

FREEDOM AND DIGNITY PROJECT

Learning Experience Module

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Topic: The social and economic impact of the Great Depression on farming and urban women and children.

Grade level: 8

NY State Learning Standards/Core Curricular Connections:

Standard 1: Students will use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand social and economic impact of the Great Depression on the lives of women and children.
- Understand the effects of the Great Depression in urban areas
- Understand the effects of the Great Depression in farming communities

Essential Questions:

- What were the social and economic effects of The Great Depression on women?
- How did the effects of the Great Depression differ in the lives of urban and farm women?

Overview of the Learning Module:

In this learning module, through letters, newspaper articles, and photos of the era, students will learn the plight of women during the The Great Depression.

Using voices of the time and proper letter format, students will write to President or Mrs. Roosevelt describing problems facing their family and suggest remedies that would alleviate the family situation.

Time Allotment: 2- 40 minute classroom periods

Vocabulary:

Material/Resources:

- **For students:**
 - primary documents
 - letters to President
 - letters to First Lady
 - photographs
 - newspaper articles
 - scaffolding questions
 - graphic organizers for challenged learners
- **For teachers:**
 - All of above
 - Grading Rubric

Procedure:

- **Teacher:**
 - ✓ Introduce students to the topic of The Great Depression using textbook, class discussion and video (The 20th Century).
 - ✓ Discuss with students the effects of The Great Depression
Teacher led discussion.
 - ✓ Essential Question:
How did the Depression effect women?
Were different women affected differently, rural, urban?
What did they do to cope?
 - ✓ Students will be given photos taken during the depression, letters addressed to the First Lady and excerpts from periodicals to use as sources for research.
 - ✓ Students will use a graphic organizer to compare rural and urban women
 - ✓ Student Work:
Students will write letters to the President or the First Lady explaining their situation, describing what they have been doing to cope with their situation (at least two ways) and asking for advice or information relating to their plight.
Include a bibliography of materials used to develop the situation in the letter.
Student work will be evaluated using the grading rubric.
- **Students:**
 - ✓ Read and discussed documents
 - ✓ Reviewed photographs
 - ✓ Read newspaper articles
 - ✓ Answered scaffolding questions

Assessment:

- ✓ Letters to President or Mrs. Roosevelt that described their family's plight, proposed a solution that described the action requested of President or Mrs. Roosevelt.
- ✓ Use grading rubric

From: **“South Dakota Farm Women and the Great Depression”**
by Dorothy Schwieder

...An examination of oral histories, farm journals, and government publications shows that South Dakota farm women played significant perhaps even crucial roles in keeping farm families on the land, and in providing food and clothing for family members. While farm women everywhere contributed to their families' economic well being, South Dakota women faced and even greater challenge than elsewhere because of natural disasters as well as general economic distress.

Throughout their daily routines, farm women played many diverse roles that have often been overlooked. In general, they provided the management for the domestic side of farm life, no small task in itself. But equally important, they served as planners, producers, processor, and marketing agents for a wide array of farm products. Even though their work was labor intensive, limited to small-scale operations with low investments, farm women made significant contributions to the farm economy. The sale or exchange of farm products that women produced often represented the only income realized by farm families in the 1930s.

...While many South Dakotans suffered increasing deprivation during the thirties, it should be noted that even at the beginning of the decade, rural South Dakota often lagged behind the rest of the nation in regard to general living conditions, particularly farm conveniences. In 1930 the federal census reported that only 10.9 % of all South Dakota farm homes had electricity compared to a national average of 13.4%; only 14.5% had water piped into the house (15.8% nationally); and 5.6% had water piped into bathrooms (8.4% nationally). South Dakotans did somewhat better with telephones, as 53.6% of all South Dakota farms had telephones compared to a national average of 34%. Rural South Dakotans fared considerably better than most rural Americans in regard to automobile ownership: 86.5% South Dakotans had automobiles compared to national average of 58%.

...In a farm economy, such as the present in South Dakota in the early 1900s, no one questioned the necessity of hard work. Under normal conditions, farm women worked long hours and performed a wide variety of tasks. But during the “dirty thirties” when South Dakotans faced drought, grasshopper epidemics, and general crop and livestock failures, farm women experienced two changes: their work load became more onerous and their farm production became more significant. During the thirties farm women

increased their production of poultry, eggs, garden produce and dairy products to provide the basic essentials for their families. Historical records on South Dakota farm women lead to one inescapable conclusion: farm women produced the farm products that fed the family and served as items for exchange for food staples as well as for clothes, shoes, and household supplies. Moreover, in at least a few cases, women's farm production provided money for taxes and overhead. ...farm women's work resulted in both in-kind products ("products furnished the household by the farm") as well as in cash income...

200 Bedford Ave.
Mt. Vernon, New York
January 17, 1936

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

In the paper I read that you will wear your beautiful fur coat for the third year. As I am very proud of our first lady I think you should buy a new coat and give the old one to my mother. Mother wanted a fur coat for years but never could afford to buy one as my father only gets \$30.00 a week. I am 12 years old and nobody knows I am writing you this letter and wouldn't my mother be surprised if she got it. No one knows so please do not tell anyone I am writing this and thank you very much.

Elsie Woenckhaus
200 Bedford Ave. Mt. Vernon
New York

(P.S. I am a girl scout since last week)

189 Livonia Avenue
Bklyn, New York
April 1937

My Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Unaccustomed as I am to appeal to any individual through this procedure for something, which, would certainly enlighten my burden of grief, or otherwise compress it, if disappointed, to provide for a more compact sorrow, I hope I am thinking the best by believing I have at last the one, and the right lady within reach, to whom I can draw aid from.

Getting down to brass tacks I shall endeavor to avoid all but the essentials in bringing forth the facts, which I do so desire you to consider and reconsider before setting this important letter aside, only to whisper that it's just one of those letters which came by the hundreds to your desk.

I am a young lady of 18 years, who has grown up with the one and only ambition of becoming a nurse. I am a graduate of the class of '37 from S. J. Tilden High School, B'klyn and a recipient of an academic diploma. I am preparing to enter nurse's training school at the earliest date, Sept. 1. However, here is where the barrier lies. Strange as it struck me I readily became acquainted with the fact that you can't enter any field of endeavor without money. Perhaps you are now asking yourself if I was an ambitious girl, why should I make that my stumbling stone? In response I have but this to say... this field is rapidly becoming crowded with young applicants, many who can afford it, and so in preference to accepting one who lacks the funds, the executives in the various institutions of the private and government hospitals would sooner accept one who lacks the aforesaid good. The sum is immense and too great for one like myself and yet a mere trifle to one of another category. How can I obtain approximately \$300 or \$400 to enable me to walk independently toward attaining my goal? You may suggest going to work. I would be only too happy, but I must first describe the predicament I am in. Being fatherless for more than 12 years with 7 others in the family and two bringing in an income barely enabling us to live as decent people in this cold flat of ours, it would be most inhumane of me to take my salary, were I working and save to satisfy my own needs, and selfishly permitting my mother to hold her present heavy burden of managing a household as she now does with the small incomings. So you see it would be almost impossible to save any trifle for myself. My last resort is to persuade, with what all my heart could cry out, one who would extend me, a mirror, legally, a loan for the sum I so dearly need with my honest vow to return. In the very near future, after receiving my R.N. certificate, with interest by way of capital or service for that deed rendered me by some kind person of understanding. If you find you can't assist me personally as soon as possible, perhaps you can recommend someone living in New York City or within it's limits, who would gladly help me. I have only two months left in which to produce the \$, after trying all my relatives, in vain, in the past 4 months.

Please try to send me some worthy information before it's too late. The soles of my shoes have given way a long time ago, in looking for a kind should, that I know, I found in you.

A young, depressed American,
Miss Mollie Travis

26-12-33

Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt Esq.

Just a line to say I never thought I would have to come to the presidents wife to ask for any assistance but I am now appealing to you for help.

I am getting an order every week of \$17.50 form the Welfare. They don't give any money to pay bills I owe a big gas and electric bill

The gas co. turned the gas off the Friday before Christmas The Electric also was turned off

I could work as good as I ever did but I have diabetus and my sight is going back on me but the Hospital treats me free

There is some work starting here now and I want to see if I can make sandwiges (Sandwiches) to sell to the work men to start it I own a property and I went to the government loan but I discovered they don't loan any money but fix your property

If I could get \$100 on the property I could soon make it yup I only owe \$200 on it

I wonder if theres any way of getting out of this terrible way of living I used to be a cook but there is so many out of work there is no chance for an aged person I can give good reference I have beign (been) foolish with my money giving it to people that was hard up but I never thought this day would come

Even if you don't help me God bless you and the presedent as it must have beign (been) God that sent Him among the people I never forget him in my prayers that God may strength him in His good work and I am not alone in my prayers and you also

Yours Respectfully
Mrs. Catherine Gavin+
Address 633 N Harrisburg Ave
Chelcey Heights
Atlantic City, NJ

Brocton, N.Y.
January 22, 1934

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am writing a few words but not very nice, I mean you may think much of it, But Mrs. Roosevelt it is a week from today and its "President Roosevelt's" Birthday and I wish him a happy one, and I would so much like to go, but tell you the truth I haven't any money but my younger brother says he will collect junk and rats and sell them so we can but a ticket but we will not be dressed like all the other girls and boys. So my dear Mrs. Roosevelt I am writing these few words to ask you if you have a gown or something that I could wear to the Ball. I have never been to a Ball in my life. I'm 20 years of age and never had a gown on. So I am writing these few words to ask if you have an older gown that you could spare. I take a size 18 so if you take a size larger I can remodel it I do a lot of sewing for the family

We are 8 children I'm the oldest home. I wish you'd at least answer me if you have a gown or not. I have never asked anyone for any clothes but I would love to go this Ball of our President. I am not very anxious to ask you for a dress but I would like to go to the Ball. So will you please do your best. I will appreciate it very much. Mrs. Roosevelt you couldn't tell me anything about Post Office Clerk. I took lessons from the Franklin Institute about three years ago and my lessons never were below 91 or 90 and after I had finished my lessons and payed my cost and they never give me attention could you give me any advise. If you can I will also appreciate it. I will say goodbye and I hope you have a wonderful time at President Roosevelt's Ball. I hope I can go.

I am
Miss Anna Gelsimino
Lake Ave
Brocton, N.Y.

"My penmanship is very shabby as I have a very poor pen point."

Buffalo, N.Y.
April, 19. 1938.

Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt.

My Dear Lady, I know you are going to be very much surprised, buy this letter as you must receive hundreds, but please read this before you throw it away? I'm a broken hearted Mother, I am asking for your help as I know no one else to go to now. Here's my problem, I bought a refrigator when times were good and owe \$38.00 on it still now. I will loose it if I can't pay for it which I can't. My dear, husband was laied off of work in Nov. 3-1937 since that time we have both done everything we could to make a living, for our 2 children, both boy's 1 age 10 & 1 age 12. We have had sickness nearly all the winter, have lost more time at school then ever before. My Husbund went everywhere to find work, got work at York, Pa. For just 4 weeks He had to be away from us had to pay room rent & board & laundey (laundry) out of his earnings which were small but so welcome to us. I myself found a washing & Ironing to do at home which did help a lot. We bought a small house in Cameron where our home is have it all paid for but \$1.59 which we owe our bank & they have been lovely with us about that. Then he was out of work again for 2 week's after he came home to us from York. We sure was glad to have him with us as we love him dearly & the boy's missed him so much for he only came home for Xmas 1 day. Well he started out again to find work, & I know our trust in God gave him work, well he stayed in Buffalo for 6 weeks, as it cost too much to make the trip home & we had to live there & eat when you don't make much. Its impossible to try & keep up to homes. Well we came here to be with him so we could all be together & thought it would be cheaper now we have this problem of losing our frigidare. I can work & willing to do anything. If only we can keep going until work does pick up, I don't care if we have to be under an apple tree, if we can all be together. I have such faith in our President, that I'm sure if I could get the money I could pay it back as soon as work picks up. When the Roosevelt Caravan was in Gammeron & Emporium we sure did talk for him & feel that he is the only one now who can help us. We have so much faith in Roosevelt that we turned our little Republican town Democrat to elect you husband. My boys want clothes and how can I but them. If you know anyone who has any clothes size 16 as they are the same size, one small & 1 large forage please ask them to send them to my boys. They want a suit so bad but as work will pick up maybe in the fall I could get them one. Please read this and try to understand our conditions as you are a Mother & tell me if you know of any way I can get this \$38.00 to pay this bill. I don't want this to be put in any paper as I want only your advise.

Please try to answer this letter.

From a broken hearted Mother.

Please answer.

Mrs. A.F. Burley
464 Elm St.
Buffalo, NY

Alsen Dec 17- 1933

Mrs. Roosevelt

Dear Lady

I am writing to you to tell you how we are situated. My husband and three sons has no work and has not work for two years only a few days now and then when they could get it as there is not much work here at the present time and as it is so hard on us now this is the first time that we was so poor. I have a little girl going to school and she needs warm cloths and shoes to go to school so bad. She has a mile to go to school and I can't get the things she needs so bad so I am writing and asking you if you can help us out a little. In a while as my husband and sons might get work after the first of the year as the office in Catskill where they apply for work told them after the first of the year they would give everybody who is idle work. Which I hope will be true as we are not the only poor people who need work with big familys. There are seven in our family I hope you will not feel offended at me for writing to you.

My address is

Mrs. Perry Law
Alsen
Greene Co.
NY

P.S. Will close by wishing you and family a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



HAMILTON, ALABAMA. "We manage to get along."





310804













"What bothers us travellin' people most 'is we
cant get no place to stay still"

Texans in Imperial Valley
Apr. 3. 1935



Qw1-36075-E



OWI-11299-E



HIGHLANDS, TENNESSEE. "The womenfolks have got to help out just like anybody else."





Photo Analysis Worksheet

Step 1. Observation

- A. Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Next, divide the photo into quadrants and study each section to see what new details become visible.
- B. Use the chart below to list people, objects, and activities in the photograph.

<u>People</u>	<u>Objects</u>	<u>Activities</u>

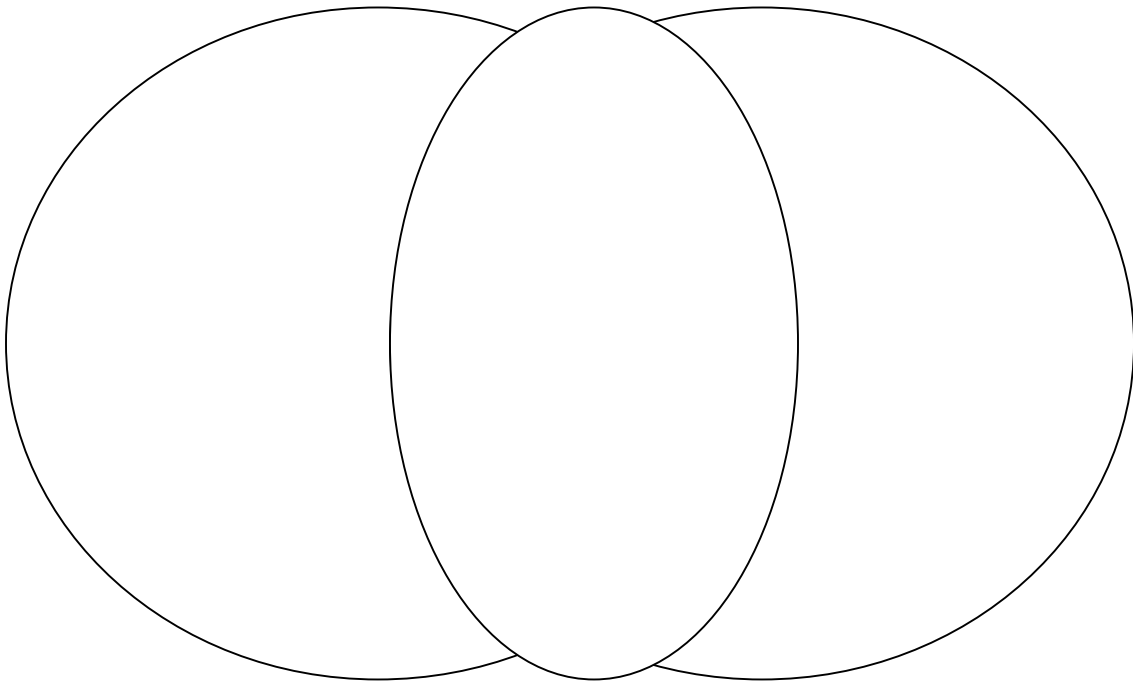
Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph.

Step 3. Questions

- A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?

Comparing women's lives during the Great Depression



Rural women

Both

Urban women

Describe at least two ways that the depression affected rural women, urban women and what they had in common.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Letter to the President or First Lady Rubric

Appearance Of Letter	Typed , neatly put together excellent description of situation 4pts.	Extremely neat hand writing, no erasures good description of situation 3pts.	Somewhat neat, some erasures, not clear description of situation 2pts	Sloppy no attempt to describe accurate situation 1pt.
Connection of request to your situation	A clear and realistic connection between your request and situation 4pts.	Can see some connection and is realistic between your request and situation 3pts.	Not a very clear connection or a realistic request for your situation 2pts	No connection not a realistic request for your situation. 1pt.
Written part Spelling and grammar.	No errors in spelling or grammar 4pts.	1-3 spelling or grammar errors 3pts.	4-5 spelling or grammar errors 2pts	More than 5 spelling or grammar errors 1pt.
Contains all required parts	Contains all parts and reflects and incorporates a clear understanding of the information in the supplied documents. 4pts.	Contains all parts but does not demonstrate a very clear understanding of the documents 3pts.	Missing only one part, does not incorporate or demonstrate a clear understanding of the documents 2pts.	Missing more than one part, unclear use of information and documents. 1pt
Total point Student				
Total points Teacher				

16 = A+
15 = A
14 = A-

13 = B=
12 = B
11 = B-

10 = C+
9 = C
8 = C-

7 = D+
6 = D
5 = D-

* Anything less is not acceptable