

The Great Depression

Section 3



MAIN IDEAS

1. Parts of the Great Plains came to be known as the Dust Bowl as severe drought destroyed farms there.
2. Families all over the United States faced hard times.
3. Depression-era culture helped lift people's spirits.
4. The New Deal had lasting effects on American society.

Key Terms and People

Dust Bowl region of the Great Plains affected by extreme drought and dust storms

Mary McLeod Bethune African American educator appointed as an adviser by President Roosevelt

John Steinbeck novelist who wrote about the hardships of the Great Depression

Woody Guthrie Depression-era folksinger from Oklahoma

Section Summary

THE DUST BOWL

American farmers were already having hard times before the Great Depression. Then the situation got worse. In the early 1930s, a severe drought hit the Great Plains. In the **Dust Bowl** region, topsoil blew away. Farmers could not grow crops; many could not to pay their mortgages and lost their farms.

Although several New Deal programs tried to help farmers, they came too late for most. About 2.5 million people left the Great Plains. Many of them drove to California to look for jobs. They often found that there were already too many workers.

Why did so many farmers move from the Great Plains to California during the Dust Bowl period?

HARD TIMES

During the Great Depression, many families had to split up as people looked for work in different places. Children dropped out of school to help support their families.

The Great Depression was especially hard on minority groups. Many faced discrimination and lost jobs to unemployed white workers. But some found jobs through relief programs. Several African

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American leaders, including **Mary McLeod Bethune**, advised the president. They became known as the Black Cabinet.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a strong advocate of equal rights. She resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution when they refused to rent a hall to African American singer Marian Anderson.

What was the Black Cabinet?

DEPRESSION-ERA CULTURE

In 1935 the Works Progress Administration put many artists, writers, and actors to work. Musicians went to rural areas to record traditional music. They preserved culture that might have been lost. Writers interviewed Americans from many different backgrounds. They kept a record of their lives and memories.

John Steinbeck was deeply affected by the hardships of the Depression. He wrote novels about depression life. Folksinger **Woody Guthrie** crossed the country, writing and singing songs of loss and struggle. At the same time, swing music became popular because it helped people forget about their troubles. Movies were yet another form of escape.

Underline the name of the New Deal program that helped artists, writers, and musicians

Why were lively music and movies so popular during the Great Depression?

EFFECTS OF THE NEW DEAL

Today, people still disagree about the effects of the New Deal. Critics argue that recovery did not occur until the U.S. entered World War II. Supporters say it gave Americans hope in a time of crisis. The New Deal did expand the role of the federal government. Some of its programs, such as Social Security and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, are still important today.

Circle the names of two New Deal programs that still exist today.

CHALLENGE ACTIVITY

Critical Thinking: Writing to Explore Imagine what it would be like to grow up during the Great Depression. Write a short poem about what your life might have been like.

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Dust Bowl	John Steinbeck	Mary McLeod Bethune
Woody Guthrie	Dorothea Lange	

DIRECTIONS Use the five words or phrases from the word list to write a summary of what you learned in this section.

DIRECTIONS Read each sentence and fill in the blank with the word in the word pair that best completes the sentence.

1. _____ was a famous American novelist who wrote about average Americans during the Great Depression. (John Steinbeck/Woody Guthrie)
2. _____ was an African American adviser to President Roosevelt. (Woody Guthrie/Mary McLeod Bethune)
3. Because of _____, soil conservation programs were established to help preserve farmland. (Mary McLeod Bethune/the Dust Bowl)
4. _____ was a folk singer who wrote songs about people's struggles during the Great Depression. (Woody Guthrie/Mary McLeod Bethune)