

**The Great Depression****Biography****Dorothy Day**

1897–1980



**WHY SHE MADE HISTORY** Dorothy Day co-founded the Catholic Worker movement and its newspaper of the same name. She was an important voice for pacifism and the poor.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Dorothy Day's interest in the poor changed the lives of many people.*

Dorothy Day was born in New York City in 1897. She received a scholarship to attend the University of Illinois in 1914. As she came to know the poverty stricken neighborhoods of South Side Chicago, she soon realized that she was interested in social change. Day left college after only two years and returned to New York. There she became involved in socialist issues and became a reporter for *The Call*, a socialist newspaper. Her sensitivity for the underprivileged became one of her life's passions.

Day became involved in demonstrating for social change. In 1917 she went to prison as one of 40 women protesters fighting for the right of women to vote. Day also believed in **pacifism** and wrote articles for *The Masses*, a magazine that opposed American involvement in World War I.

In March of 1926, Dorothy Day gave birth to her only child, a daughter. Day was deeply moved by the experience of childbirth and had her child baptized a Catholic. She stated, "I did not want my child to flounder as I had often floundered." Shortly after, Day converted to Catholicism herself and embraced her religion completely.

Day's newfound religion **propelled** her to continue the work she had begun for the poor and underprivileged. In 1933 Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin



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**VOCABULARY**

**pacifism** refusal, for reasons of conscience, to participate in or support war or any military action

**propelled** pushed, drove

**doctrine** policy, set of guidelines

founded the Catholic Worker movement. This movement combined the Catholic **doctrine** with a platform of social reform and war opposition. That year, they also began publishing the *Catholic Worker* journal. The newspaper encouraged readers to unite in a variety of activities to assist the poor. Within three years the publication had 150,000 readers.

Dorothy Day also organized hospitality houses for the underprivileged and poor. By 1936 there were 33 Catholic Worker houses across the country. The houses supplied food and shelter to about 5,000 people daily. Because of the Great Depression, many people across the country needed the hospitality houses to survive.

Day and the Catholic Worker organization opposed the United States' entry into World War II. She continued to demonstrate against inequality and violence through her last years.

Dorothy Day died in 1980 at the House of Hospitality she founded in New York City. She left a legacy of goodwill, peace, and charity.

### **WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

1. What major event changed the life of Dorothy Day?

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2. **Sequence** List several events of Dorothy Day's life in chronological order.

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### **ACTIVITY**

3. Imagine that you have been asked to interview Dorothy Day for your school newspaper. On a separate sheet of paper, write a few questions that you would like to ask her in your interview.