# Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Dust Bowl**

Dust Bowl is the name commonly applied to a large area in the southern part of the Great Plains region of the United States, much of which suffered extensively from wind erosion during the 1930s. The area included parts of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado. In its original state, the region was covered with hardy grasses that held the fine-grained soil in place in spite of the long recurrent droughts and occasional torrential rains characteristic of the area. A large number of homesteaders settled in the region in the 30 years before World War I, planting wheat and row crops and raising cattle. Both of these land uses left the soil exposed to the danger of erosion by the winds that constantly sweep over the gently rolling land.

Beginning in the early 1930s, the region suffered a period of severe droughts, and the soil began to blow away. The organic matter, clay, and silt in the soil were carried great distances by the winds, in some cases darkening the sky as far as the Atlantic coast, and sand and heavier materials drifted against houses, fences, and barns. In many places 8 to 10 cm (3 to 4 in) of topsoil were blown away. Many thousands of families, their farms ruined, migrated westward; about a third of the remaining families had to accept government relief.

Beginning in 1935, intensive efforts were made by both federal and state governments to develop adequate programs for soil conservation and for rehabilitation of the Dust Bowl. The measures taken have included seeding large areas in grass; 3-year rotation of wheat and sorghum and of lying fallow; the introduction of contour plowing, terracing, and strip planting; and, in areas of greater rainfall, the planting of long “shelter belts” of trees to break the force of the wind. Dry spells in the 1950s, '60s, and late '70s were responsible for recurrences of dust storms in the region.

# Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Black Tuesday**

For a time this was true: In 1928 the price of stock in the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) multiplied by nearly five times. The Dow Jones industrial average—an index that tracks the stock prices of key industrial companies—doubled in value in less than two years. But the stock boom could not last. The great bull market of the late 1920s was a classic example of a speculative “bubble” scheme, so called because it expands until it bursts. In the fall of 1929 confidence that prices would keep rising faltered, then failed. Starting in late October the market plummeted as investors began selling stocks. On October 29, in the worst day of the panic, stocks lost $10 billion to $15 billion in value. By mid-November almost all of the gains of the previous two years had been wiped out, with losses estimated at $30 billion.

The stock market crash announced the beginning of the Great Depression, but the deep economic problems of the 1920s had already converged a few months earlier to start the downward spiral. The credit of a large portion of the nation’s consumers had been exhausted, and they were spending much of their current income to pay for past, rather than new, purchases. Unsold inventories had begun to pile up in warehouses during the summer of 1929.

The stock market crash was just the first dramatic phase of a prolonged economic collapse. Conditions continued to worsen for the next three years, as the confident, optimistic attitudes of the 1920s gave way to a sense of defeat and despair. Stock prices continued to decline. By late 1932 they were only about 20 percent of what they had been before the crash. With little consumer demand for products, hundreds of factories and mills closed, and the output of American manufacturing plants was cut almost in half from 1929 to 1932.

Unemployment in those three years soared from 3.2 percent to 24.9 percent, leaving more than 15 million Americans out of work. Some remained unemployed for years; those who had jobs faced major wage cuts, and many people could find only part-time work. Jobless men sold apples and shined shoes to earn a little money.

Many banks had made loans to businesses and people who now could not repay them and some banks had also lost money by investing in the stock market. When depositors hit by the depression needed to withdraw their savings, the banks often did not have the money to give them. This caused other depositors to panic and demand their cash, ruining the banks. By the winter of 1932 to 1933, the banking system reached the point of nearly complete collapse; more than 5,000 banks failed by March 1933, wiping out the savings of millions of people.

The government responded to Black Tuesday with New Deal programs. The SEC (Securities and Exchange Commission) was created to regulate the stock market and prevent fraud. The FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) provided insurance for individual bank accounts. The Banking Act of 1935 regulated the nation’s money supply.

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**The Bonus Army of 1932**

At the end of World War One, as the American Expeditionary Force was being demobilized, a grateful U.S. government passed legislation that authorized the payment of cash bonuses adjusted for length of service, to war veterans, in 1945. However, the Crash of 1929 wiped out many veterans' savings and jobs, forcing them out into the streets. Groups of veterans began to organize and petition the government to pay them their cash bonus immediately. In the spring of 1932, during the worst part of Depression, a group of 300 veterans in Portland, Oregon organized by an ex-Sergeant named Walter Walters named itself the 'Bonus Expeditionary Force' or 'Bonus Army,' and began traveling across the country to Washington to lobby the government personally. By the end of May over 3,000 veterans and their families had made their way to the capital. Most of them lived in a collection of makeshift huts and tents on the mud flats by the Anacostia River outside of the city limits. Similar ghettos could be found sheltering the migrant unemployed and poor outside any large city in the United States and were called 'Hoovervilles.' By July, almost 25,000 people lived in Anacostia, making it the largest Hooverville in the country.

In June, the Bonus Bill, which proposed immediate payment of the veterans' cash bonuses, was debated in the House of Representatives. There was stiff resistance from Republicans loyal to President Hoover, as the estimated cost of the bill was over $2 billion and the Hoover Administration was adamant about maintaining a balanced budget. The bill passed in the Congress on June 15, but was defeated in the Senate only two days later. In response, almost 20,000 veterans slowly shuffled up and down Pennsylvania Avenue for three days in a protest that local newspapers titled the 'Death March.'

President Hoover considered the Bonus Army Marchers a threat to public order and his personal safety. Contrary to tradition, he did not attend the closing ceremonies for that session of Congress on July 16 and many members left the Capitol building through underground tunnels to avoid facing the demonstrators outside.

Many of the Marchers left Washington after Congress adjourned, but there were still over 10,000 angry, restless veterans in the streets. On July 28, 1932, two veterans were shot and killed by panicked policemen in a riot at the bottom of Capitol Hill. This provided the final stimulus. Hoover told Ralph Furley, the Secretary of War, to tell General Douglas Macarthur, then the Army Chief of Staff, that he wished the Bonus Army Marchers evicted from Washington. Troops from nearby Forts Myer and Washington were ordered in to remove the Bonus Army Marchers from the streets by force. After the event, public opinion toward Hoover severely declined and contributed to his defeat in the 1932 election.

In the end, some money was paid to veterans but not without further difficulties. Within a year of the Bonus Army Incident, President Roosevelt imposed the Economy Act of 1933, which cut veterans’ disability allowances by 25%. Pressure from veterans' groups continued until a lump-sum bonus law was passed over Roosevelt's veto in 1936. Eventually $2.5 billion was awarded to veterans of World War I.

**Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Soup Kitchens and Breadlines**

The United States entered the Great Depression. A depression is a time when there is little money and no growth in business. By 1932, 5000 banks had failed, more than 32,000 companies had closed and one fourth of the workers in the United States were unemployed. Some people were actually starving, and their only food came from soup kitchens and bread lines that were set up to feed the poor. Beggars went from house to house asking for food, and homeless people, called hobos, crisscrossed the country on freight trains looking for work.

Large cities established soup kitchens and bread lines, and thousands of unemployed people waited in line every day for the simple meals they offered. Even Al Capone and his gang opened Chicago's first soup kitchen in 1931. For many people, the soup kitchen meal was the only food they would see that day. At its peak, New York City had 82 bread lines providing 85,000 meals a day. It was difficult for hard-working people to swallow their pride when hunger drove them to a soup kitchen.

Lines for free meals at soup kitchens stretched out for blocks and people fought over garbage cans behind restaurants just to get a scrap of food. Families turned to relatives, missions and soup kitchens for food, shelter and clothing. Most people ate at soup kitchens during the Great Depression because they could not afford to buy food.

Those hurt the most were more stunned than angry. Many sank into despair and shame after they could not find jobs. The suicide rates increased from 14 to 17 per 100,000. Protest that did occur was local, not national: "farm holidays," neighbors of foreclosed farmers refusing to bid on farms at auction, neighbors moving evicted tenants' furniture back in and local hunger marches.

Resistance to protest often turned violent. In 1932, four members of the Dearborn hunger march were shot and killed when 1,000 soldiers accompanied by tanks and machine guns evicted veterans living in the Bonus Army camp in Washington, D.C.

The government responded to the unemployment and despair of the American people by creating many New Deal programs. FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Act) helped states to provide aid to the unemployed. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) quickly created jobs for many Americans. The Social Security Act created an unemployed compensation system, old-age insurance and Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).