabbits came through eating what few crops remained. In order to solve the problem, rabbit drives were organized to hunt the rabbits. These drives became social events that people would go
and watch. The rabbits that were caught went to good use as people ate the meat and sold the fur.

#9: The dust storms that hit western Kansas were very dangerous. People could get dust pneumonia from breathing in the dust and some people and animals died after being caught in storms. To combat the dust, people would wear masks or towels around their faces and goggles to keep out the dirt.

#10: A 1933 Kansas Sun article said of the 4,434 students enrolled at KU, around 60% were paying at least part of their own tuition. Of that 29% of men and 16% of women were paying for school entirely on their own. Not everyone could afford to return to finish school. Those who did graduated were not sure if they would even find a job.

#11: While dust storms were a bigger issue in western Kansas, the storms were so bad that towns in eastern Kansas would experience smaller ones. This photo is of a dust storm at KU.

#12: During the Great Depression people found inexpensive ways to spend their free time. In Kansas, community and family activities like board games, dances, card games, picnics, singing, 4-H events, sporting events, and cow-pasture baseball were popular.

#13: Like today, movies were a popular past time during the Great Depression. It cost a quarter for adults and a dime for children. To encourage more people to buy tickets, theaters had raffles and contests for ticket holders to win things like dishes, radios, towels, glasses, and even trips. In rural communities without theaters, families might take special trips to see movies or people would set up a projector in a community room.

#14: Not all farms in rural farms had indoor plumbing. Instead, people had to use outhouses, which were not very clean. Later, the Works Progress Administration built new outhouses to improve sanitation and health.

#15: Children who lived in rural Kansas went to one-room schools that would sometimes be miles away from their family’s farm. Since there was only one room, students from different grade levels had class together.

#16: Women who stayed at home were just as hard working as those that entered the work force. It was reported that over half of housewives spent 48 hours a week on housework. A housewife was responsible for cooking, cleaning, caring for children, and making sure her family had what they needed.

#17: During the Great Depression families had to make do with what they had. One wife described how they lived as “use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.” Quilting was one way women used scraps of fabric to make new household goods. This quilt, from the Watkins’ collection, was made by sewing an old shawl into the backing in order to recycle fabric.

#18-#24: no accompanying text; see card for source

#25: During the 1930s, the state would publish textbooks but parents had to buy them. Since a lot of families could not afford new books, students often used their older siblings’ books. To make matters worse, schools couldn’t afford to buy new books or any books at all.

#26: During the Great Depression, school attendance went up and down depending on where you lived. Some students stayed in school longer since there were no jobs available. In rural areas, schools closed because they did not have money, forcing children to travel even farther to get to school. In some cases, children stopped going to school because of the distance or because they had to help work on the farm or find jobs to support their families. Sometimes children did not go to school simply because they did not have clean clothes or shoes to wear.
#27: Children who lived in cities did not have to do as many chores as children who lived on farms. That meant they had more time to play. Some popular games were yo-yo, cops and robbers, street baseball, spinning tops, and marbles. Children also enjoyed going to sporting events, camping, and fishing.\textsuperscript{xxi}

#28: With less money to spend, families had to make do with what they had. This meant they could not buy things like new appliances for cooking with. Instead, they might have used an eggbeater like this one from the 1920s.\textsuperscript{xxi}

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**Works Cited**

**Introduction**

\textsuperscript{1} “List of Measurable Verbs Used to Assess Learning Outcomes” in Clinton Community College, [http://www.clinton.edu/curriculumcommittee/listofmeasurableverbs.cxml].

**Lesson 1: Daily Life Cards Text**

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\textsuperscript{iii} Colleges and University notes 1982, Box 1, Folder 28, Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression project records, Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas.

\textsuperscript{iv} Colleges and University notes 1982, Box 1, Folder 28.

\textsuperscript{v} The Division of Continuing Education, *Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression* (The University of Kansas, 1983), 29.

\textsuperscript{vi} The Division of Continuing Education, 29.

\textsuperscript{vii} Colleges and University notes 1982, Box 1, Folder 28.

\textsuperscript{viii} The Division of Continuing Education, 11.

\textsuperscript{ix} The Division of Continuing Education, 15-16.

\textsuperscript{x} “Citizens wearing dust masks in Liberal, Kansas,” in Kansas Memory, [http://www.kansasmemory.org/item/210018].

\textsuperscript{xi} Colleges and University notes 1982, Box 1, Folder 28.

\textsuperscript{xii} Rowe, 94-95.

\textsuperscript{xiii} The Division of Continuing Education, 54-55.

\textsuperscript{xiv} The Division of Continuing Education, 53.

\textsuperscript{xv} The Division of Continuing Education, 24.

\textsuperscript{xvi} The Division of Continuing Education, 37.

\textsuperscript{xvii} Family and Community network, support, undated, Box 1, Folder 36, Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression project records, Kenneth Spencer Research Library at the University of Kansas.

\textsuperscript{xviii} The Division of Continuing Education, 30.

\textsuperscript{xix} The Division of Continuing Education, 37.


\textsuperscript{x}i The Division of Continuing Education, 34.

\textsuperscript{x}ii The Division of Continuing Education, 37.

**Lesson 3: New Deal Packet**

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5. “Periodic Table of the New Deal,” in Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, [http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/education/resources/periodictable.html].