

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

33 Minutes • Color

OBJECTIVES

After viewing and discussing this film, viewers should be able to identify the main causes of the Great Depression, understand the psychological as well as economic effects of the Depression, and understand some of the conflicting theories about how to prevent or cure such a Depression.

BEFORE VIEWING THE FILM

Briefly review what viewers know about the Depression; where did the word itself originate, and what does it imply? What are the symptoms of a Depression?

AFTER VIEWING THE FILM

1. Why was the boom of the twenties a hollow boom? Why was there so much credit available? What are the similarities and differences between the 1920s and today?
2. How did many businessmen make their fortunes in the 1920s?
3. What was the relationship between expectations and the stock market rise and fall? Can you think of other activities where expectations seem to determine outcome?
4. What was the government policy toward unemployment benefits and relief early in the Depression? What programs did F.D.R. institute to solve the problem of unemployment? Which have survived and which have not?
5. Why, according to the film, did the middle class suffer most during the Depression? Why do you think this is or is not a valid thesis? Can you give personal examples that would support your position?
6. What was the reaction to open protests against economic troubles? What different groups did you see protesting in the film?
7. How high did the unemployment rates go in the 1930s? How does that compare with today's rates?
8. Many have called F.D.R.'s programs "socialistic." What is the opinion of the people in the film? What were the pros and cons for the Works Progress Administration (WPA)? Do you know of structures built by the WPA in your area?
9. What is a balanced budget? Deficit spending? What do J.K. Galbraith and Paul McCracken have to say about Roosevelt's policies in these areas?
10. What seems to be the general agreement about how the Depression ended?

FURTHER ACTIVITIES

The country is faced with another Great Depression as unemployment soars and the stock market falls. Your group must formulate a policy to cope with these events. Research how Herbert Hoover and Roosevelt felt such a situation should be handled, then debate within your group the principles you think should be followed. Try to arrive at enough of a consensus to make a policy statement.



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