

Chapter 3

The Great Depression

(18:10 minutes)

Synopsis

This 18-minute video explores Montana during the Great Depression. The challenges of prolonged drought, declining population, and unemployment set the background for the state before the beginning of the national Great Depression. The video particularly focuses on the experience of youth and Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies designed to combat young people's unemployment and disillusionment. It also addresses attempts to use recreation to tie individuals to their communities and to protect democracy and capitalism. The video ends with the advent of World War II and the end of the Great Depression.

- The video begins with students giving their best answer to the question: **“What was life like during the Great Depression?”** Teachers may wish to ask their students the same question before viewing the episode.

The narrator answers the focus question:

“Following World War I, Montana slipped into a deep depression that ran right through the 1920s. When the nation dropped into the Great Depression in 1929, Montana struggled even harder. Drought compounded the economic failure and forced some Montanans to abandon the state for the West Coast. Others worked to be self-sufficient. Montana’s mining, timber, and railroad industries bottomed out. President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s widespread, experimental New Deal programs—beginning in 1933— influenced Montana directly. Agriculture, industry, finance, and public works all benefited from federal attempts to employ Montanans and invigorate their economy. Some programs extended to the state’s Indian reservations while others helped the state’s young people. As a result, Montanans survived and became more dependent on the federal government.”

Post-viewing Discussion Questions

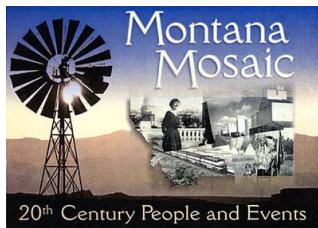
Engage students’ critical thinking skills and elicit their emotional responses with the following four questions, most easily remembered through the acronym DICE: What **disturbed** you? What **interested** you? What **confused** you? What **enlightened** you?

“Getting at the Meaning” Questions

1. How has your understanding of the Great Depression in Montana changed?
2. Describe the struggles of youth in the Great Depression in Montana. Why was the government worried that the youth would be so attracted to extreme ideologies?
3. How did New Deal programs try to address the needs of youth? Do you think these methods were successful?
4. After viewing the video, what advantages or disadvantages do you see in enacting programs similar to the New Deal today?

Vocabulary Terms

Alphabet soup: a term used to describe the acronyms of the government bureaus and regulatory agencies created under Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal programs. For example, the Civilian Conservation Corps was referred to as the CCC and the National Youth Administration was referenced as the NYA.



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Communism: a political and economic system where property and businesses are owned by the government.

Fascism: a political ideology and mass movement characterized by extreme militaristic nationalism along with contempt for democracy and political and cultural liberalism. Fascism became established in central, eastern, and southern Europe between World War I and World War II.

New Deal: the domestic program of President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1939. The New Deal was created to bring about immediate economic relief through a government-regulated economy. Also, with the rise of communism and fascism, the New Deal was a program meant to ease discontent in order to buffer the United States from these two spreading political ideologies.

Socialism: a political system that maintains that capitalism results in unfair power and wealth distribution and that, in order to create a society of equal opportunity, the state should own and regulate major industries and services.

Stock market crash: the 1929 event where the sudden decline in U.S. stock market values resulted in financial instability and uncertainty throughout international markets. The 1929 crash acted as a harbinger to the international Great Depression of the 1930s. (Information from <https://www.britannica.com/event/stock-market-crash-of-1929>).

Additional Resources

For more information on topics addressed in this episode, see *Montana: Stories of the Land*, Chapter 18, “The Great Depression Transforms Montana, 1929–1941” (<https://mhs.mt.gov/education/textbook/chapter18/Chapter18.pdf>).

Content Standards

Montana State Social Studies Standards

SS.CG.6-8.4. Distinguish the structure, organization, powers, and limits of government at the local, state, national, and tribal levels.

SS.E.6-8.1. Explain how economic decisions impact individuals, businesses, and society, including Indigenous societies.

SS.E.6-8.2. Analyze examples of how groups and individuals have considered profit and personal values in making economic choices in the past and/or present.

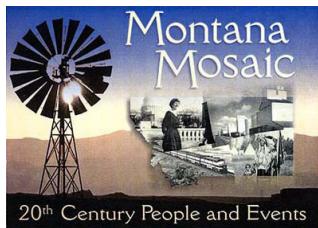
SS.G.6-8.6. Identify how the historical and contemporary movement of people, goods, and ideas from one area can impact change, conflict, and cooperation in other areas.

SS.H.6-8.2. Analyze how the historical events relate to one another and are shaped by historical context, including societies in the Americas.

SS.CG.9-12.5. Evaluate how citizens and institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international levels.

SS.E.9-12.2. Explain how economic cycles affect personal financial decisions.





SS.H.9-12.1. Analyze how unique circumstances of time, place, and historical contexts shape individuals' lives.

SS.H.9-12.4. Analyze multiple, and complex causal factors that have shaped major events in US and world history, including American Indian history.

SS.H.9-12.7. Analyze how historical, cultural, social, political, ideological, and economic contexts shape people's perspectives.

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