

Georgia's History:

# Great Depression

SS8H8ab



# Standards

**SS8H8 The student will analyze the important events that occurred after World War I and their impact on Georgia.**

- a. Describe the impact of the boll weevil and drought on Georgia.
- b. Explain economic factors that resulted in the Great Depression.

Georgia's History:

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# After World War I

- After WWI, many people enjoyed good economic times.
- Increased industrialization left many Americans wealthy.
- Unfortunately, farmers, like the majority of Georgians, still faced many challenges.

# A Call to Diversify

- In addition to calling for more industry in Georgia, agriculture experts and New South promoters urged farmers to diversify their crops.
- Georgia's farmers relied heavily on cotton and refused to take the advice.
- They kept growing cotton (and only cotton) because it was the most profitable.

Picking Cotton  
Near Marietta –  
1930s



# Boll Weevil

- A tiny insect known as a boll weevil made its way north from Mexico and reached Georgia's farms in 1915.
- The boll weevil was devastating to the South because it laid its eggs in cotton plants and the larvae destroyed the cotton bolls.
- By the 1920s, many Georgia farmers had lost their crops, money, and their land due to the insects' destruction.
- The total cotton crop dropped from 1.75 million bales a year to 588,000 in 1923.



Boll Weevil



# Severe Drought

- A severe drought soon followed the boll weevil catastrophe from 1924 to 1927.
- The U.S. Weather Bureau said that rivers in many places reached the lowest stages ever known.
- Without enough rain, farmers could not grow as much as they normally did.



# Economic Hardship

- Both the boll weevil and the drought had a severe impact on Georgia's agriculture.
- More and more people left farms to work in factories in Georgia's cities.
- By the 1930s, at least half of all workers in the state worked in non-farming jobs.
- The farmers who remained tended to be very poor—most were sharecroppers or tenants and were drowning in debt.

# Consumerism

- While farmers suffered, the majority of the rest of the nation enjoyed prosperity during the 1920s.
- The war led to increased production and more money.
- People's spending habits changed as lot as consumerism became normal and they focused more on buying things rather than on saving.
- Buying things on credit also became more common, which allowed people to buy things right away rather than having to save to afford them.

# Overproduction

- Meanwhile, industries and businesses were producing more than people could buy.
- Farmers were also producing more than people could use.
- With the war over, prices for crops fell drastically, making it hard for them to earn a profit.
- Many farmers had to borrow money to buy new equipment and grow more crops.

# Stock Market

- More and more people began buying stocks as well.
- When people buy stock they purchase part ownership in companies that they believe will make money.
- When the companies do well, the stockholders grow wealthy.
- During the 1920s, people often paid for part of a stock and then borrowed money to buy the rest.



New York Stock  
Exchange Floor – 1920s

# Stock Market

- Millions of Americans bought stocks on speculation.
- That meant they made high-risk investments and hoped the price of shares in companies would go up.
  - This sent the price of stocks up more than they were really worth.



# Black Tuesday

- When stocks began to drop to their true worth, people panicked and sold their stocks for cheaper prices.
- This caused the stock prices to drop rapidly.
- On October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1929, the stock market crashed.
  - This is known as Black Tuesday, and is generally considered the beginning of the Great Depression.

Crowd Gathering Outside  
the NYSE after the Crash  
in 1929.



# Great Depression

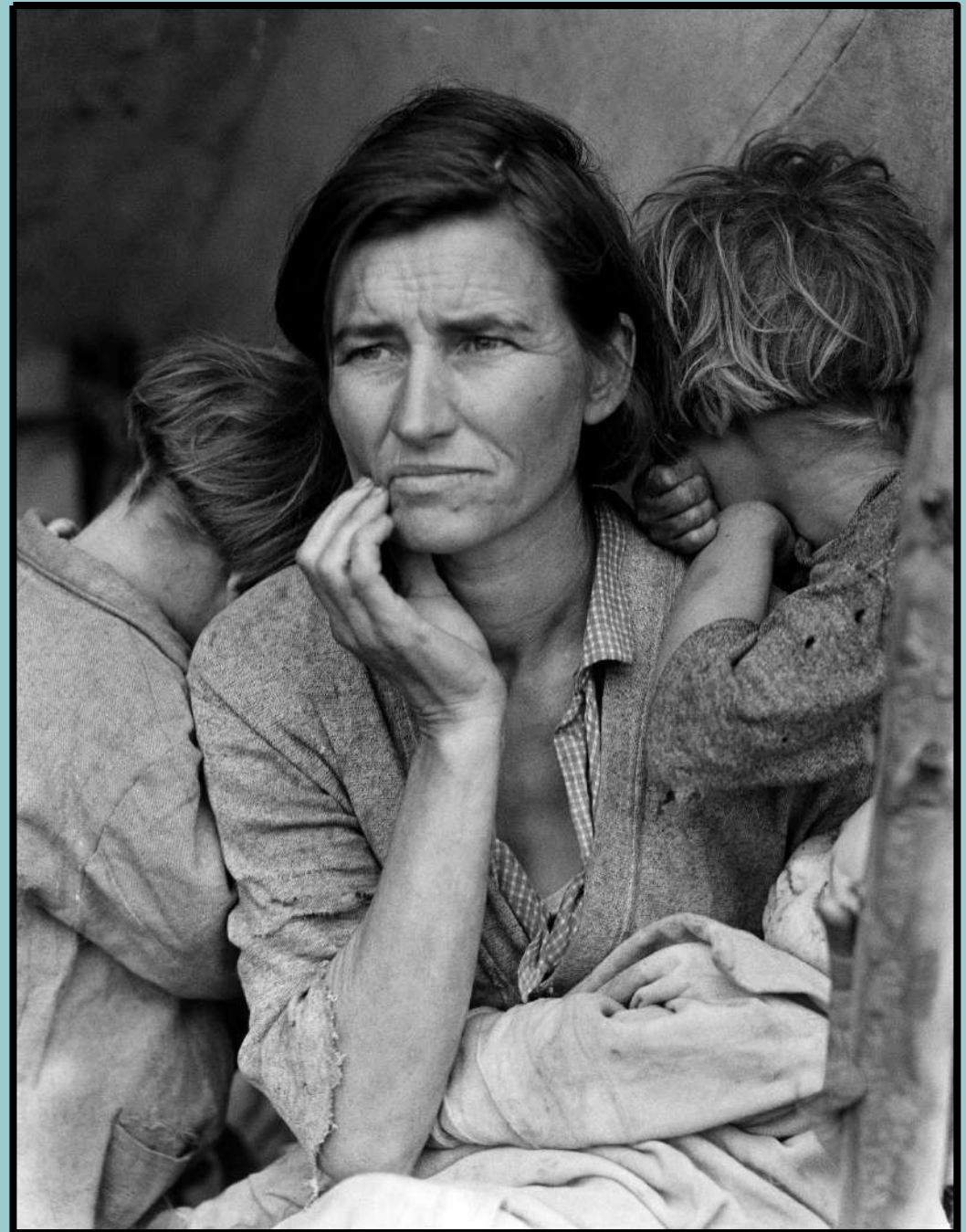
- Many banks went out of business, unemployment rose sky high, and thousands of people lost their life savings and their homes.
- The depression that followed the stock market crash hurt many Americans.

# Crowds Outside of the Bank of the United States in NYC after its Failure in 1931.





Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother* depicts poor pea pickers in California. This is Florence Owens Thompson, age 32, a mother of seven children, in March 1936.



Impoverished American  
Family Living in a Shanty  
– Oklahoma, 1936



# Dust Bowl

- During the Depression, more than 750,000 farmers lost their farms.
- On top of that, farmers in the Great Plains were hit with severe droughts.
- Without rain, crops could not grow or hold the fertile topsoil in place.
- Much of it blew away in powerful dust storms.







# Dust Bowl

- This part of the nation became known as the Dust Bowl because dust literally covered everything.
  - The skies would turn black with dry, blowing dust.
- Oklahoma and Kansas were especially hard hit.
- Many farm families packed all they owned into their cars and headed west to California to make a new start.



Buried  
Machinery in a  
Barn Lot --  
South Dakota,  
1936



DUST STORM APPROACHING SPEARMAN, TEXAS.  
APRIL 14, 1935

# Georgia

- The Depression hit Georgia especially hard.
- Cotton dropped to 5 cents per pound and within a year, many farmers lost their land and moved to cities to find work.
  - Between 1900 and 1940, Atlanta's population grew by 200,000.
- Others, including many African Americans, left Georgia altogether and headed for northern cities.

# Georgia

- Those who remained on the farms were illiterate and trapped in poverty.
- Many farm families lived in shacks without plumbing or electricity, went hungry, and were unable to buy food and other basic necessities.
- Rural schools closed and the ones that remained open saw a drop in students as children had to work to support their families.



# Herbert Hoover

- Herbert Hoover was president when the Depression began.
- He believed that private charities and local communities should help the needy; it wasn't the government's job to help.
- Many people believed he did not do enough to help Americans during the Depression.



# Hoovervilles

- Thousands of Americans could not pay their mortgages and lost their homes.
- Many were forced to live in cardboard shacks that they built in public parks.
- These shacks were known as “Hoovervilles”.
  - Empty pockets were “Hoover Flags” and newspapers were “Hoover Blankets”.





# Soup Kitchens

- Millions of Americans were out of work and could not provide food for their families.
- Thousands of people lined up for food at soup kitchens that were run by charities.
- After waiting in line for hours, they received bread and a bowl of soup.
  - This was usually the only meal that they would eat all day.



Unemployed Men  
Outside of a Soup  
Kitchen in Chicago,  
1933









# F.D. Roosevelt

- A new president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was elected in 1932.
- He promised a “New Deal” for the American people.
- Hoover believed that the government should not interfere with the economy, but Roosevelt felt the opposite.
- FDR’s government took an active role in trying to help the economy recover.



32<sup>nd</sup> President  
Franklin D. Roosevelt in  
1933