

# The Great Depression

**Cross-Curricular Focus: History/Social Sciences**



The 1920s in the United States were a time of success and great wealth. America's millionaires had lots of parties. The parties sometimes lasted for weeks!

The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, known as Prohibition, became law in 1920. It made it illegal to make or sell alcohol. Some people found ways to get around the law. They used secret tunnels and other ways to transport alcohol. There were many fast-speed police chases in the dark of night. Organized crime, or gangsters, made large amounts of money selling alcohol. Prohibition was not repealed, or canceled, until the Twenty-first Amendment was passed in 1933.

Through most of the 1920s, businesses were growing. There were plenty of jobs for everyone. In 1929, the economy suddenly fell apart when the stock market failed. The stock market is an economic system that allows people to buy and sell shares of companies. A share gives people part ownership of businesses. People's shares became almost worthless, sending the country into very hard times. When an area goes through a time of very little business activity, it is called a **depression**. The stock market crash was so bad that the depression it caused was the worst the U.S. had ever experienced. This time period became known as The Great Depression.

During The Great Depression, many people lost their jobs. They even lost their farms and homes. People could not feed their families. Poverty, disease and starvation affected most of the nation.

There was a severe **drought** at the same time in the middle of the U.S. The lack of rain made the ground so dry it turned to dust. Huge dust storms turned daylight to darkness. People got sick from the dust. Some even died from breathing too much dust. This time became known as the Dust Bowl. Thousands of people moved west in search of work and better lives during this time.

The Great Depression finally ended when the U.S. entered World War II in 1941. Many new jobs were created as war supplies, like aircraft and ships, were needed to support the war effort.

During World War II, it was hard to get enough of some supplies. **Inflation**, or the raising of prices, made goods expensive. Because of the war, there just was not enough for everyone. The government had to **ration** some items, like butter and gasoline. People were only allowed to buy so much of an item. Though the war years were difficult, people remembered how much harder it was during The Great Depression. The times were better than before.

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

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

1) Which amendment to the Constitution made alcohol illegal? \_\_\_\_\_

2) Imagine living on a farm at the time of a huge dust storm. Would you stay, or would you move west? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

3) What is a share? \_\_\_\_\_

4) What is a depression? \_\_\_\_\_

5) What started The Great Depression? \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: **Key**

Answer the following questions based on the reading passage. Don't forget to go back to the passage whenever necessary to find or confirm your answers.

**Actual wording may vary.**

1) Which amendment to the Constitution made alcohol illegal? \_\_\_\_\_

**the 18th Amendment**

2) Imagine living on a farm at the time of a huge dust storm. Would you stay, or would you move west? Why? \_\_\_\_\_

**student's choice**

3) What is a share? **part ownership of a company**

4) What is a depression? \_\_\_\_\_

**a time of little business activity**

5) What started The Great Depression?

**the failure of the stock market in 1929**