

LESSON | The Impact of the Great Depression

GUIDING QUESTIONS | What impact did the Great Depression have on individuals and families? How did Alvin C. York show commitment to his cause despite the impact of the Great Depression?

STANDARDS & SKILLS *This lesson is aligned with Tennessee State Standards and learning objectives; however, this lesson can be adapted to meet standards in other states.*

Social Studies

5.15 Identify the causes of the Great Depression, President Herbert Hoover's role, and its impact on the nation.

5.49 Describe Tennessee's contributions during World War I and World War II, including: the influence of Tennessean Alvin C. York.

Literacy

5.RI.CS.6 Analyze the similarities and differences in points of view of multiple accounts of the same event or topic.

5.RI.IKI.7 Locate an answer to a question or solve a problem, drawing on information from multiple print or digital sources.

5.RI.RRTC.10 Read and comprehend stories and informational texts at the high end of the grades 4-5 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Skills

SSP.01: Gather information from a variety of primary and secondary sources

SSP.02: Critically examine a primary or secondary source

SSP.04: Construct and communicate arguments supported by evidence.

LESSON OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will learn about how the Great Depression affected the lives of everyday people and families across the country. They will look at primary and secondary sources to understand the challenges people faced and how they tried to overcome them. Students will also discover the story of Alvin C. York, a hero from World War I who received the Medal of Honor. By exploring different sources, students will learn how Alvin C. York worked hard for what he believed in—both during the war and after it ended.

EXIT TICKET

After exploring primary and secondary sources about the Great Depression and learning about the life of Alvin C. York before and after this time, students will respond to the following question: **How did the Great Depression negatively impact people?** Students will use what they've learned and support their answers with evidence from the sources they studied.

CLEAR LEARNING TARGETS

- I can analyze the impacts of the Great Depression on individuals and families.
- I can analyze the life of Medal of Honor Recipient Alvin C. York and determine how he showed commitment to his causes despite the impact of the Great Depression.

OPTIONAL Homework Assignment

-  The 1929 Stock Market Crash - Black Thursday - Extra History
- [KWL Chart for Optional Homework Assignment](#)

In-class Activities

- [Primary Sources for The Great Depression](#)
- [Challenges of the Great Depression Handout](#)
- [Article: The Depression](#)
- [Article: The Human Toll of the Great Depression](#)
- [Challenges Faced during the Great Depression Handout](#)
- [Alvin York Graphic Novel](#)
- [Citation: Alvin C. York](#)
- [Information - Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute](#)
- [Alvin C. York ~ After the War](#)
- [The Commitment of Alvin C. York - During and After the War Handout](#)
- [Exit Ticket](#)
- [Rubric for Exit Ticket](#)

ACTIVITIES

- Optional Homework on Video Introduction on Black Thursday
- The Great Depression: Primary Sources
- The Impact of the Great Depression
- Medal of Honor Recipient - Alvin C. York: Commitment During and After the War
- Exit Ticket

OPTIONAL HOMEWORK | Video Introduction on Black Thursday**FOCUS: Video Analysis**

Use if an introduction or quick review of Black Thursday and the crash of the stock market is needed. The video  The 1929 Stock Market Crash - Black Thursday - Extra History will help students get background information on the stock market crash that occurred in 1929. This assignment is not required for students to be able to complete the rest of the activities.

INSTRUCTION

- Before you have students watch the video, have them complete the "K" and "W" portions of the [KWL chart](#).
- Students can fill in a couple of things that they already know about the 1929 stock market crash. They will also record at least 2 questions that they have.
- Depending on when students complete this optional homework assignment, the activity can be done individually, with a partner, or in a small group.
- Once students have watched the video, they will record at least two facts that they learned about the stock market crash of 1929 (Black Thursday).

NOTES

- Turning on Closed Captioning while watching the video will help students hear and read the words.
- Model how to pause and record information in the "learned" section of their handout.

SUGGESTIONS

- If students don't have access to devices at home or you do not assign homework, you can have this be the first part of your lesson to launch students into the activity and activate some background knowledge.

HANDOUT | KWL Chart for Optional Homework Assignment

Name: _____

Directions:

- 1. Fill out the first column with at least 2 things you **KNOW** about the Stock Market Crash 1929.
- 2. Fill out the second column with at least 2 things that you **WONDER** about the Stock Market Crash of 1929.
- 3. Watch the video: [▶ The 1929 Stock Market Crash - Black Thursday - Extra History](#)
- 4. Fill out the third column with at least 2 things that you **LEARNED** about the Stock Market Crash of 1929.

What you KNOW	What you WONDER	What you LEARNED
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.

OPTIONAL CLASS ACTIVITY | Homework Debrief**FOCUS: Debrief on Video Introduction on the Stock Market Crash of 1929**

You can use this time to debrief the video with students and discuss what they learned after watching the video.

INSTRUCTION

- Have students form groups of 3 or 4. Then, have them go around the circle and share one thing they learned after watching the video.
- Set a timer for 2-3 minutes to have students share out.
- Once everyone has shared, the teacher can select and sequence students to share out.

NOTES

- As the students share, the teacher can walk around and take anecdotal notes on things they notice. The teacher can use this information to write down who they would like to share with and be intentional.
- While the students are sharing, the teacher can take notes on a chart to capture all the students' responses.

SUGGESTIONS

- Intentionally pair students in groups.
- Use a timer to keep students on track.

CLASS ACTIVITY 1 | The Great Depression: Primary Sources

FOCUS: Analyzing Primary Sources

Students will work in groups of three or four to analyze images and documents, focusing on the Great Depression and its impact on the American people. As students examine these sources, they will begin to consider the impact of the Great Depression.

INSTRUCTION

- Students will be placed into groups of three or four. Each group will be given a packet of [five sources](#) showing life during the Great Depression. Individual students will be given a handout to capture their thinking.
- Students will work in their groups to analyze the sources and identify the challenges they believe people faced during the Great Depression.
- Students will complete the "[Challenges of the Great Depression](#)" handout as they discuss with their group. Each student should have information written on the handout as they are having a discussion with the group.
- Have students read the titles and captions of the sources to get a better understanding of what is being shown in the picture.
- Call on groups or individuals to share their thoughts.

NOTES

- Ensure each group includes a student who feels confident and comfortable reading titles and source descriptions aloud to support group understanding.
- Consider putting a handout under the document camera and capturing students' ideas during the share-out portion.

SUGGESTIONS

- For students who express their ideas more easily through visuals, invite them to draw pictures on their handouts representing the challenges people face.

ACTIVITY SOURCES PREVIEW

Source #1
A Breadline During The Great Depression

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Depression: Breadlines. Long lines of people waiting for food in New York City in the winter of 1932. Government Collection. ©2009 National Archives and Records Administration. <https://www.archives.gov/depression>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.

Source #2
Children of children posing under sign that reads "U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community"

History. Robert. Group of children posing under sign that reads "U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community". In the California, San Francisco: Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/rr/hist/histimg.html>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.

Source #3
"Dust Bowl" in Sacramento, California

Large. California. Sacramento. California. Dust Bowl. 1930s. The photograph shows a large crowd of people gathered in a dusty, open field, likely during the Dust Bowl in Sacramento, California. <https://www.dustbowl.org/>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.

Source #4
Depression in Front of the Closed American Union Bank in New York City

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Depression: Unemployment. A large crowd of people gathered in front of the American Union Bank in New York City during the Great Depression. <https://www.archives.gov/depression>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.

Source #5
Workers Registering for Jobs and Benefits Claims

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Depression: Unemployment. Workers registering for jobs and benefits claims in New York City during the Great Depression. <https://www.archives.gov/depression>. Accessed Aug 12, 2024.

CHALLENGE 1: Challenges of the Great Depression

Name: _____

Directions: Read the source and answer the questions. Write your answers in the spaces provided. Then, write your own challenge in the space provided.

Source #1

What do you SEE in the picture?

What do you THINK is going on in the picture?

What do you FEEL about the picture?

What CHALLENGE does this picture show people facing?

Source #2

What do you SEE in the picture?

What do you THINK is going on in the picture?

What do you FEEL about the picture?

What CHALLENGE does this picture show people facing?

Source #3

What do you SEE in the picture?

What do you THINK is going on in the picture?

What do you FEEL about the picture?

What CHALLENGE does this picture show people facing?

Source #4

What do you SEE in the picture?

What do you THINK is going on in the picture?

What do you FEEL about the picture?

What CHALLENGE does this picture show people facing?

Source #5

What do you SEE in the picture?

What do you THINK is going on in the picture?

What do you FEEL about the picture?

What CHALLENGE does this picture show people facing?

HANDOUT | Primary Sources for Class Activity #1

Source #1

A Breadline During The Great Depression



U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. *Depression: Breadlines: Long Line of People Waiting to Be Fed: New York City: In the Absence of Substantial Government Relief Programs during 1932, Free Food Was Distributed with Private Funds in Some Urban Centers to Large Numbers of the Unemployed*. National Archives Identifier 196506. National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/196506>. Accessed July 27, 2026.

Source #2

Group of children posing under sign that reads "U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community."



Hemmig, Robert. *Group of Children Posing under Sign That Reads "U.S. Department of Agriculture Farm Security Administration Farm Workers Community."* El Rio, California, 1941. Photograph. Library of Congress.

<https://www.loc.gov/item/toddbib000400/>. Accessed July 27, 2026.

Source #3

"Squatter Camp" in Sacramento, California



Lange, Dorothea. *Sacramento, California. Close-up View of Squatter Camp. This Family Lives in the Car without a Tent.* Sacramento, CA, March 15, 1940. Photograph. National Archives Identifier 521748. National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/521748>. Accessed July 27, 2026.

Source #4

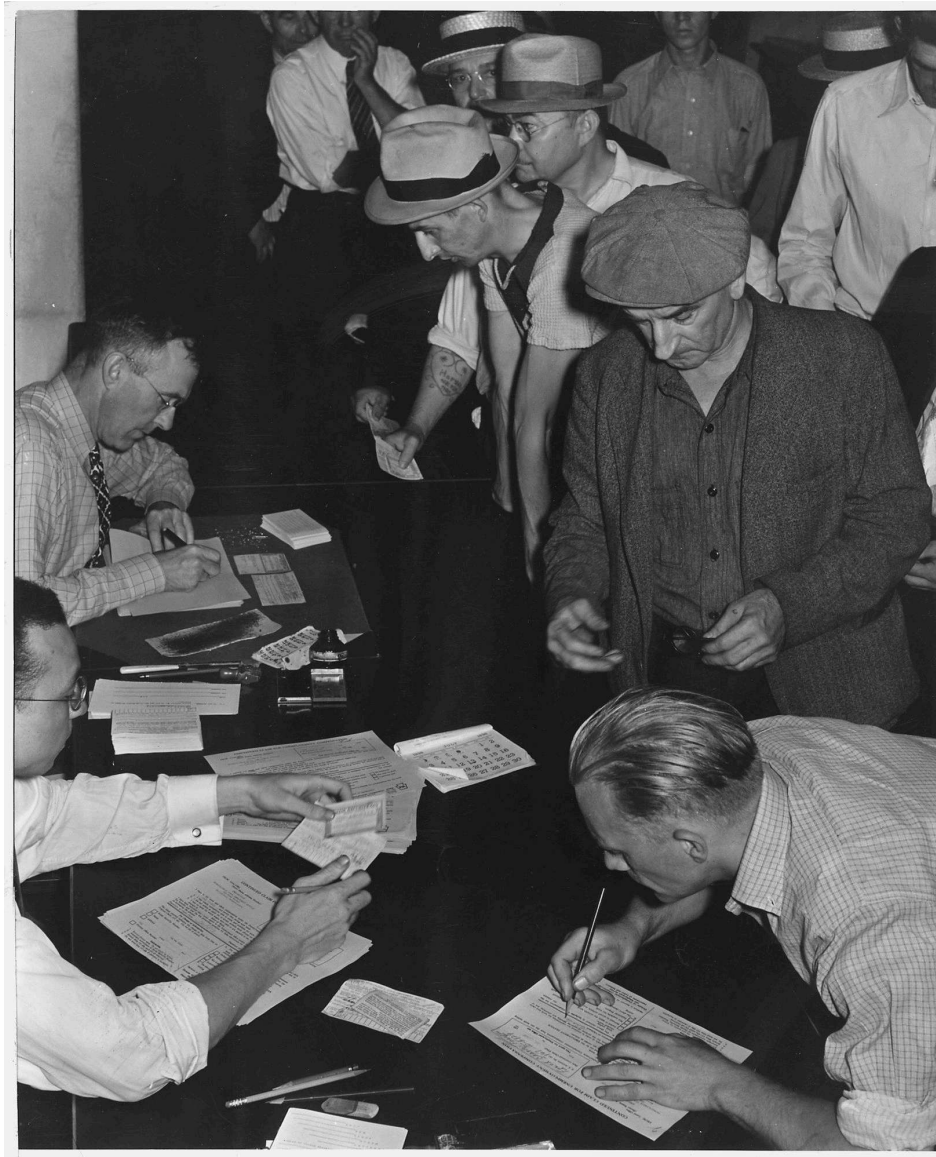
Depositors in Front of the Closed American Union Bank in New York City



U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. *Photograph of Depositors in Front of the Closed American Union Bank in New York City*. National Archives Identifier 12573155. Produced April 26, 1932. National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/12573155>. Accessed July 27, 2026.

Source #5

Workers Registering for Jobs and Benefit Claims



Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum. *Social Security "Unemployed Insured Workers Registering for Jobs and Filing Benefit Claims at a State Employment Office."* National Archives Identifier 195881. National Archives Catalog. <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/195881>. Accessed July 27, 2026.

HANDOUT | Challenges of the Great Depression

Name: _____

Directions:

Use the source packet to take notes on things you see, think, and wonder about the photograph. Then, list any challenges that the person or people might be facing in the picture.

Source #1



What do you **SEE** in the picture?

What do you **THINK** is going on in the picture?

What do you **WONDER** about the picture?

What **CHALLENGES** does this picture show people facing?

Source #2



What do you **SEE** in the picture?

What do you **THINK** is going on in the picture?

What do you **WONDER** about the picture?

What **CHALLENGES** does this picture show people facing?

Source #3



What do you **SEE** in the picture?

What do you **THINK** is going on in the picture?

What do you **WONDER** about the picture?

What **CHALLENGES** does this picture show people facing?

Source #4



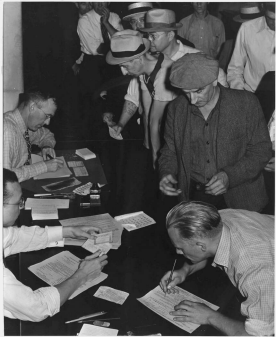
What do you **SEE** in the picture?

What do you **THINK** is going on in the picture?

What do you **WONDER** about the picture?

What **CHALLENGES** does this picture show people facing?

Source #5



What do you **SEE** in the picture?

What do you **THINK** is going on in the picture?

What do you **WONDER** about the picture?

What **CHALLENGES** does this picture show people facing?

2023 Teacher Feltson Lesson

HANDOUT A: The Depression

Name _____

Directions:
Read and annotate the article about challenges the average family faced during the Great Depression.

Annotate the article by:

- _____ = something I don't understand
- _____ = challenge someone faced

The Depression

Childhood Fears

Many families enjoyed economic prosperity during the optimistic 1920s. With rising incomes they became consumers, able to buy such modern conveniences as electric refrigerators and other appliances. They were more mobile, changing more family cars on better roads. The widespread ownership of radios connected people with a wider world, decreasing the isolation of rural communities. The 1920s were a time of economic growth, modern outlook, particularly for women as they dropped shorter skirts and bobbed their hair.

Prosperity came to a screeching halt for many Americans on "Black Tuesday," October 29, 1929 – a day of economic panic that marked the beginning of the Great Depression.

Facing the drastic deprivation Americans had never known, families had to learn to get by. They did not want luxuries and, in some cases, necessities. They used and re-used clothing and other items until they were worn out and they struggled to make ends meet. They used ingenuity and discovered inner resources that helped them to survive the harsh years of the 1930s.

Farm families had gotten an early taste of economic hardship during the 1920s as prices for farm products and the value of farmland, on the decline since World War I, continued to fall. With the Great Depression, many families lost their farms and migrated to urban areas in search of work and aid from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal government programs.

With record unemployment, children accompanied their fathers in an effort to make a living. Children of the 1930s were subject to child labor laws that limited their hours of work, which limited their earnings to less than, and provided guidelines for employment of minors. Many children were self-employed, collecting rags or bits and doing odd jobs for neighbors.

2023 Teacher Feltson Lesson

HANDOUT B: The Human Toll of the Great Depression

Name _____

Directions:
Read and annotate the article about challenges that the average family dealt with during the Great Depression.

Annotate the article by:

- _____ = something I don't understand
- _____ = challenge someone faced

The Human Toll of the Great Depression

Many years later, memories of the Great Depression remained in the minds of those who lived through it. People remembered breadlines, soup kitchens, frozen shelves and for a poor shaver known as "Hoovermania." They thought of the poor men and women sitting apologetic on street corners and thousands of families and their packed into Model A four-wheel-drive housing in California.

The collapse was overwhelming. Unemployment increased from about three million in 1929 to four million in 1933. There unemployment increased from eight million in 1933 to twelve and a half million in 1939. In 1932, 26 percent of families in the United States did not have a single employed family member. Even those families that did have jobs suffered large pay cuts and lost wages in 1932. Nine out of ten companies cut wages, and in 1933, 73 percent of all workers were on part-time schedules. They worked on average only 40 percent of the normal work week.

The economic collapse was terrifying because of how many people it impacted across the United States. By 1933 the average family income had lowered 40 percent, from \$2,300 in 1929 to just \$1,300 four years later in the Henryvilles could feed, three or four families could cover together. One-room shacks and lived on wild weeds, in Arkansas, families were being forced to live in Oakland, California, whose families lived in sewer pipes.

Homelessness shot up as many families were evicted from their homes for not paying rent. The Southern Pacific Railroad proudly said it threw 183,000 vagrants off its trains in 1933. Free public soupshouses and missions in Los Angeles provided beds for 200,000 of the homeless.

To save money, families ignored medical and dental care. Many families tried to survive by planting gardens, canning food, buying old furniture and using cardboard and cotton for shoe soles. Even though there was a steep decline in food prices, many families went without milk or meat. In New York City, milk consumption declined by a million gallons a day.

President Herbert Hoover declared, "Nobody is a slackay during the holidays are better left than poor men eat." But in New York City in 1933, there were twenty known cases of starvation.

2023 Teacher Feltson Lesson

HANDOUT C: Challenges Facing During the Great Depression

Name _____

Directions:
Fill out the challenges that were faced by people during the Great Depression. Identify which article you got your information from.

What challenges did people face?	Who did it impact?	What source did you get the evidence from?

HANDOUT | Article: The Depression

Name: _____

Directions:

Read and annotate the article about challenges the average family faced during the Great Depression.

Annotate Guide:

- ◆ ★ = something important
- ◆ ? = something I don't understand
- ◆ _____ = challenge someone faced

The Depression

Childhood Years

Many families enjoyed economic prosperity during the optimistic 1920s. With rising incomes they became consumers, able to buy such modern conveniences as electric refrigerators and other appliances. They were more mobile, driving more family cars on better roads. The widespread ownership of radios connected people with a wider world, decreasing the isolation of rural families. Fashion reflected a more independent, modern outlook, particularly for women as they donned shorter skirts and bobbed their hair.

Prosperity came to a screeching halt for many Americans on "Black Tuesday," October 29, 1929 – the day of economic panic that marked the beginning of the Great Depression.

Facing the greatest deprivation Americans had ever known, families had to learn to get by. They did without luxuries and, in some cases, necessities. They used and re-used clothing and other items until they were worn out. As they struggled to make ends meet, they used ingenuity and discovered inner resources that helped them to survive the harsh years of the 1930s.

Farm families had gotten an early taste of economic hardship during the 1920s as prices for farm products and the value of farmland, on the decline since World War I, continued to fall. With the Great Depression, many families lost their farms and migrated to urban areas in search of work and aid from President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal government programs.

With record unemployment, children competed for jobs with their elders in an effort to make a contribution to their families. Children of the 1930s were subject to child labor reform measures of the 1920s, which limited their workday to 8 hours, and provided guidelines for employment of minors. Many children were self-employed, collecting junk to sell or doing odd jobs for neighbors.

Not All Doom and Gloom

As parents were using their ingenuity to guide their families safely through the dark days of the Great Depression, their children were creating their own fun.

Those that could afford the dime admission flocked to movie theatres to be swept away by such adventures as King Kong, The Moon Riders, and The Wizard of Oz. Many children huddled around the family's radio to listen to the adventures of Tom Mix, Buck Rogers, and Jack Armstrong, the All-American Boy.

Children found a similar escape in reading, enjoying books and the "funnies" in the newspaper. Popular board games, such as Lexico (1931 - later Scrabble®), and Parker Brothers' newly invented Monopoly® game (1935), offered other stay-at-home activities for children. Both boys and girls participated in outdoor games and played sandlot baseball and other sports, often substituting makeshift equipment, like sticks and stones, for real bats and balls and, like Robert D. Hill and Dorothy Snell Curtis, making the most of Minnesota winters.

For the poor, homemade toys, such as cars, dolls and puppets, were cherished gifts, as were recycled toys – used toys that had been repaired by volunteers from charitable organizations.

Getting By

The children of the Great Depression learned of necessity to be resourceful, wearing hand-me-down clothing, going without luxuries of any kind and, at times, going without meals.

Many young men joined the Government's Civilian Conservation Corps, which promised temporary employment and steady wages, and even young children found work in an attempt to make a financial contribution to their families -- in some cases giving up educational opportunities to do so. Very few families were unaffected by the Great Depression.

[Quoted, Abridged, and Reorganized for 5th Grade students by the Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center]

"Minnesota's Greatest Generation." *Minnesota Historical Society*. Archived at <https://mgg-mnhs-archive-288bd72f38aeeb5c5ccf5d6a66dab0022e28c474e61afb.gitlab.io/dev-mnhsorg.pantheonsite.io/mgg/depression/childhood/learn-more.html>. Accessed July 28, 2026.

HANDOUT | Article: The Human Toll of the Great Depression

Name: _____

Directions:

Read and annotate the article about challenges that the average family dealt with during the Great Depression.

Annotate Guide:

- ★ = something important
- ? = something I don't understand
- _____ = challenge someone faced

The Human Toll of the Great Depression

Many years later, memories of the Great Depression remained in the minds of those who lived through it. People remembered breadlines, soup kitchens, tin-can shanties and tar paper shacks known as "Hoovervilles." They thought of the poor men and women selling apples on street corners and thousands of Arkies and Okies packed into Model A Ford automobiles heading to California.

The collapse was overwhelming. Unemployment increased from less than three million in 1929 to four million in 1930. Then unemployment increased from eight million in 1931 to twelve and a half million in 1932. In 1932, 25 percent of families in the United States did not have a single employed family member. Even those fortunate enough to have jobs suffered large pay cuts and fewer hours to work. Nine out of ten companies cut wages, and in 1932, 75 percent of all workers were on part-time schedules. They worked on average only 60 percent of the normal work week.

The economic collapse was terrifying because of how many people it impacted across the United States. By 1933 the average family income had lowered 40 percent, from \$2,300 in 1929 to just \$1,500 four years later. In the Pennsylvania coal fields, three or four families crowded together in one-room shacks and lived on wild weeds. In Arkansas, families were found living in caves. In Oakland, California, whole families lived in sewer pipes.

Homelessness shot up as many families were evicted from their homes for not paying rent. The Southern Pacific Railroad proudly said that it threw 683,000 vagrants off its trains in 1931. Free public flophouses and missions in Los Angeles provided beds for 200,000 of the uprooted.

To save money, families ignored medical and dental care. Many families tried to survive by planting gardens, canning food, buying old bread, and using cardboard and cotton for shoe soles. Even though there was a steep decline in food prices, many families went without milk or meat. In New York City, milk consumption declined by a million gallons a day.

President Herbert Hoover declared, "Nobody is actually starving. The hoboes are better fed than they have ever been." But in New York City in 1931, there were twenty known cases of starvation

and in 1934, there were 110 deaths caused by hunger. There were so many accounts of people starving in New York that the West African nation of Cameroon sent \$3.77 to help.

The Depression had a big impact on families. It forced couples to delay marriage and pushed the number of births below the number of deaths for the first time in American history. The divorce rate fell because many couples could not afford separate households or to pay legal fees. But the number of parents deserting their families soared. By 1940, 1.5 million married women were living away from their husbands. More than 200,000 homeless children wandered the country as a result of the breakup of their families.

The Depression was very hard on jobless men who were expected to be the bread-winners of the family. With no money, many men lost their role as their family's decision makers. Large numbers of men lost self-respect, became inactive, and stopped looking for work, while others turned to alcohol or hurt themselves or their families.

In contrast to men, many women saw their status rise during the Depression. To add to the family income, married women entered the work force in large numbers. Although most women worked in occupations thought to be easy, the fact that they were employed and bringing home paychecks elevated their position within the family and gave them a say in family decisions.

Despite the hardships it caused, the Great Depression brought some families closer together. As one observer said, "Many a family has lost its automobile and found its soul." Families had to create strategies for getting through hard times because their survival depended on it. They pooled their incomes, moved in with relatives in order to cut costs, and made do without some necessities and comforts. Many families turned to their religion for support and were sustained by the hope things would turn out well in the end. Others put their faith in themselves and in their determined efforts to survive. This impressed observers like Woody Guthrie, a famous American folk singer-songwriter, who was inspired by these experiences to create music. But many Americans no longer believed the problems could be solved by people acting alone or through local assistance groups. More and more, they looked to the United States government for help.

Groups Affected the Most

Economic hardship and loss affected all sections of the country. One-third of the Harvard class of 1911 confessed that they were experiencing difficulties, receiving government assistance, or were dependent on relatives. Doctors and lawyers saw their incomes fall 40 percent. But no groups suffered more from the depression than African Americans and Mexican Americans.

A year after the stock market crash, 70 percent of Charleston, South Carolina's black population was unemployed and 75 percent of Memphis, Tennessee's. In Macon County, Alabama, home of Booker T. Washington's famous Tuskegee Institute, most black families lived in homes without wooden floors or windows or sewage disposal. They survived on salt pork, hominy grits, corn bread, and molasses. Their income averaged less than a dollar a day.

Conditions were also troubling in the North. In Chicago, 70 percent of all black families earned less than \$1,000 a year, far below the poverty line. In Chicago and other large northern cities, most African Americans lived in "kitchenettes." Before the Depression, six-room apartments were rented for \$50 a month. During the Depression, these apartments were divided into six kitchenettes and each kitchenette was rented for \$32 dollars a month. This gave landlords an extra \$142 a month. Buildings that previously held sixty families now held 300.

The Depression hit Mexican American families especially hard. Groups of workers called "unions" were worried about rising unemployment and disliked competition from Mexican Americans for jobs. These unions put pressure on federal, state, and local authorities. These authorities then sent more than 400,000 people of Mexican descent to Mexico. This was done to prevent Mexican Americans from applying for government financial assistance. Many of these Mexican Americans were US citizens and their removal from the United States violated their civil liberties.

Private and Public Charity

The economic crisis of the 1930s overwhelmed private charities and local governments. In south Texas, the Salvation Army provided a penny per person each day. In Philadelphia, private and public charities distributed \$1 million a month in financial assistance. But this provided families with only \$1.50 a week for groceries. In 1932, total public and private financial aid amounted to \$317 million or \$26 for each of the United State's 12.5 million jobless.

[Adapted for 5th Grade students by the Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center]

Mintz, Steven. "The Human Toll of the Great Depression." *Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History*.

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/human-toll-great-depression>. Accessed July 30, 2026.

HANDOUT | Challenges Faced During the Great Depression

Name: _____

Directions:
Fill out the challenges that were faced by people during the Great Depression. Identify which article you got your evidence from.

What challenge did people face?	Who did it impact?	What source did you get the evidence from?

CLASS ACTIVITY 3 | Medal of Honor Recipient - Alvin C. York: Commitment During and After the War

FOCUS: Analyzing the Commitment of Alvin C. York During and After the Great Depression

Students will explore the life of Medal of Honor Recipient Alvin C. York and how he showed commitment to different causes during and after his service. Students will analyze the impact of the Great Depression on his causes and how he continued to show his commitment despite challenges.

INSTRUCTION

- Introduce the Medal of Honor:
 - ◆ The highest military award for valor in the United States.
 - ◆ The Medal of Honor has six character traits associated with it: Patriotism, Citizenship, Courage, Integrity, Sacrifice, and Commitment.
- Inform students that for today's activity, they will be focusing on the character trait of commitment.
 - ◆ Define commitment: devoting time, energy or resources to causes in which we believe
- If time allows, you can show the video from the Congressional Medal of Honor Society:
 - ▶ [In Their Own Words: An Introduction to the Medal of Honor and Its Recipients](#)
- Students will start by reading the [graphic novel](#) and [Medal of Honor citation](#) about Alvin C. York to learn about his actions during World War I.
- Students will complete the "During the War" portion of "[The Commitment of Alvin C. York ~ During and After the War](#)" handout to determine how Alvin C. York was committed to his cause in World War I.
- Students will then read the sources "[Information - Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute](#)" and "[Alvin C. York ~ After the War](#)"
- Students will use sources to analyze Alvin C. York's causes after World War I. Students will then complete the "After the War" portion of "[The Commitment of Alvin C. York ~ During and After the War](#)" handout to determine how Alvin C. York was committed to his causes after World War 1 and during the Great Depression.
- Students will compare Alvin C. York's commitment during and after the war. They will also look at the impact the Great Depression had on his efforts.

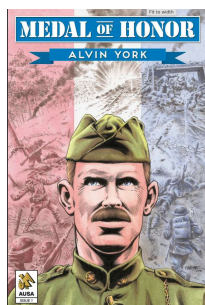
NOTES

- Be intentional when creating peer partnerships, pairing students in ways that foster shared strengths and mutual growth!

SUGGESTIONS

- For students who express their ideas more easily through visuals, invite them to draw pictures on their handouts representing the challenges people face.
- For students writing at a higher level, encourage the use of complete sentences. For those at a lower level, starting with words or short phrases can help build confidence and skills.

ACTIVITY SOURCES PREVIEW



2020 Teacher Fellow Lesson Plans

HANDOUT | Alvin Cullum York - Medal of Honor Citation

Name _____

Address _____

Read the citation that explains Alvin C. York's contributions and the reasoning for his Medal of Honor.

Alvin Cullum York Medal of Honor Citation

CITATION



After his platoon had suffered heavy casualties and three other noncommissioned officers had become casualties, Capt York assumed command of the survivors leading seven men, he charged with great daring a machine-gun nest which was pouring deadly and incessant fire upon their position. In his heroism the machine-gun nest was taken, together with four officers and still more and several guns.

DETAILS

RANK: Corporal (Highest Rank: Sergeant)

CONFLICT/ERA: World War I

UNIT/COMMAND: Company I, 2nd Battalion, 38th Infantry 8th Division

MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH: US Army

MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION DATE: October 8, 1918

MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION PLACE: Near Oriskany, France

[illegible][illegible]

Jenny Teicher, Faculty Liaison

HANDOUT (The Commitment of Aish C. York - During and After the War)

Directions:
 Read the handout the graphic novel about Aish C. York. Then read the citation that was given as part of the military award. Using these resources, read the "What the World" section of the graphic organizer.

During the war

What are some ways that Aish C. York showed commitment during World War I? Use details from the graphic. What was Aish C. York's and the citation information regarding the Medal of Honor?

Cause	Consequence

What is the second and final handout about Aish C. York's commitment after the war? Using these resources, read, and then write the citation information of the graphic organizer.

After the War

What were some reasons that Aish C. York focused on after World War I? How did she show commitment to those around her? Write the citation information of the graphic organizer.

Cause	Consequence

HANDOUT | Alvin Cullum York - Medal of Honor Citation

Name: _____

Directions:

Read the citation that explains Alvin C. York's contributions and the reasoning for his Medal of Honor.

Alvin Cullum York Medal of Honor Citation**CITATION**

After his platoon had suffered heavy casualties and three other noncommissioned officers had become casualties, Cpl York assumed command. Fearlessly leading seven men, he charged with great daring a machine-gun nest which was pouring deadly and incessant fire upon his platoon. In his heroic feat the machine-gun nest was taken, together with four officers and 128 men and several guns.

DETAILS**RANK:** Corporal (Highest Rank: Sergeant)**CONFLICT/ERA:** World War I**UNIT/COMMAND:** Company G, 2D Battalion, 328th Infantry 82D Division**MILITARY SERVICE BRANCH:** U.S. Army**MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION DATE:** October 8, 1918**MEDAL OF HONOR ACTION PLACE:** Near Chatel-Chehery, France

HANDOUT | Information - Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute

Name: _____

"About Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute"

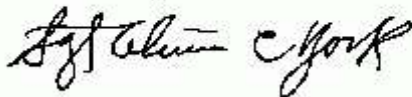
Alvin C. York established the school that carries his name during the 1920s in the county seat of his home county of Fentress. His goal was to give rural children the chance to obtain a high school education. Beginning in 1919 he toured the United States raising funds for the school, using his status as a war hero to get public attention and raising a total of \$10,000. He also solicited and received funds from the state legislature, which contributed \$50,000, and from Fentress County, which pledged \$50,000. Classes began in 1929 and the school operated privately until 1937, when financial pressures related to the Great Depression led York to transfer the school to the state of Tennessee, which continues to operate it as a public school as a living memorial to York.

Alvin C. York Institute. "About Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute." *About Us*.

https://www.yaidragons.com/apps/pages/index.jsp?uREC_ID=1913249&type=d&pREC_ID=2055908. Accessed July 30, 2026.

"Alvin C. York Institute"

*"To the end that my people
of Pall Mall and of Fentress County
and the boys and girls of this mountainous section
may enjoy the liberating influences and
educational advantages which were denied me,
I dedicate this institution and my life to its
perpetuation, and seek from the American people
support in keeping with the great need."*

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Alvin C. York". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Quote from Alvin C. York about Alvin C. York Agricultural Institute

TNGenWeb. "Alvin C. York Institute." *Overton-Fentress-Pickett Counties TNGenWeb Project*, January 21, 2022.

<https://tngenweb.org/ofp/alvin-c-york-institute/>. Accessed July 30, 2026.

HANDOUT | Alvin C. York - After the War

Name: _____

Alvin York is remembered by Tennesseans and Americans alike. Many people first think of the movie made about him called "Sergeant York," but his legacy is more than a movie. York said he wanted to be remembered for his commitment to education and for helping others. Even though he was famous for his actions in WWI, Alvin York remained a humble man who used his fame for good.

The accomplishment York was most proud of was the Alvin C. York Institute that he founded in Fentress County, Tennessee. He wanted kids who grew up in rural places like him to have an education, so he started a school for them. The York Institute continued to educate students through the Great Depression and beyond.

Alvin York is celebrated across Tennessee and the United States in many different ways: there is a road, a bridge, an elementary school, and several other buildings named in his honor in Tennessee. There is a statue of York at the state capitol in Nashville, a type of military tank is named for him, and York is the subject of all sorts of art, T-shirts, cartoons, stories, and television shows. He even appears on a U.S. Postal Stamp!

York stands as a symbol for many people. He represents the traditional values of frontier heroes like Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett, and Abraham Lincoln. He also represents progress and working toward a better future through education, technology, and generosity. Americans appreciate his values of faith, home, family, and country, but they also like how he stood by those values even after he became famous.

News Reporter: "How do you want to be remembered?"

Alvin York: "For improving education in Tennessee."

[Adapted for 5th Grade students by the Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center]

Birdwell, Michael. "Legacy." *Sergeant York Patriotic Foundation*. <https://sgtyork.org/legacy>. Accessed August 4, 2026.

HANDOUT | The Commitment of Alvin C. York ~ During and After the War

Name: _____

Directions:

Part A: Read the graphic novel about Alvin C. York. Then read his citation that was given as part of his military service. Using these 2 sources, fill out the "During the War" section of the graphic organizer.

During the War	
What are some ways that Alvin C. York showed commitment during World War I? Use details from the graphic novel "Alvin C. York" and the citation information regarding his Medal of Honor.	
<u>Cause</u>	<u>Commitment</u>

Part B: Read the additional handouts about Alvin C. York's commitment after the war. Using these sources, fill out the "After the War" section of the graphic organizer.

After the War	
What were some causes that Alvin C. York focused on after World War I? How did he show commitment to these causes despite the impacts of the Great Depression?	
<u>Cause</u>	<u>Commitment</u>

Name: _____

Part C: Then use your sources to compare his commitments. Finally, using all the sources, complete the section on the impact of the Great Depression.

Comparison
What similarities do you see between his commitment during and after World War I?
Impact of the Great Depression
How do you think the Great Depression impacted his causes?

CLASS ACTIVITY 4 | Exit Ticket

FOCUS: Constructing an Argument

Students can use any of their handouts and sources to answer the guiding question: What impact did the Great Depression have on individuals and families?

INSTRUCTION

- Have students use all their handouts and sources for their exit ticket.
- Students will complete an evidence-based claim on the [Exit Ticket](#) handout.

NOTES

- For this activity, some students may need scaffolding when writing their answers. Consider using a word bank or sentence stems for students who may benefit from this approach.
 - ◆ "The main idea is....."
 - ◆ "According to the text....."
 - ◆ "This shows that....."
 - ◆ "Another example is....."
 - ◆ In conclusion"
- As students work, circulate around the room and provide feedback to them as they answer.
- Remind students that they must cite evidence in their answers.
- Use the included [rubric](#) to grade.

SUGGESTIONS

- If students need more time, they can complete it at home for homework.
- As an extension, students can choose to write a multi-paragraph response instead of a one-paragraph response.

ACTIVITY SOURCES PREVIEW

HANDOUT | Exit Ticket

2025 Teacher Fellow Lesson

Name: _____

Directions:
Write an evidence-based claim to answer the question: **What impact did the Great Depression have on individuals and families?** Your answer needs to be in complete sentences, and you should have evidence from any handouts or sources covered in this lesson. Your answer should be one paragraph in length.

.....

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HANDOUT | Rubric for Exit Ticket

2025 Teacher Fellow Lesson

Criteria	4 - Excellent	3 - Good	2 - Needs Work	1 - Beginning
Main Idea / Topic Sentence	Clearly states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph.	States a main idea, but it could be clearer.	Attempts to give a main idea, but it's confusing or off-topic.	Does not have a clear main idea.
Use of Sources	Uses information from 2 or more different sources, explanations are perfect.	Uses information from at least 2 sources, but explanations are partial.	Uses 1 source or mentions more than one without clear explanation.	Does not use information from any source.
Evidence and Examples	Includes strong evidence or examples that clearly support the main idea.	Includes some evidence or examples, but they could be stronger or clearer.	Includes little evidence, and it doesn't clearly support the idea.	Does not include any clear evidence or examples.
Explanation	Clearly explains how the evidence supports the main idea.	Attempts to explain how the evidence connects to the idea.	Explanation is weak or hard to understand.	Does not explain the evidence at all.
Paragraph Structure	Well-organized with a clear beginning, middle, and end.	Mostly organized and in the right order.	Somewhat mixed up or hard to follow.	Confusing or very disorganized.
Writing Mechanics	Sentences are complete with correct spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.	Mostly correct sentences with a few small errors.	Some mistakes that make it a little hard to read.	Many mistakes that make it hard to understand.
Effort and Understanding	Shows understanding of the topic and significant effort in writing.	Shows good understanding and effort.	Shows limited understanding and effort.	Shows little understanding and minimal effort.

HANDOUT | Exit Ticket

Name: _____

Directions:

Write an evidence-based claim to answer the question: **What impact did the Great Depression have on individuals and families?** Your answer needs to be in complete sentences, and you should have evidence from any handouts or sources covered in this lesson. Your answer should be one paragraph in length.

[illegible]

HANDOUT | Rubric for Exit Ticket

Name: _____

Criteria	4 - Excellent	3 - Good	2 - Needs Work	1 - Beginning
Main Idea / Topic Sentence	Clearly states the main idea at the beginning of the paragraph.	States a main idea, but it could be clearer.	Attempts to give a main idea, but it's confusing or off-topic.	Does not have a clear main idea.
Use of Sources	Uses information from 2 or more different sources, explained clearly.	Uses information from at least 2 sources, but explanations are partial.	Uses 1 source or mentions more than one without clear explanation.	Does not use information from any source.
Evidence and Examples	Includes strong evidence or examples that clearly support the main idea.	Includes some evidence or examples, but they could be stronger or clearer.	Includes little evidence, and it doesn't clearly support the idea.	Does not include any clear evidence or examples.
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