



# The Dirty Thirties

A thematic unit for  
Grades 7-10

created by:

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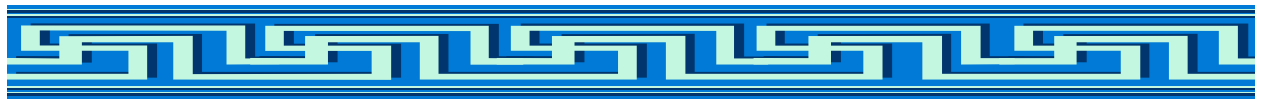
# Introduction

This thematic unit was designed for grades 7-10. It is to be used in conjunction with United States History. The textbook that I reference is [\*The American Nation\*](#) by Prentice Hall. It is for 9-10. The 7-8 Text is *U.S. History* by Macmillan McGraw-Hill. The 9-10 textbook is online and available at the previous link. Extra work and extensions for each chapter are also available as well as lesson plans. The site is free and you do not need to register to use it.

My class periods run 40 minutes for 4 days a week. The lessons, in this unit are geared for this time frame. You will need to adjust the lessons to meet your needs and schedule.

I have included a list of websites that may or may not have been referenced in this lesson. I hope that you will use the unit and expand on it. If you create new lessons or have comments on the lessons I made, please [email me](#).

I hope you enjoy this thematic unit.



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# Lessons and the 8 Intelligences

|                        | Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 | Lesson 4 | Lesson 5 | Lesson 6 | Lesson 7 | Lesson 8 |
|------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Verbal<br>Lingulistic  | X        | X        | X        |          | X        | X        | X        | X        |
| Logical<br>Mathmatical |          |          | X        | X        | X        |          |          | X        |
| Kinesthic              |          |          | X        | X        | X        |          |          | X        |
| Visual<br>spatial      | X        | X        | X        | X        |          | X        | X        |          |
| Musical                |          |          |          | X        |          |          |          |          |
| Inter-<br>personal     | X        | X        | X        |          | X        | X        | X        | X        |
| Intra-<br>personal     | X        |          | X        |          |          |          |          | X        |
| Naturalist             |          | X        |          |          | X        |          |          |          |

# Lesson 1

## *Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt*

Time/length: approx. 3 hours, 2-3 class periods

Room Décor: vintage planes hanging from ceiling, music playing from the era. Pictures and posters of the Dust Bowl and war propaganda on the walls.

### Objectives:

1. The students will recognize and understand who Eleanor Roosevelt was as a person.
2. The students will study the ways that the Roosevelts worked to help the Country.
3. The students will study and discuss, until comprehension the different levels of poverty during the Depression and analyze the different levels of “doing without”.
4. Students will discuss to comprehension the different phrases used in the letters.
5. Students will begin to identify with the people of the Depression, through writing and experience journaling.

### Supply List:

Access to the internet, [Dear Mrs. Roosevelt](#), journals, large paper for brainstorming (Post It! is the best), markers, textbook.

[Eleanor Roosevelt](#)



### Procedure:

1. Read the pages with the students from their book. [Pages 710-713](#)
2. Do a KWL with the students. (what you **K**now, what you **W**ant to know, and what you **L**earned.) Have the students brainstorm about what they know about Eleanor Roosevelt, about the New Deal and about the Depression and the Dust Bowl. Then have them list the things they would like to know about these areas.
3. Divide the students into 4 groups. Their assignment is to locate the letters to Mrs. Roosevelt and print out 4. They must print out 1 from a male, 1 from a wealthy person, 1 from a poorer person, 1 from an ethnic person. They need to do/visit the following:  
[www.newdeal.feri.org/eleanor/index.htm](http://www.newdeal.feri.org/eleanor/index.htm)

- a. Have the students read the letters aloud to the group.
- b. Each student needs to pick one that they can identify with themselves.
- c. Discuss with the group the following questions:
  - Who wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt? Why do you think this group wrote the letters?
  - Who replied to the letters?
  - Was everyone hurting the same?
  - Are there any word phrases that stick out?
  - What do they mean?
- d. They will be called on to read that letter aloud in class. They need to state why they chose that letter.
- e. Discuss “canned replies” . Were these replies canned? Take a poll in the class, make each side state why they think the way they do, and write them on the board.
- f. Discuss the different wording in the letters, identify what they mean and compare them to the current phrases and meanings.

### **Writing:**

Have the students create a story about the person, whose letter they read. They need to create a life about that person from the Depression to current day. Conclude the story by having the person write a letter to Mrs. Roosevelt, explaining their life story. ([excerpts from Web site](#))

**Extension:** Have the students view art work from the [era](#). Provide Charcoal Pencils and newsprint. Have the students draw a picture depicting the Depression.

Discuss the following:

What are the pictures of? How were the artists effected by the Depression? Display their art work and have them talk about their work.

**Assessment:** Grade the Writing Project using the [rubric](#).

## Lesson 2

### *Impact on Society*

Length: 2-3 class periods

Objectives:

1. The students will study the daily lives of those living during the Depression.
2. They will interview a person that lived during the Depression.
3. They will understand and possess a “snapshot view” of life in the 30’s.

Procedure:

1. List the following on the board.  
Cities around the country ( divide in pairs and have each pair choose one city.)  
  
List the following: (in a separate list)  
Food, national resources, schooling, religion, work, transportation, games, relaxation, arts and crafts.
2. Have the students choose an area of the US or a City, from the first list. They need to research that area and find out about everything on the second list.
3. They need to interview a living person that survived the Depression. The students find out how the people dealt with those items in their daily lives. They could also use the web and find [stories of the Depression](#).
4. The students need to prepare a presentation of their choosing. It needs to convey different areas of research and needs to be neat, orderly, and contain all necessary info. It will be displayed in the school Creative Arts Fair. Things that will add to the presentation: era music, era food, costumes, etc.
5. Map the cities/ areas that the students choose. Place a large pin in the area. Label the area with a few adjectives, ( using an overhead would work best) to describe the area. (you can use the following site for a map: [www.scottforesman.com/educators/maps/USAmap.html](http://www.scottforesman.com/educators/maps/USAmap.html))
6. Discuss the different areas: Are there correlations between the list and the areas of the country? Were any areas under the same types of pressure?
7. Compare and contrast the Dust Bowl areas with that of large Eastern cities. How did the Depression effect them? If the Dust Bowl had not occurred, would the Mid-east have suffered as much as they did? Make lists and post in room.

Assessment:

Have the students create a Venn diagram from the lists.

## Lesson 3

### *Black Thursday*

Time: 1 class period

#### Needed Materials:

3x5 cards with specific events (going to the bank to find money gone, going to work to find that you no longer have a job, etc.) written on them.

#### Objectives:

1. The students will review the causes of the Depression.
2. They will discuss the impact of Black Thursday.
3. The students will empathize with the people by acting out Black Thursday, using pantomime.
4. Students will rationalize possible long and short term effects of the stock market crash and the Depression.

#### Procedure:

1. Read with the students pages ([708-709](#)) from the textbook. Discuss the Depression and the stock market crash. Using the web site "[Causes of the Depression](#)" would be helpful. Putting the information into a PowerPoint Presentation would be beneficial.
2. Define [Black Thursday](#) by: conducting a search on the internet with the entire class. If you have a projector, it would be helpful to project the web on to the wall for all to see. Make a list of events that occurred on that day. Next to that list create a parallel list of events ( i.e. mass suicides, drunken binges, some never went home, etc.) This list can be created through reading to define Black Thursday.
3. Divide into groups of 3. Give 1 group a card and 1 minute to prepare their skit. They need to pantomime the experience. Repeat for each group.

#### Assessment:

1. Have the students view the site "[The Great Depression and the 1990's](#)". Using the information gathered in class regarding the causes and effects of the Crash and Depression, have the students evaluate the web site and compare it to what the class determined. How are they alike?, How are they different?
2. More evaluation will occur at the end of the unit.

## Lesson 4

### *Entertainment*

Time: 2-3 class periods (use your discretion) and time after school.

#### Needed Materials:

CD/cassette player, computer, internet, contact a big band conductor and a dance teacher.

#### Objectives:

1. The students will study the types of music that were prevalent in the Thirties. They will do this by researching the decade.
2. Students will choose 1 piece of music and obtain a copy of it. They can do this via the internet, local library or by looking up a composer of that era and finding works that way.
3. The students will attend a performance by a big band company.
4. Students will view a dance performance as an example of the style of the 30's.

#### Procedure:

1. Have the students research the styles of music of the 30's. They need to find an example to play for the class.
2. Take the class on a field trip to hear a Big Band. ( by contacting the local symphony you can set this up. If you miss their performance, ask them to send you a video of it. )
3. Contact a dance company and arrange for your class to view a variety of dances. The dance company will explain their costumes and where they came from.

#### Extension:

1. Have the students evaluate the dances, based on Christian standards. You will have to go over these after the dancing.
  - 1.) Does it glorify God?
  - 2.) What is the object of the dance?
  - 3.) What message is the body sending out in each dance?



## Lesson 5

### *Soil Erosion*

Time Needed: 2-3 class periods

#### Supplies:

Bulletin Board with a large US Map, variety of large soil samples, poster paper, roll of construction plastic, water table, small powerful fans (erosion fans).

#### Objectives:

1. Students will define the Dust Bowl.
2. The class will locate the affected area of the US and color it on a Bulletin Board.
3. The class will discover the causes of the Dust Bowl.
4. Students will brainstorm on how the farmers could have prevented the tragedy.
5. The students will demonstrate their knowledge of Excel by creating a chart.

#### Procedure:

1. Read about the Dust Bowl from the textbook. (See pages [\(723-725\).](#))
2. Have the students expound, using the poster paper, on the causes of the Dust Bowl and the ways they feel it could have been prevented.
3. Divide the class into 3 groups. Do an erosion study. The area will need to be draped with plastic to allow for easy clean-up.  
*An erosion study is an experiment on the erosion rates of different types of soils.*  
See the worksheet.

#### Assessment:

The students will be given points for completing and sharing their research worksheet information. The chart will be collect and points awarded for achieving the criteria.

# Erosion Study

Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Group Members: \_\_\_\_\_

You are assigned a type of soil. You will determine how quickly it erodes in water and in a wind. Your job is to cause erosion for 1 minute. Measure the weight of the soil that is displaced. Repeat using the other type of erosion. Record your findings below.

When you are finished cleaning up, and return to your seat. When all the groups are finished you will share your information and will complete your chart. Everyone will turn in a study sheet.

| Soil Type  | amount used in LBS. | weight of sand moved by water | weight of sand moved by wind in LBS. | Comments and Observations |
|------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sandy Loam |                     |                               |                                      |                           |
| Clay       |                     |                               |                                      |                           |
| humus      |                     |                               |                                      |                           |

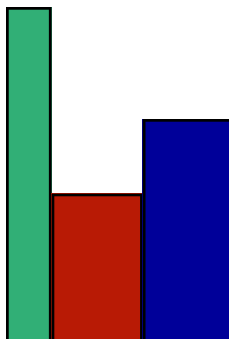
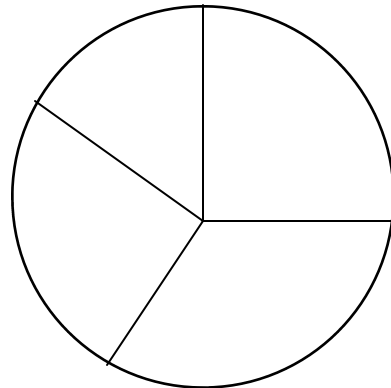
How could you change the soil to keep it from eroding?

\_\_\_\_\_

# Erosion Study

Page 2

Using excel, you need to create a chart or graph that would clearly show the results of the experiment. The chart is due at the end of the lesson. It needs to be printed in color and have labels.



pictures taken from [http://www.weru.ksu.edu/pics/dust\\_storms/](http://www.weru.ksu.edu/pics/dust_storms/)



## Lesson 6

### *Local Impact*

**Time Needed:** 2 class periods (plus time at home)

#### **Supplies needed:**

- Contact the local newspapers for ideas on how to receive copies of 1930's news on the Depression.
- Poster paper, research materials on the town, access to the state websites.

#### **Objectives:**

1. The students will describe a pre-Depression Detroit.
2. The students will identify the results of the Depression on the local area. (Detroit)
3. The students will evaluate the Post—Depression Detroit with the Pre-Depression. How are they different? What impact did the Depression have long term?

#### **Procedure:**

1. The students will recall details about Detroit, during the 1920's. This is a review of the previous chapter (the unit before) that was studied.
2. Have them create a poster comparing these 3 eras of Detroit. They can reference this site for information. [How the Great Depression Changed Detroit](#). The Science fair presentation boards work great for this project.

#### **Assessment:**

The Students' projects will be assessed by the following criteria:

1. Do they cover the 3 topics completely?
2. Creativity
3. Grammatical process
4. Is it well planned?



## Lesson 7

### *A Web Quest*

For this lesson I am referencing the following website:

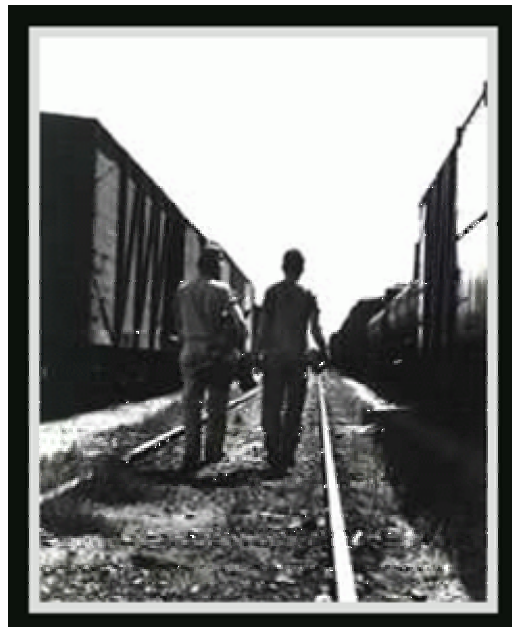
[The Great Depression Web Quest](#)

Time: 2 class periods and 1 extra day for presentation

This will take 2-3 days to fully complete.

Assessment:

The quest contains several worksheets and different ways to evaluate the student's progress.



## Lesson 8

### *Recovery*

Time: 1-2 Class periods

#### Objectives:

1. The students will be able to describe what the “New Deal” was.
2. The students will list the programs that were begun.
3. The students will distinguish between the programs that have ended and those that continue still today.

#### Procedure:

1. Write the words New Deal on the Board. Pass out markers to the students. Tell them they have 3 minutes in which to fill the board with everything they know about the New Deal. One student writes what they know and passes the marker to the next, they add, not repeat, to what is already there. This goes on until the time is up.
2. Read through what is on the board. Erase what is incorrect. Explain and affirm as you read aloud.
3. Give the students 20 minutes to research what is not on the board.  
*book, computer, encyclopedia, library books*
4. Pass out markers of a different color. Repeat step 1.
5. Discuss how the New Deal helped to bring the economy back to a livable condition.
6. Ask the students what else began to happen that would later help to stimulate the economy. Why would that even help out?

#### Assessment:

1. Have the students make up 5 test questions each. They could be any test variety. Collect them. Play Kickball.

Directions: The teacher is the all-time pitcher. The teacher will ask a question of the “kicker”, they must answer it correctly to get a “pitch”. A wrong answer is an “out”. They only get 1 try. All other rules of the real game apply.

# Parent Survey

**Dear Parents,**

**You may have heard about our current topic for History. We were studying The Depression and the Dust Bowl. The learning took place in the form of a thematic unit. Please fill out the survey below to inform me of the impact this style of learning had on your child.**



Check all that apply:

\_\_\_\_\_ I did not know that you did anything different.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child updated me everyday on what the class was doing.

\_\_\_\_\_ My child was interested in the unit and shared what they were doing in class.

Comments:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

Your child will receive 5 extra credit points for returning this survey on time.

# Student Evaluation

What was your favorite part of the Unit? \_\_\_\_\_

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What activities did you enjoy?

---

---

Name 1 thing that you learned, (you never knew it until now).

---

What would you like to see done differently next time?

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Which way do you prefer to learn? Circle one

- A. This way
- B. Strictly book learning with a few videos and worksheets.





# Evaluation:

Using your judgment, create a test to cover the basics of the unit. Be sure to include vocabulary, essays on the soil experiments, true and false and matching and multiple choice. A good essay question for higher level thinking is “Using your new knowledge of the 30’s, why was it called the Dirty Thirties”?

On the last page of the test, be sure to include an evaluation sheet for the students to fill out. This gives them the opportunity to help you make the unit valuable to them.

I would also send an evaluation home to the parents and ask them to comment on the unit. What did they hear about? What struck their child enough to talk about it at home? Give the students an extra few points for getting the parent review back in 1 day (signed).

# Unit Closure:

On the last day of the unit host a Depression party. No one at that time could afford to supply everything, so everyone brought something. The students will need to use era recipes. The students will also dress in period wear. They can make up something out of their parents or grandparents closets, or they can visit the thrift stores.

Supply period music to be played at the party and a few games that were common to that day. (Hopscotch is a good start) As a final evaluation, the students need to complete their KWL. They need to fill out the L (what they LEARNED).

# Resource Index

**Dear Mrs. Roosevelt**

<http://newdeal.feri.org/eleanor/index.htm>

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/97/depress/overview.html>

**FDR cartoons**

<http://www.nisk.k12.ny.us/fdr/FDRcartoons.html>

**Audio clips**

[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/toddbib:@field\(DOCID\(@range\(4088a1+5146b1\)\)\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/S?ammem/toddbib:@field(DOCID(@range(4088a1+5146b1))))

**Rubrics**

[http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/PALS/rubrics/3wrt\\_hol.htm](http://www.fcps.edu/DIS/OHSICS/forlang/PALS/rubrics/3wrt_hol.htm)

**Art Works**—prints from depression and black peoples

<http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/>

**Oral Histories**

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/lessons/oralhist/oraldown.html>

**WWII and Post War Atmosphere**

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart8.html>

**Photos of WWII, Depression and Dust Bowl**

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/fsowhome.html>

**Great Depression Man Web Site:**

<http://www.ls.net/~newriver/topic/qrtdep.htm>

**Climbing Out of the Depression**

[http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/Slouch\\_Climb16.html](http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/Slouch_Climb16.html)

**Detroit and the Depression**

<http://www.detnews.com/history/depress/depress.htm>

**Web Quest for the Great Depression**

<http://www.plainfield.k12.in.us/hschool/webq/webq1/webquest.htm>

[http://students.itec.sfsu.edu/itec815\\_s99/rfishtrom/index.html](http://students.itec.sfsu.edu/itec815_s99/rfishtrom/index.html)

