

The Impact of the Depression on Teenagers

Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt

Freedom and Dignity Project

Paul T. Ibsen
Wappingers Central Schools

FREEDOM AND DIGNITY PROJECT
Paul T. Ibsen: Wappingers Central Schools

Topic Title: The Impact of the Great Depression on Teenagers

Grade Level: 8th Grade

Overview of the Learning Experience:

- How were teenagers affected by the Great Depression?
Students will get background information from our textbook chapter "Depression and the New Deal 1924-1941"
- Students will evaluate and/or analyze primary source documents (letters written to Mrs. Roosevelt)

Essential Questions:

- How were teenagers affected by the Great Depression?
- What view of Mrs. Roosevelt is revealed by the letters of the teenagers?
- How effective can the federal government be in responding to an overwhelming crisis?
- To whom would a poor teenager turn to today for economic assistance?
- What safety nets exist today for people during hard times that did not exist in the 1930's?

Time Allotment:

Two forty minute classes

Vocabulary:

Great Depression
primary document
First Lady
poverty
board
WPA
National Youth Administration (NYA)

Dust Bowl
New Deal Legislation
tuition
Civil Works Administration (CWA)
hose
F.E.R.A.

Materials/Resources:

- Letters written to Mrs. Roosevelt
- A guide sheet to analyze the letters
- A political map of the United States

Procedure:

- Students will be divided into groups of four.
- Each group will be given two letters written to Mrs. Roosevelt, a U.S. political map, and a guide sheet for analyzing the letters.
- Students will have read the section in their textbook that pertains to the poverty resulting from the Great Depression, particularly the Dust Bowl region of the Great Plains.
- The teacher will give background information about why teenagers wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt and how many letters she received.
- Students will read the two letters in their groups and write responses to the guide sheet questions.
- Students will be given twenty minutes to answer the questions and locate the states from which the letters were written and to identify the region in which the states are located.
- One student will be randomly selected to report the group's responses to the class.
- Reporters will be asked to read the responses to their group's guide sheet questions.
- The teacher will ask students to look for similarities and differences in the letters.
- The teacher will conduct a class discussion using the essential questions.



Assessment

Wappingers Junior High

Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt

Name: _____

Teacher: Paul Ibsen

Date Submitted: _____

Title of Work: _____

Criteria

Points

	A	B	C	D	
Main/Topic Idea Sentence	Main/Topic idea sentence is clear, correctly placed, and is restated in the closing paragraph	Main/Topic idea sentence is either unclear or incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing paragraph.	Main/Topic idea sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is not restated in the closing paragraph	Main/Topic idea sentence is unclear and incorrectly placed, and is restated in the closing paragraph.	
Supporting Detail Paragraph(s)	Essay consists of intro, 4 supporting paragraphs, conclusion	Essay consists of intro, 3 supporting paragraphs, conclusion	Essay consists of intro, 1 supporting paragraph, conclusion	Essay consists of intro, 2 supporting paragraphs, conclusion	
Supporting Detail Sentence(s)	Paragraph(s) have 3 or more supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph(s) have 2 supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea.	Paragraph(s) have no supporting detail sentences that relate back to the main idea	Paragraph(s) have 1 supporting detail sentence that relate back to the main idea	
Elaborating Detail Sentence(s)	Each supporting detail sentence has 3 or more elaborating detail sentences.	Each supporting detail sentence has at least 2 elaborating detail sentences.	Each supporting detail sentence has 1 elaborating detail sentence.	Each supporting detail sentence has no elaborating detail sentence	
Legibility	Legible handwriting, Typing, or printing.	Marginally legible handwriting, typing, or printing	Writing is not legible in places.	Writing is not Legible.	
Mechanics and Grammar	Essay has no errors in punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.	Essay has 1 or 2 punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors.	Essay has 3-5 punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors	Essay has 6 or more punctuation, capitalization, and spelling errors	
				Total---->	

Teacher Comments:

Paul T. Ibsen: Wappingers Junior High School

Grade Level: 8th

Topic Title: The Impact of the Great Depression on Teenagers

Background Information:

Using letters written to Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt by teenagers from various regions of the United States, students will examine and discuss the problems faced by teenagers during the Great Depression. These problems affected the teenagers regardless of the geographic region they were from.

Assignment #1:

Using a political map of the United States, students will label and identify the states from which the letters originated as well as locating the Dust Bowl.

Assignment #2:

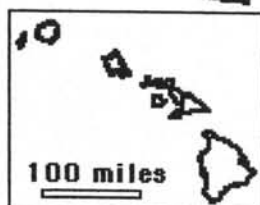
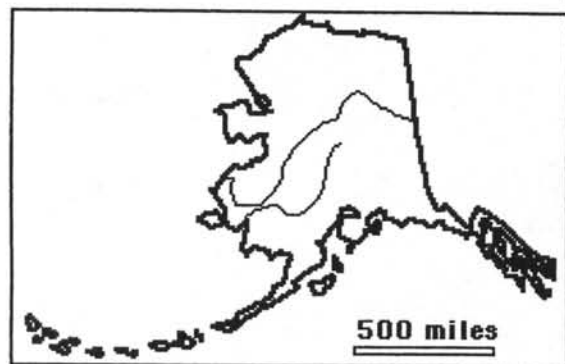
Students will write an organized essay (introduction, body, conclusion) reflecting upon the problems teenagers and their families encountered during the Great Depression.

Student Set-up:

Put students in groups of 4. Each group will analyze two letters from a particular region of the United States.

Topic Questions from Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt:

1. What year was the letter written?
2. Identify the state.
3. What is the age of the writer?
4. What is the gender of the writer?
5. What is the writer asking Mrs. Roosevelt for?
6. What does this letter reveal about the problems faced by this writer and their family?



500 miles
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■ Geary, Oklahoma

April 20, 1935

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am a thirteen year old girl and live on a farm with my mother and Step-Father we are very poor people I have lived here for five years and have wished each year for a radio but as the years go by our circumstances get worse and worse. I am wondering if I would be asking to much of you to help me obtain one. As we live in the country we would have to have a Battery Radio. We live five miles from town, and we are poor we have no money for boughten amusements. There is not a radio around in the country and I get terribly lonesome in summer. If you could in any way help me to obtain one it would mean enjoyment for all my friends as well as me.

If you can help me to get one my appreciation cannot be put into words.

Sincerely yours,

M. N. C.

■ Humboldt, Kansas

Jan. 5, 1935

My Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Would you have time to read a letter from just a country girl? I will be sixteen years old March 22. I am a senior in High School.

We worked hard during the campaign for Mr. Roosevelt, our Democratic club (young peoples) had meetings and gave short programs before the speaking. I was on the programs all over the county for tap dances.

Here is my problem. We raised no grain and money is scarce. My father was seriously injured two months ago, which made it still harder. I need clothes for school but haven't funds to buy them. I just wondered if you might have some I could make over, as I do all my own sewing—which is mostly madeover. I would appreciate anything as I have to go ten miles to school and I have no overshoes or not very good shoes.

Dresses, hose that can be mended and used, shoes, overshoes or underwear. I wear 6½ shoes and a 16 dress.

If you can help me—write me.

Thank you.

Sincerely

P.S. Please do not let this be put in the newspapers.

■ Tulsa, Okla.

Aug. 16, 1934

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

If this letter ever reaches your hand please, please read it.

I am a negro girl, 17 years old, just finished the Washington High School and am trying to go to college. Mrs. Roosevelt I have of how you are helping the white women and girls; and the president has opened C.C.C. Camps for both colored and white but we negro girls don't get a break.

I have a mother dependent upon me and I am working for S. E. A's of this address at \$6.00 per week. I am trying to save out of this to go to college in mid-term. My letter perhaps has no significance to you; but I am asking you for assistance. Would you please Mrs. Roosevelt give me \$25.00 before January 1st. By Dec. 25th I will have saved \$50.00 with \$25.00 more I would be able to pay room, board, tuition and books. Would have about \$15.00 left over on the next term.

If you get this letter and would like to find out something about me, you may write to the school from which I finished or the people for whom I worked. Hoping to hear from you.

Respectfully yours

B. L.

■ Birmingham, Alabama

January 31, 1940

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am a negro boy who sang for you when you visited our school a few years ago in Birmingham.

I have attended College one year, and one month. Due to the lack of money, I had to quit school and try to find work so that I could continue my education. I have looked everywhere, but Cannot find anything to do. I am very eager to finish my schooling, but I cannot find work at all. Some days I walks over twenty miles trying to find work, but all in vain. All of my efforts have been a complete failure. So Mrs. Roosevelt I appeal to you for help.

The course that I was taking requires two years of college training then one is eligible to teach for a limited time of six years. I need only six more months of training then I will be able to help myself. Please Mrs. Roosevelt, send me a donation so as to help me in this dilemma. I do not have relatives that is in a position to give me any financial support, so you see Mrs. Roosevelt, my future is very dark and discouraging. You are the only one that I know to come to for relief, please look at my condition, and consider this matter noteworthy because I am striving to be somebody, and I am trying in my young days.

Please let me hear from you. I can get the other six months of College training for \$160. It wouldn't be that much but when I left, I wasn't able to pay my back loan and before I re enter I must pay it before I can get my credits.

Please don't think hard of me Mrs. Roosevelt, but I didn't have any one else to call on but you.

Yours Truly,

A. L.

■ Drumright, Okla.

January 16, 1935

Mrs. Roosevelt:

I am a girl, age fourteen (14), and in the eleventh grade. I am five feet, three inches tall, have brown hair and blue eyes, and weigh about 130 pounds. I have gone to school eight years, all of which my mother has paid for. My parents were divorced before I started to school, and my father, who is married again and has children, does not help us any. I have 1 brother, aged sixteen (16) who is also in the eleventh grade. He is taller than I am but weighs several pounds less. We are both at the head of our class, and have been exempted from all our semester "exams" so far.

We desire to go to college when we finish high school, and if we can manage the clothes and money, maybe have to work our way through, we will, if at all possible. My brother wishes to be a lawyer and enter politics, and I want to be a primary school teacher, an author, and a church and Welfare worker. I teach a class of girls, age 4 to 8 each Sunday and my brother, a class of boys, 4 to 9.

We lived in town for a while and Mother worked, but we had to come to the country over four years ago. My brother and I pick cotton each year for our clothes and Mother keeps house for a man, who surely does like, Mr. Roosevelt's new Deal. Since there was so little cotton this year we didn't have very much money to buy the clothes that we have to have.

We go to a high school six miles from home, and walk two miles waiting in the cold till the truck comes. We have no car, no radio, or any other musical instrument.

I am writing this letter to ask if you have any cast-off clothing or any wearing apparel you don't want. I would certainly appreciate them and Mother could make them over to fit me. If you have anything which isn't already spoken for, it would be new to me and I could surely use it. It costs a "lot of money" to keep in dresses, hats, slippers, hose, coats, underthings and everything else that a person needs and I don't have that "lot of money" to spare because it takes so much to go to school.

I would always remember you for the kindness you would be sharing, if you would send me some of your things that you have no longer any use for. I don't want you to think I am begging you for anything, but I'm merely asking for some cast-offs you don't want. I could use anything and it would surely make my Senior year in high school, much easier.

Your friend,

S. A.

■ Kansas City, Mo.

Jan 23, 1936

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

My name is A. S. I am 12 years old. I go to the Allen School and I am in the sixth grade. My sister D. is 11 years old. She and I both love to listen to radio but we have none. The only time we have a chance is when we go to our aunts. And if you would send me some kind of a one I would be very happy. I know where I can get one for \$14.00 but I have no money. The best program I like is the gang busters. And Eddie Cantor.

Yours truly,

A. S.

P.S.

Please do not put me in jail.

La Moure, N. Dak.

October 12, 1936

Dear Pres. and Mrs. Roosevelt;

Well I realize that you are too busy to consider my letter but I am going to send it anyway. My brother is eight and I am twelve. This may sound awful funny to you but our whole future depends on your presidency. If you don't get in I don't know what we will do. My Dad is only a W.P.A. worker and we are certainly thankful for that. Every day after work and Friday and Sat. he's out campaigning for you. He certainly has wonderful results. He's convinced many of people that if it wouldn't of been for you only the Lord knows what would have happened to all the poor people including us. I can remember Hoover was pres. We were hungry many times and without warm clothes and actually froze. Now this may seem a little think to you but its my whole future. I dream so much of a piano that it seems that I can't work when I think of it. My dream is growing bigger every day but it seems as though they are to be shattered. My Dad and Mother can't buy it out of \$40.00 a month. I'm not complaining. I'm so thankful for that. Please, Kind Sir don't think I'm begging for I'm not. But seems that I had to tell my troubles to some one. Next to God I thought you would be best. We certainly hope you'll be president the next four years. By the way I'm in the seventh Grade. I've had A's for 4 yrs straight that is being on the honor roll. I've been on since we moved to town. I'm hoping you are pres. the next four years. If not my dreams will die with election day. God bless you and Mrs. Roosevelt. If you aren't to busy won't you please answer our letter.

Yours truly,

A hundred per cent democrat

B. T.

Graniteville, Mass.

Mar. 18, 1935

My Dearest Mrs. Roosevelt,

Just a line to let you know if you can help me out a little, if you dont mind. There is nine of us in the family & no one working I'm the oldest (15 yrs.) My father hasn't been working for 3 yrs. He got hurt up the quarrel where he was a stone cutter. This coming June I have to graduate grammar school and I suppose I can't. So I thought I would write to you & let you know if you can send at least a small check that I could get every thing for graduation & if any is left over I'd get a dress, & coat for Easter. This is the first time that I gratuating and I'd like to graduate as the other girls. Well I hope I will received what I told you. When I'm working I will send you a lovely gift. Dear Mrs. Roosevelt Please, please don't say anything to anyone because I wrote for help. Please don't. Please don't even put this letter in the newspaper. Because I know you will help me account of being the President wife. You are a lovely, lovely lady. I'll pray to God every minute I think of it and ask him that I will receive the check. If you do send a check please write a letter also to be sure that you send it. I thank you very much if you send it. I'll be expecting to receive a envelope from Washington D.C.

Thank You.

Yours truly

p.s. Please don't forget. Please don't let me worry about graduating

Basom, New York

Jan. 19, 1935

Madame,

I am a girl going to school. After exams I will be entering high school. I am also taking lessons on a Hawaiin Guitar. My father is sick and he is not able to work. Therefore we have no money to pay for these lessons. I am very interested in my lessons and wouldn't like to stop.

I have heard you have helped many other people who are interested in different things. I would like you to help me also. If you can.

I am an Indian living on the Tawanda Reservation and am very interested in you. I do not care what amount of money you send me but I will be very grateful to you. In all, these lessons amount to \$52. Before my father became sick we had paid a little.

I hope you will consider my plea or even answer me. I am 15 years old.

Yours very truly,

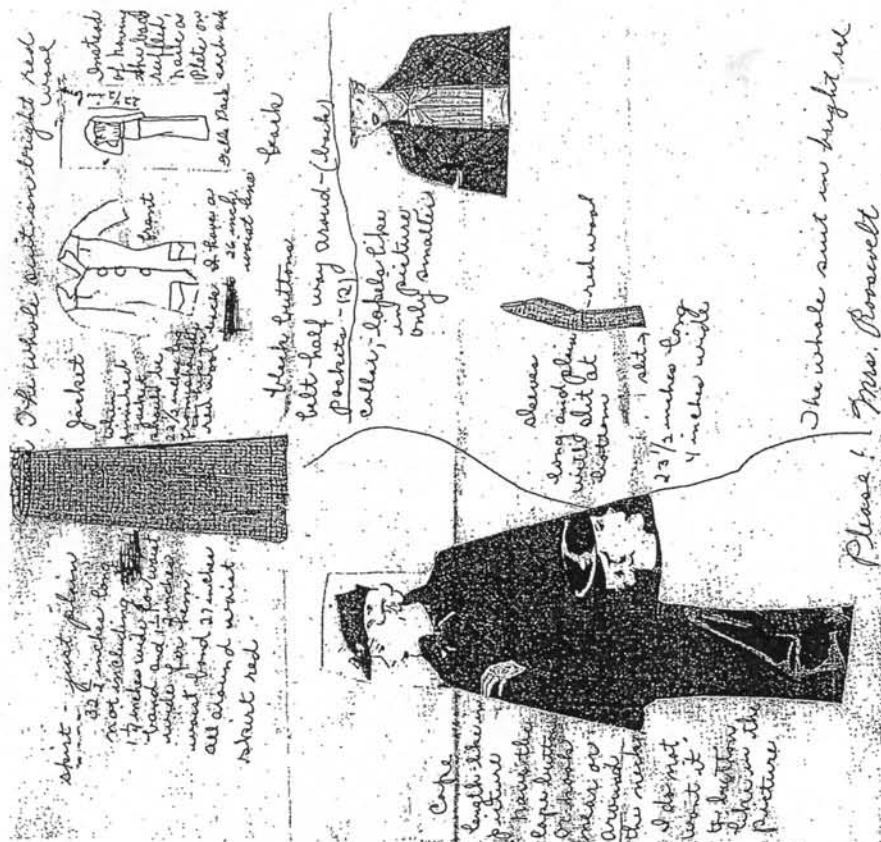
CLOTHING

February 26, 1934

Petroleum, West Virginia

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I just wondered if you ever received a letter from a little girl like me. I am eleven years old the 24 of March. This is my fifth year in school. I think I will soon be ready for sixth Grade. I have got five perfect certificates and one gold star of honor. I have . . . a hard way of getting what education I have. But I expect to keep on trying. I have to walk two mile and a half to school through the mud. My Father is almost blind. We have no income of any form. Father has never recieved one cent of the money that the unemployed is supposed to get. We sure could use it. We have been told by many people that you was very kind to the poor and neady. So I thought I would ask you if you would or could send me a few things to wear. I wear size 12 year old dresses and a 14 year old coat. I am four feet and six inches tall and weigh 80 pounds. I also would like to have a pair of shoes size 3 1/2 wide weidth. I would be the happiest person in the world. If I would recieve a package from you for my birthday. You would never miss this small amount



Please! Mrs. Roosevelt

The whole suit in light red

A teen from Ohio included these sketches, advertisements, and specifications with her letter to Mrs. Roosevelt in 1936, to show the First Lady the clothes that she hoped to receive from her. (From the collection of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.)

I have asked for. My relation helped to put President Roosevelt where he is. I dont ask for anything fine just serviceable. I do hope you will fix me up a little package and mail to me at once. My friends will be surprised.

Mrs Roosevelt please dont have this printed or broadcasted, as some of my people have radios and all take papers and I dont want any of them to know I asked you to send me the things. But God knows I will remember you. And you surely will be rewarded. I send you my love and best wishes.

Haynes, Arkansas

December 30, 1934

Dear First Lady,

I guess you get lots of letters similar to this, but I thought I'd try writing you anyway.

I'm twenty and a Senior in High School. I know I'm rather old to still be in High School but there have been years in which I haven't been able to go. My parents are old, my mother is fifty-five and my father is seventy-one, and we are very poor. My father is a farmer—a share-cropper and there have been years when we haven't made enough money to send me and my sister to school. During those years we picked cotton and bought clothes to go the next term of school. Even this year we stayed out the first three weeks of school to pick cotton to help pay our way through this term, though we have some cousins who have been generous in sending us dresses, which they can no longer wear and even sent a coat, which was still wearable.

During the summer before the depression shut down too tight I worked in a factory and saved my wages to buy books and clothes for the fall term.

I've never been able to attend parties given by my class due to the lack of money and the fact that we've lived so far from town. Now commencement is on its way and I'd like to have clothes I wouldn't be ashamed of to wear to the parties and dinners given in honor of the Seniors, and especially the Junior-Senior Banquet.

There are other expenses, too—the invitations and cards, the cap and gown and the pictures. My mother is the only one in the family working and she gets only five days a month in the F.E.R.A. Sewing room. So I see no way of making my wishes come true.

I had intended working in the Five and Ten during the week before Christmas but I was ill with the "Flu." This caused the end of my hopes of possessing a class ring.

After graduation I intend to enter training for a nurse.

Wondering if you can help me make my wish of graduating as the other girls in my class will, I am

Sincerely yours

A. R.

Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts

May 18, 1938

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

Perhaps you may not be able to help me but nevertheless I am appealing to you. My daddy is out of work and our home is gone. I mean daddy is in New Hampshire trying to earn a little money, Buddy, my brother, is living with my grandmother and I am with a friend of my mother's in Wellesley. I want a home. We need money! Can't you help us? Last night when I went to see daddy, he hadn't had a decent meal. I don't want him to go hungry. And Buddy won't get half a chance where he is living. I am only sixteen and there is nothing much that I can do. With a little money my father could get back on his feet and maybe start a new rink somewhere. You see he runs a roller skating rink. Bud and I are whizzes at it—almost.

Do you know that when Buddy was four he was paralyzed from the hips down and he couldn't see or talk and now he is the fastest roller skater in Nashua. He had infantile paralysis once. But you can't keep a good man down. You should see him now. But I can't make a man of him if we are separated all the time. Please, you wouldn't miss a little money would you? I hate to ask for money because it sounds so much like begging. Maybe it would be better if I said borrow.

You seem so nice and understanding that's why I have turned to you. Please keep this confidential, won't you? Nobody knows I am doing this and I don't care to have anyone know. You understand just how I feel, don't you. I hope I am not imposing too much upon your kindness but we need your help.

Sincerely,

■ Daleville, Ala.

Feb 12, 1934

Dear Mrs Roosevelt,

I want to write you and ask a favor of you for mother said you would help us. She said she thanked God for such people as you and our president. I am a little 13 year old boy the only boy in our family of seven four of us have been in school. I have just finished the sixth grade and a sister of mine have finished the ninth and dady just can't get us books for we have not been able to farm now in two years and havent got anything except dady gets two days a week on the road the CWA [Civil Works Administration] work. I dont want to be a beger. I just want to ask you to please loan me fifty dollars to buy a mule with so we can raise us something to eat at home. seven of us have to live and pay house rent out of just four and a half a week and you know we live hard and don't get scarcely any clothes at all if you will lend it to me we will do our dead level best to pay it back this fall please reply by return mail.

Well good by
from your friend

C. D.

■ Gettysburg, S.Dak.

Jan 8, 1934

Dear Mrs Roosevelt:

A young girl from a God forlorn country is writing you. I will be 16 years old Jan 16. We are so poor we haven't hardly enough to eat. I have 2 sisters and 1 brother and father. Mother is dead over 5 years. She was killed in a railroad collision. I have to keep house. We haven't had a crop for 8 years. We get about $\frac{1}{4}$ can of cream in two weeks and that is only 10 cents so we can't buy anything. Eggs we haven't any. Would you be so very kind and send us a little money to buy a few neccarry things. I suppose you get many letters like this but if you can please send a little I would thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As ever your Friend.

A. N.

■ Salida Colo.

May 7—1935

Dear Mrs Roosevelt,

I was just wondering, if you could do something, so I can graduate from the Eight grade, It will take about \$10.00 and then I got to make my confirmation and there is three of my other brothers, too, and one sister, beside me. The work relief don't do right here, they give those girls in the relief office \$20 a week, and they only support theirself and they give a man with, a family of seven, \$48.00 a month, last month they gave us \$46.00, when he should get \$58 at the least. How much do you think a family of seven should get? Mother hadn't no light, now because we didn't have enough money to paid for them . . . and we are way far back in rent. Some men here get \$6.00 a day, and they only got two or three in a family, because they are the boss or timekeeper. I think if Mr. Roosevelt get the old-age Pension [i.e. Social Security] in it will be a lot better than the relief work. Every week we go to bed one or two days without anything to eat. My brother and I go down to the railroad track to pick up coal to keep warm. If only the Railroad Pension go through daddy will have steady work on the railroad. We hardly got enough to wear, we have to wash out our clothes and put them back on. Gosh! Mother can't get a haircut, her hair looked terrible.

If the Old Age Pension go in these girls got to go out and do something else, beside working on the relief. Gosh! I used to be able to take care of baby but now the big girls get the job, we used to only get .10 cent, to take care of a little girl, but the girls, that take care her, now get .50 a day and .50 cents a night. I read a lot a about you in the papers we get from the neighbors. My mother and Dad don't know I am writing to you. Please answer as soon as possible. Gosh! May 15th we have to try to make our confirmation if we can get some clothes and a dollar each too. I hope mother or dad wont find out I writing to you, because they don't want to let anyone, know how hard-up we are.

Please Please write immediately. I heard you help the poor peoples. I wish God blessed you, and let you luck. Please answer as soon as you received this letter.

Your's Very Truly,

Miss A. M.

■ Rogersville, Mo.

Jan. 16, 1939

Dear Mrs Roosevelt:

I am a girl 19 years old and love pretty cloths but never could have them we are poor people and I am writing to you to see if you would send me some of your cast off clothing please do Mrs Roosevelt. We live in what I would call a high headed community and the girls all have nice cloths and make fun of me because I don't have if they knew I wrote this letter to you they would laugh sure enough...I can't even go to Sunday school on Sunday on account of cloths and I havn't got decent shoes or dresses to wear to look for a job. so if you will send me some of your dresses, slips, brassieres, panties and a coat because I do not have a coat at all, and if you have any shoes, Mrs Roosevelt I am telling the truth before the Lord. thats its pitiful the way I'm looked down on. You may think I'm stretching things but I'm not. and maybe I can pay you back the money it took to bring them some time so please do mrs. Roosevelt, please do. I would sure write you a big letter of thanks Mrs. Roosevelt you may have recieved other letters like this one. You may think I'm putting up a big fish story but I sure telling the truth and my dady & step mother would appreciate any thing you & Mr. Roosevelt might send them. so please send us some things if you will we will be three smiling people and Mrs Roosevelt please send them as soon as possible and write me a card a day or two before so I can be at the mail box to get it. so I will close with a million thanks and with lots of love

M. K.

I have your picture in the paper me & you are about the same size I can wear your cloths O.K.

■ Birmingham, Ala.

July 27, 1938

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt.

I'm writing you in regard of this W.P.A. work which my Father works on. He did make \$36 per month but I think he will get a raise of \$4.80 on the imonth But he has five to support Threee children and I'm the oldest one fifteen years of age but to young to hold a job. I can't go to Church or Sunday school any more for the need of clothes.

Mother and daddy dont go either because their clothes are to bad.

If you have any clothes that you dont want mother can make them fit us. Please Mrs Roosevelt dont mention this over the radio or in the papers. my school mates would nag me to death. but if you think its false call or write. Relief Headquarters Birmingham.

Thanking you I am

■ Poplar Bluff, Missouri

March 8, 1939

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I don't know how to begin, but this is my last hope is through you. And I do know your rich, and I'm poor. I'm a girl of 14 yrs and don't want my parents to know I'm writing this letter to you. They would never quit Punishing me for it, so before I start If you don't care to do this, Please destroy this letter and don't let my parents know, I'll begin, I never had a spring coat and Mother said she couldn't buy one for me this spring, Most of the other girls in school has one or going to get one. And oh, I wish for one so bad Would you please send me/ And when I get to work I'll pay you for it, I just won't get one any other way. I wear size 12 in Junior. Please don't Publish my letter My parents would hurt me so

Waiting

Your friend

Brooklyn, N.Y.

March 21, 1939

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I'm so confused so troubled—I don't know where to begin. I'm not trying to convince you with this letter. I'm asking—please—to believe and help me.

My problem is that—of most young folks—"Marriage."

It's easy enough for children of the wealthy—those—with permanent positions—but how about us—with only season jobs—are we not human too.

Mrs. Roosevelt—my girl friend and I planned to get married in September of 1939. Two months ago—she lost her job. I do season work—and although I've been out of work for four months—I'm working now and expect to until Easter—when my season ends.

We're young folks—I twenty six and my girl friend nineteen—and very much in love—and we don't want to live another day—apart from the other—feeling this way—we changed our wedding date to June 4th—we changed because I was getting sick waiting—we have the blessings of her family and mine but financially they can't help us.

Mrs. Roosevelt—I must give my girl friend some kind of a wedding. I had thought of borrowing—from a finance company—buying furniture on credit—but—it's all too much with the little job I have—I couldn't pay—when my season slackened—the sensible thing to do—would be to wait—until I accumulated enough money together—Mrs. Roosevelt—please believe me—I'm headed for consumption—if I wait another day—I have no friends from which I could borrow two or three hundred dollars—that's all I'd need—couldn't you—wouldn't you please help me Mrs. Roosevelt—you would never miss that amount—in time I'd pay you back—but I must have your help—if I wait any longer—my health is at stake—please—believe me.

Praying to God—that you will help me—I remain—

Respectfully,

J. T. M.

P.S. Mrs. Roosevelt—please forgive me—for daring to write—but I'm helpless—I wrote to Mr. Rockefeller—Mr. Rushmore and a Dr. Sauchelli—but my letters went ignored—Please Mrs. Roosevelt—give my letter thought.

The Bronx, N.Y.

December 28, 1934

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am a girl of fourteen years old and I have diabetes. You might not know much about this disease but it is most unpleasant and painful. I take needles twice a day which hurt extremely. As you see I haven't gotten much fun out of life. I also cannot eat a bit of sweets. I have not tasted candy, cake, ice cream or pie for over 4 years. I have thought several times of committing suicide. I received nothing for Christmas because my father only makes \$18 a week. I have two other sister who have to be provided for. My medicine cost \$3 a week. This also takes up a lot of money. There is only one thing that my sister and I wanted for Christmas that is a model 28 bicycle blue in color. If I had a bike I could ride to school and save carefare. If my sister had a bike she could run errands. The children around our neighborhood got one for Christmas. They tease us until we almost cry. This makes my father feel bad and he will try to get us one. But out of his salary this is impossible. I will be most grateful to you if you will grant my most desired request. It will make me very happy. And if I ride to school it will use up some of the excess sugar in my blood. Please regard my request carefully. I desire a Model 28 bicycle blue in color.

Yours truly

M. G.

Port Morris, N.J.

March 20, 1934

My Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Do you realize that "Easter" is at hand? Do you realize how many hearts are broken on this account? Do you realize how hard its going to be for most people? Like me, for instance, I am a young girl of fifteen and I need a coat, so bad I have no money, nor any means of getting any. My father has been out of work for two years.

My brother works on the C.W.A. but he is, or rather has been, insane in an asylum and has taken most of our money. My mother gets "fits" when I ask her to buy me something new. Poor mother, I sympathize with her because it has been very hard on her, this depression, and no money at all but debts piling up on us. I want to tell you something: We were once the richest people in our town but now, we are the lowest, considered, the worst people of Port Morris.

For Easter some friends of mine are thinking of getting new out-fits and I just have to listen to them. How I wish I could have at least a coat. That would cost about \$5.00 at least. I need a dress. I want one and it only costs \$.79 cents. Dear Eleanor how I wish I had the coat and dress for Easter I would be the happiest girl. I love you so much.

Please send me about \$6.50

I thank you so much

A. C.

March 27, 1935

Philadelphia, Pa

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

I am asking you for your charity, asking you to send me and my two sisters suits for Easter. It is not only that we have nothing to eat but also nothing to get dressed into.

Easter is coming nearer and nearer but I do not think it will be an Easter for me. It will be another dull and unpleasant Easter like last year. It is supposed to be a time of rejoicing but I know I shall not rejoice for I have nothing to rejoice about. Mrs. Roosevelt I do hope you shall send the suits. If you do I would like you to send them in these sizes. J. 15 years old size 20 a shadow check S. 14 years old size 20 in a shadow check A. 10 years old size 14 in a color of blue You notice the big sizes, that is to last us for a few years I hope you will send them and make our Easter a time of rejoicing at least once I hope you shall send them about a week from Easter. During this time I shall pray for you and pray that you do send them. If you do send them just let it be a secret between me and you, please do not tell anyone.

During this time God Bless You A thousand times

Yours truly

P.S. Mrs Roosevelt please send mother one of your old dresses that you do not wear now if it is a size 40 please!

■ Chester, Pennsylvania

January 30, 1939

Mrs. Roosevelt,

I do not have any way to go, so I come to you against the hungry depression of today

I have study the violin for two years and I cannot go on studying, because the violin is too small and I am too big for it. I am 15 years of age.

I need a full size good violin complete to continue with the study of the violin.

My father does not work not because he does not want to work but he cannot find work, so I wrote to you to see if you could get me one so I could continue with the study of it.

The violin that you will sent me will be remember all the rest of my life. This picture that I am sending to you is when I just me and my small violin were just starting to play.

That is all I have to say. If you are going to sent it I will be appreciated for it. Best regards to all.

Thank you

Sincerely yours

B. S.

[The writer encloses a photograph of himself and his tiny violin.]

■ C.R., New Brunswick

[acknowledged Dec. 5, 1940]

Dear Lady and Santa Claus,

A few words to tell you if you are kind enough to make me a favor to Santa Claus. Maman was telling me that Santa Clause is not coming for me this year a Xmas because we are too poor. And Santa Clause left his bag of toys over to Lady Roosevelt in America. Today that I am all alone I thought I would write you to tell you to see in Santa Clause toy bag If you can find a little phonograph with a dozen records. Would you kindly send it to me. It would be a great pass time. I would also like to have a doll. During the winter nights. Tell Santa Claus for me that I was good all the year. I did not go to school this year because I was too poor to go. If you will send me a phonograph I will send you a rug I made for a present I will send it to put near your bed. I also got some to sell and I would like to sell them I would try to sell them \$3.00 each I would like to sell them so I can buy Some Clothes to go to school. If you want to buy them I would be awful glad we are five children in the family and are poor people Tell Santa Im ten years of age not to forget me And In payment I will pray God for you to be blessed your family.

Yours truly

N. L.