

Farmers Take Action and Respond to the Great Depression

Lesson Question

How did farmers join together and use direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression?

Lesson Task: After reading a primary and a secondary source document on farmer action during the Great Depression, students write a four-paragraph essay that explains how farmers joined together to improve their conditions during this time.

The main goal of this lesson is to support students in thinking more deeply about the ways in which farmers had to work together to support themselves during the Great Depression. Students will investigate how the direct actions farmers took responded directly to the economic pressures facing them.

A misconception of this time period is that the government swept in to support people in need. While the government of FDR did institute major public works projects and other economic interventions, in the early days of the Great Depression there was little government response. Instead of standing by helpless, farmers took direct action to improve their conditions.

One challenge of this lesson is its focus on the interdependence of economic systems. The lesson asks students to examine farmer actions as a direct response to the economic conditions facing them. We anticipate many middle school students will be unfamiliar with economic concepts and terms.

An important note here is that farmers' actions did not lead directly to a government response. They were successful in raising public attention to their plight however, and were part of a larger and ultimately successful push from the public for greater government intervention.

NAEP Era: 7. Modern America and the World Wars (1914–1945)

Focal Skill: Identify key details in documents that reveal how authors convey point of view and purpose

Number of Documents: 2

Number of Days: 4–6

Common Core Standards

- CC reading standard (primary): RH.6-8.2 Determine the central ideas or information of primary sources
- CC writing standard: WHST.6-8.2 Write informative/explanatory texts

TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Suggested time: 1 session]

OVERVIEW 2

- Objectives
- Instructional Sequence

THE HOOK 3

- Purpose & Process
- Transition to Context-Setting

CONTEXT 6

- Overview
- Four Context Slides
 - Purpose & Process
- Slide Review
- Transition to Documents

[Suggested time: 2 sessions]

DOCUMENTS 12

- Documents Overview
- Document 1: Farmers Confront the Great Depression
 - Purpose, Process, Discussion
- Document 2: Iowa Farmers Fight Back
 - Purpose, Process, Discussion

[Suggested time: ½ session]

CONNECT 18

- Purpose
- Cross-Document Discussion

- Re-engage students in historical inquiry
- Compare big ideas and details across documents
- Help students articulate own thinking

[Suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

WRITING 20

- Teachers' Roles During Writing
- Preparing Students to Write
- Writing Outline
- Set Level of Writing Support
- Sample Student Essay
- Writing Rubric

OVERVIEW

[Suggested time: 5 minutes]

Content Objectives

Students will understand how the Great Depression impacted farmers and how, in response, farmers joined together and used direct action to try to improve their conditions.

The Great Depression led to a drop in crop prices and farmers struggled to pay their mortgages. Initially, the government did very little to address the farmers' difficulties.

Farm Holidays were an attempt to raise the price of crops so that farmers could make more money and try to keep their farms.

Foreclosure protests were a collective attempt to prevent banks from taking their farms away from them.

Historical Thinking Objectives

- Close Reading
- Contextualization

Skill Objectives

- Identifying main ideas and details in primary and secondary source documents
- Using evidence to support main ideas in writing

Instructional Sequence

Before you begin the lesson you should share a brief agenda with students:

HOOK	Together, we will look at a puzzling picture from 1933 of farmers dumping out their own milk and we'll think about why they might have done such a thing.
CONTEXT	We'll then review some background context about the impact the Great Depression had on farmers.
DOCUMENTS	On your own, you will read one secondary and one primary source document about what farmers did in response to the conditions they faced.
CONNECT	We'll discuss the actions farmers took and connect back to what was happening at this time.
WRITE	You'll write a four-paragraph explanatory essay in which you will describe how farmers joined together and used direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression.

Lesson Background

Millions of Americans were affected by the Stock Market crash in 1929 and the subsequent decade of economic unrest. The Great Depression was one of the worst economic collapses in United States history, affecting nearly every facet of American society. Banks that had invested funds in the market lost clients' savings and were forced to close, businesses failed without proper fiscal backing, and one quarter of Americans were unemployed at the height of the crisis. The country did not financially recover from the Depression until the onset of World War II.

In the formative early years of the Depression, the government response was minimal and severely ineffective. Many in President Herbert Hoover's administration believed that the government's best course of action was to remain neutral and allow the economy to right itself. According to their plan, most economic assistance would come from either local government agencies or private benefactors and charities. While there were some small federal programs instituted to help those most gravely affected, these programs did very little to combat the crisis as a whole.

The Depression had a devastating effect on both urban and rural Americans. Some of those unemployed in the cities were unable to keep their homes and were forced to live in massive, makeshift shantytowns. In rural societies, hundreds of thousands of farmers were threatened with farm foreclosure when they were unable to sell their crops at profit. The Depression had reduced the price of staple crops (wheat, corn, etc.) so greatly that farmers were unable to make enough money to pay their mortgages, therefore putting the future of their farms and their livelihoods in jeopardy.

With little help from the government, and faced with the imminent danger of losing their farms, some farmers turned to direct action. Farming communities banded together in certain areas to block crops from entering the market. These "Farm Holidays" were designed to lower the supply of crops in an effort to increase demand for the remaining items. Farmers and their supporters would go as far as physically blocking other farmers' trucks from entering the market, and even dumping excess foodstuffs on the side of the road.

Farmers used other methods of direct action when a farm foreclosure was imminent. Members of the community would crowd the bank's foreclosure sale and initiate "penny auctions," bidding extremely low amounts on the items for sale and threatening any bidder who attempted to raise the price. After each item from the farm was sold for pennies on the dollar, the crowd would return the items to the original farmer. Farmers also attempted to stop foreclosures before they even began. In one instance, a group of farmers physically assaulted and threatened the life of a judge who was known for issuing a large number of foreclosures.

Examples of these direct actions were spread throughout rural America. While they were not necessarily the norm, many instances of farmer protest were nationally publicized. These actions brought to light the plight of farmers during the Depression. Therefore, each protest served a dual purpose: it stopped an imminent local issue, and it elevated farmers' financial troubles into the national consciousness. By working collectively and using direct action, farmers were able to temporarily improve their conditions and combat the ill effects of the Depression.

In 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt instituted the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA). The act placed quotas on the amount of foodstuffs sold at market, effectively increasing the price of crops and giving farmers a steady source of income. In some instances farmers were reimbursed for any lost income as a result of these crop quotas. The AAA was an effective piece of legislation necessary for the long-term survival of rural communities. While the act was not directly connected to farmers' use of direct action, it did address the same concerns and fulfill the same demands farmers voiced during the early years of the Great Depression.

Student Background Knowledge

Students should understand that:

- The Great Depression began when the Stock Market, a trading place where people buy and sell shares (a small percentage of a company), crashed in 1929. The crash forced many Americans who had put money into the stock market to lose a great deal of money.
- The Stock Market Crash affected all parts of the economy and all parts of American society. Banks that had placed money in the market closed. Companies that kept their money in banks were forced to fire employees. And people who lost their job could no longer afford their homes or pay for other necessities like food.

THE HOOK

[Suggested time: 10 minutes]

Farmers Dumping Milk on Their Way to Market in 1933

Purpose

The purpose of this image is two-fold:

- To introduce the lesson inquiry.
- To engage students through the use of a puzzling image.
- Students will not have all of the information they need to answer the **Think About It** question. This is OK; as the lesson unfolds they will fill in missing pieces of the puzzle using the Context slides and the secondary source.
- The central concept for students to explore at this stage is the idea of direct farmer action. Students may also begin to hypothesize about the economic rationale for this action, though we expect students will have more questions than answers at this stage.
- *Note:* The original caption for this photograph was “9/16/1933—Striking dairy farmers of the Chicago district spilling milk from one of the non-striker’s trucks near Harvard, IL, where they are operating an effective blockade.” This strike is one example of a direct action some farmers took during the Great Depression. As this photograph shows, supporters of the “Farm Holiday Movement”—which proposed blockading crops from entering the market in order to lower the supply and increase prices—would even destroy non-striking farmers’ supplies to further their cause.

Farmers Dumping Milk, 1933



Process

- **Read** the image headnote and **Think About It** question with students.
 - Be sure to establish that students understand what a dairy farmer is.
- Have students carefully **observe** the slide image for a few moments. Questions to prompt close

observation include:

- What do you notice about these people?
 - What are they doing?
 - How do the people in this image look? [Several faces look distinctly happy; the others are serious and intent, but no one appears to be unhappy about these actions.]
 - Where are they? [Students may notice the sign on the building in the background. Students may infer that the full sign is “Dairy Company.”]
- Next, **ask** students the **Think About It** question: Why might these dairy farmers be dumping out pails of milk?
 - Unless they have prior knowledge about Farm Holidays, students will simply be making educated guesses here. This is OK. The point is not to drive towards the correct answer, but to support students in deeper thinking through discussion.
- Questions to **ask** to push students’ thinking include:
 - What date was this picture taken? What do we know about what was happening at this time?
 - What do most farmers do with the milk they produce? [Sell it.] So, why might farmers happily destroy a product they produce?
 - > Students may hypothesize: There was too much milk; the milk was spoiled. If so, ask them: Why would an official photograph have been taken of that moment? Let’s remember what people were going through at this time....
- If students don’t get to the concept of protest or action, you may want to ask about other events they are aware of when people used goods in a form of public action, for example boycotts of products.
- Once students have established this as some form of “action,” **ask**:
 - Why do you think farmers would have protested by destroying milk? [Students may or may not have answers to this, which is fine.]
- **Say** to students: We’ve developed a hypothesis here that these farmers may have been protesting something or taking some form of direct action. We still have some questions about why and what they were trying to accomplish. In this lesson we are going to be thinking about the ways in which farmers were impacted by the Great Depression and how they responded. During this lesson we will explore the question: **How did farmers join together and use direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression?**

TRANSITION TO CONTEXT-SETTING

Transition students to the Context slides by letting them know that they are now going to learn more about how the Great Depression impacted farmers.

Context slides are intended to serve as a support for a relatively quick “interactive lecture” with students. The goal is to both provide essential background information and engage students’ prior knowledge and thinking.

While you can certainly slow the process down according to your students’ needs, Context is not intended to be a “deep dive” into slide images. Documents in the Context slides serve the role of illustrating content, sparking quick observations and reactions, and making abstract ideas more concrete.

CONTEXT

[Suggested time: 25–30 minutes—to be completed in the first session]

Context Overview

The purpose of these slides is to provide the background information that students need to fully understand the actions farmers took to save their farms.

The four Context slides focus on these ideas:

The Economic Impact of the Great Depression—How the Great Depression devastated all aspects of the U.S. economy

Farms and the Banks—The inter-dependent relationship between farms and banks

The Great Depression Affects Farmers—Two graphs showing the relationship between falling crop prices and farm foreclosures

Farmers Respond to the Great Depression—Introduction to two forms of action farmers took: Farm Holidays and foreclosure protests

Slide 1: THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

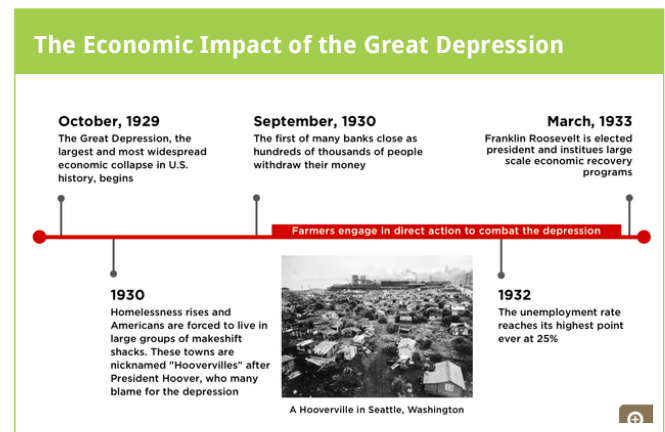
Purpose

To orient students to the idea that the Great Depression impacted all facets of the U.S. economy, and that sectors of the economy are interdependent.

To situate farmer action within the overall timeframe of economic collapse and the beginning of recovery efforts.

Suggested Process

- **Read** through the slide title, introduction, and **Think About It** question with students.
- **Clarify** with students what the phrase “economic impact” means.
 - Students may identify “economic” as having to do with money. Push students to develop a deeper definition, emphasizing that the economy has to do with a complex *system* of wealth creation and distribution in a country.
- Before you look at the timeline, tap into students’ prior knowledge. **Ask:** What do you already know about the Great Depression?
- Look through each of the points on the timeline. **Provide** background information as needed:
 - **The Stock Market Crash:** This lesson assumes students have some prior knowledge of the Stock Market Crash of 1929, so spend some time refreshing students’ memories about this content.



- **Length of the Depression:** The Depression lasted for about ten years, but there is no exact date for its end. Some historians argue that the U.S.'s entry into WWII ended the Depression; others point to the GDP equaling its pre-crash rate in 1939.
- **Hoovervilles:** There were thousands of Hoovervilles throughout the country. The largest was in St. Louis and another notable Hooverville sprung up in New York's Central Park. They were nicknamed Hoovervilles because many Americans blamed President Hoover and his administration for not acting fast enough to stop the prolonged depression.
- **Bank Failures:** Bank failures were part of a larger financial panic that occurred *after* the Stock Market Crash. It is important to remember that, although significant, the crash itself did not have an enormous impact on most Americans. But, the fact that their assets and savings (through bank shares) were tied up in the market vicariously affected millions of Americans.
- **Bank Holidays:** FDR would later institute a Bank Holiday on his first day in office, closing all banks for four days to freeze assets and allow banks to recover from bank runs (people withdrawing their money en masse).
- **Unemployment:** To put the unemployment rate in perspective, the United States has not gone above 10% unemployment since 1939. Even at the height of the great recession in 2009, the rate was 9.7%. In the Great Depression, most who were unemployed came from single-wage houses. Therefore, entire families were affected by this unemployment rate. With no government support system (no social security, minimal welfare programs, etc.) there was very little American families could do to help themselves out of poverty.
- **Roosevelt's Policies:** Franklin Roosevelt ran on a progressive platform that ran in stark contrast from Hoover's conservative economics. FDR's first 100 days in office are famous for the number of federal programs he instituted, including the Agricultural Adjustment Act (which, like the Farm Holiday Movement, raised crop prices by setting quotas for farm production). While historians argue that FDR's policies were a moral boost for Americans and were effective in curbing short term economic losses, overall, FDR's 100 days did not bring the U.S. out of the Depression.
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: How did the early years of the Great Depression affect Americans?
 - During this short discussion, help students to see the ways in which various aspects of the economy are interrelated.
 - Tell students that the Great Depression impacted both rural and urban communities.
- **Point out** the red bar on the timeline and tell students that in this lesson they will be taking a closer look at the impact of the Great Depression on farmers and how farmers responded. The documents they read will reference the time period represented by this red bar.

Slide 2: FARMS AND THE BANKS

Purpose

To inform students about the interdependence between banks and farms.

Key Point: Students may jump to the conclusion that banks were “bad” and took advantage of farmers. It will be important to help students to see the deeper nuances here, while acknowledging that the system did put farmers in a situation of being virtually powerless to hold on to their property.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the slide title, introduction and text with students.
- As you discuss the bullet points, **provide** additional background information as needed:
 - Farmers’ livelihoods are directly connected to how much crop they can grow and how much they can sell those crops for at the marketplace.
 - Farmers normally have no control over the market price of their crops; prices are dictated by larger economic forces, including supply and demand.
 - When the Stock Market crashed the price of wheat and corn dwindled.
 - Farmers had an abundance of product that they simply could not sell and earn any profit on.
 - Without any income, farmers could not pay their bills, the largest of which were their mortgage payments to the banks.
- Be sure to **define and explain** the following terms. Students will need to understand them as they read the documents.
 - A **mortgage** is a loan for property, or in this instance, for a farm. Most farmers did not have enough savings to purchase a farm and the land needed to grow crops outright, so they would go to a bank and ask to borrow the money to buy the farm. When the bank agreed to the loan, they would charge the farmer a monthly fee (with interest) until the farmer had paid off all the money for the farm. Most farmers would never make enough money to pay back the mortgage in full, and became stuck in constant monthly payments.
 - If a farmer could not make his monthly mortgage payment, banks could foreclose on the farm. A farm **foreclosure** is when a bank seizes the property and takes it away from the farmer. The bank can do this because, even though the farmer is working on the land, the land and the farm are technically the bank’s property until the farmer pays off all of his debt to the bank.
- Once a bank takes back the property, it then tries to sell it, usually in an auction, in order to make back some of the money that the bank lost in the initial loan. An **auction** is when a bank holds a public event to sell off items from a foreclosed farm. A group of people meet at a specified time and an auctioneer (the person in charge of the auction) sets opening prices on items. People in the group then state an amount they are willing to pay for the item. This is called “bidding.” Others can make higher bids, and the person with the highest bid wins the item.

Farms and the Banks



A farmer from Alabama looking out on his fields

- * Many farmers did not own their land. Banks sold land to the farmers and farmers paid banks a mortgage
- * Farmers made money by growing crops and selling the crops at market price
- * If farmers did not make enough money to pay their mortgage, banks could foreclose on their land, meaning they could take the farms away and sell them at auction

- **Ask** students the **Think About It** question: What might happen to farmers if the price of crops dropped?
 - Help students hypothesize about what might have happened to farmers. The next slide will present some data to help students deepen their answers.

Slide 3: THE GREAT DEPRESSION AFFECTS FARMERS

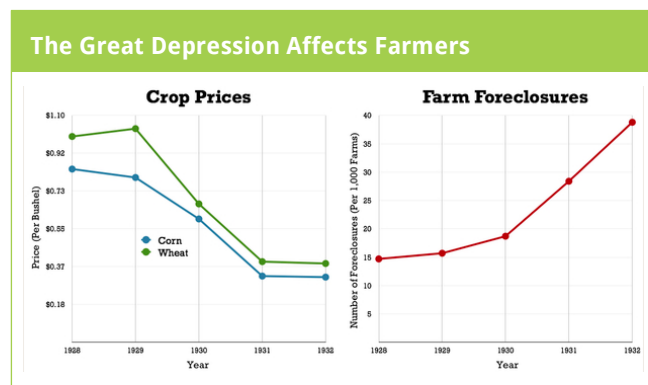
Purpose

To help students see the relationship between the falling price of crops and the rate of farm foreclosures.

To support students in developing skills in using data to deepen historical understandings.

Suggested Process

- **Read** the title and slide text with students.
- **Look** at each graph on its own, supporting students in using all the features of the graph for a “close read.” For example, **ask** students:
 - What is the title of this graph? What does that tell us?
 - What is along the x/y-axis? What’s the unit of measurement?
- **Flag** potential misunderstandings:
 - Students may need support in understanding what a **bushel** is:
 - > A bushel is a standard agricultural unit of measurement. It equals 8 dry gallons, and depending on the crop, weighs approximately 50-60 pounds. Corn equals 56 pounds and wheat equals 60 pounds, so their bushel weights are comparable.
 - Students may need support in understanding what is meant by “Number of foreclosures per 1,000 farms.”
 - > Students are likely to read the numbers and assume that “15” means 15 foreclosures. The graph does not tell students anything about the absolute number of foreclosures; it only indicates information about the *rate* of foreclosure.
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: What was the relationship between crop prices and farm foreclosures?
- **Support** students in seeing how they can **compare** the two graphs:
 - What is the same about these graphs and what is different? How can we use what is the same and what is different to compare this data?
- As students make observations that compare the two graphs, **provide** background information, as needed:



- While there are obviously many other types of crops (dairy, meat, fruits, vegetables, etc.) grains like corn and wheat were the most plentiful and necessary staples of American diet. Other crop prices fell in a similar fashion. Most farmers, especially those in the Midwest (who were most affected by the Depression) held a significant portion of their acreage for either corn or wheat.
- These farm foreclosure statistics are a national average. In the Midwest, the numbers were significantly higher. Some counties in Iowa, however, had few to no foreclosures. This is attributed to pressure from local farmers on banks and county officials to halt foreclosures, as well as local banks' financial stability. Some banks understood that their land investments would not yield enough return at auction, and simply held the land until local economic conditions improved. So while foreclosures were a rampant problem, they varied greatly from county to county depending on circumstances.

Slide 4: FARMERS RESPOND TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Purpose

To introduce students to the concept of farmer action, and to the two major forms of action farmers took: Farm Holidays and foreclosure protests.

Students will use these categories as they take notes and write their essays.

Suggested Process

- **Read** through the slide with students and **look** at the slide image.
- **Ask** the **Think About It** question: Why do you think farmers worked together in groups to improve their conditions?
- Since students do not yet know much about Farm Holidays or foreclosure protests, **focus** the discussion on the *collective action* part of the question. Follow up questions could include:
 - What would the benefits of working together have been? What might the challenges have been?
- As students discuss this slide, **provide** some background information about the lack of government response and the actions farmers took. This will help prepare students to read the lesson documents more deeply.
 - **Lack of government response:** There was a widespread belief (especially in the Hoover administration and conservative circles) that the economy would right itself without too much government intervention—that the free-market would fix any problems. While many in Hoover's administration were advocates of this system, Herbert Hoover himself was more progressive than many realize. Hoover raised taxes on the wealthy in 1932 and even created an Emergency Relief and Construction Act. While these were similar in theory to some of FDR's later policies, they were dwarfed in size and financial contributions. Hoover, however, was not simply a scapegoat for the ills of the Depression. His desire to "trim the fat" of government bureaucracies did cripple relief efforts in the early years of the Depression.

Farmers Respond to the Great Depression



Farmers gather together in an effort to stop a foreclosure, 1933

Farmers did not wait for a national response. They banded together and took direct actions such as:

* Farm Holidays

* Foreclosure Protests

- **Farm Holidays:** Farm holidays were organized, collective public demonstrations where farmers and supporters would physically stop crops from entering the market. Some farmers volunteered to surrender their crops. Others were forced to cooperate when Farm Holiday supporters built roadblocks and formed picket lines. One goal of these demonstrations was to raise the market price of the crops by lowering the supply, and thus increasing the demand.
- **Foreclosure Protests:** Foreclosure protests were localized, but potent showings of force. Farmers would meet at a foreclosure sale and purposely bid extremely low prices on items for sale. When the sale ended, farmers would sell or give back the items to the original farmer.

Slide 5: CONTEXT REVIEW: FARMERS TAKE DIRECT ACTION

Purpose

To summarize the essential information from the Context that students will need for contextualizing farmer actions.

Process

- Look at the image on this slide and **remind** students that they will need some of the information they’ve just learned (or reviewed) in order to answer the lesson questions, so they will spend a few moments to review and take some notes.
- **Guide** students in remembering the most important information to answer the two **Take Notes on Context** questions:
 - What happened to the price of crops during the Great Depression?
 - How did the economic conditions at this time impact farmers?
- If necessary, return to past slides to jog students’ memories.
- Allow students to **discuss** their answers at table groups or with a partner.
- Each student should **record** his/her own notes.

Context Review



TRANSITION TO DOCUMENTS

After reviewing the Context slides say to students:

The context information we just discussed will help you to better understand the information in the two documents you are about to read. The Context and the Documents will help you to answer the lesson question: **How did farmers join together and use direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression?**

DOCUMENTS

[Suggested time: 2 sessions]

Documents: Overview

Students read one secondary and one primary source during this lesson.

The Farmer Takes Direction Action, Secondary Source, 2015

Central Information: A historical essay that provides additional context and discusses the impact of farmer action

An Iowa Farmer Remembers the Great Depression, Primary Source, 1971

Central Information: An oral history that describes both Farm Holidays and foreclosure protests.

Students will be thinking about the ways in which farmers had to work together and the ways these tactics responded to the economic pressures facing farmers at this time.

The central reading skill is to identify main ideas and details in the documents.

Note: Students can work on these documents independently while you circulate and support their work. (See PD Doc on Supporting students during document work.)

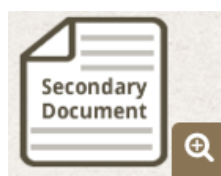
Document 1: FARMERS CONFRONT THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Purpose

To provide additional background information for students on the ways in which the Great Depression impacted farmers and to highlight how farmers banded together in response.

- Students will draw on this document when they write the introductory paragraph of their essays.

Secondary Source



Key Reading Challenge

The key challenge of this document is understanding the complex economic forces that impacted farmers. We anticipate that most middle school students will be unfamiliar with the concepts of mortgages, foreclosures, and bank auctions.

Students have to understand the relationships between banks, farms and the wider market, as well as the impact the Great Depression had on these relationships. Students will need grounding in these ideas to fully understand the direct actions farmers took. For this reason, you may want to consider reading this document with the whole class.

Suggested Process

- We suggest reading this document as a whole class.
- Use the questions in the tool and in the teacher notes to support whole and small group discussion as you work through this document.

- If students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Read Closely questions) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.



Document 1: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the central information—i.e., When the government did nothing to help farmers in the early years of the Great Depression, they banded together to take action and keep banks from taking over their farms.

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It and Read Closely questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts for the extension questions below.

Discuss the Source It Questions

As you talk through the Source It questions, focus on the following points:

- This is a secondary source written by historians.
- This document will help students better understand the next document, which is an oral history about farmer actions.

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Ask the first **Read Closely** question: Why did many politicians believe that the government did not need to step in and help out those who had been hurt by the Great Depression?

- Support students in finding the place in the text that discusses many people's belief that the situation would right itself and that the private sector—not the government—should intervene.
- Connect students back to what they learned in Context: What did we learn about Hoover's initial response? How does that connect to what this essay is saying?

Ask the second **Read Closely** question: What did the banks do when farmers could not meet their mortgage payments?

- Students may need some support here in understanding the central concepts. Make sure students understand the following concepts (which were also covered in Slide 2 of the Context):
 - Mortgages
 - Foreclosures
 - Bank auctions
- Key point:** Students may have a tendency to see this content as “bad” banks against farmers. It will be important to help students see the complexities here: Farms were an investment for banks and the loss of mortgage payments made banks vulnerable, which in turn hurt ordinary Americans.
- Ask** students:
 - How were different parts of the economy connected? How did problems in one part of the economy hurt other parts? (Looking at the connection, for example between the price of goods, farms, health of banks, people’s jobs, etc.)

Ask the third **Read Closely** question: Why did farms band together to take action?

- There are several ways to approach this question. Support students in sharing with each other the range of ideas they pulled out from the text:
 - Farmers had to take action to protect their farms and their way of life because the government and banks were not.
 - Farmers had to join together because alone they were relatively powerless within the larger economic system, but together could exert more power.
 - Farmers wanted to make changes and to support each other.
- Make sure students describe any portions of the text that they quote *in their own words*.

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion.

Document 2: IOWA FARMERS FIGHT BACK

Purpose

To investigate two tactics farmers used to try and improve their conditions during the Great Depression.

Key Reading Challenge

Students need to understand that the farmers’ actions were a direct response to their economic realities.

Ten-cent sales and other disruptions were efforts to *protest foreclosures*.

Farm Holidays were an effort to impact the agricultural market and raise the price of crops.

These are complex economic ideas and students may benefit from some explicit teacher support in grappling with them.

Primary Source



Suggested Process

- As students read independently, move around the room to diagnose difficulties and offer coaching. When you note several students struggling with particular passages or questions bring them to the attention of the class as appropriate.
- Use your Teacher Dashboard to scan and assess student responses to specific Document questions (such as the Big Idea questions) once a majority of students have finished reading the document. This will prepare you for the class discussion.



Document 2: Class Discussion

It is critical for students to briefly discuss each document after they have read it.

Purpose

Check for and deepen students'

- comprehension of the document
- grasp of the “Big Ideas”—i.e., the purpose and result of foreclosure protests and Farm Holidays

Process

Engage students in discussing one or two key questions they have answered in the tool.

- *Zoom In* provides Source It, Read Closely, Gather Evidence, Big Idea and Think About It questions and prompts alongside this document. Depending on your class's needs, you may choose to focus on certain question types over others.
- We strongly recommend using structures such as turn-and-talk and table group discussions as you engage students in these questions.
- Most important, be sure to follow up on student comments by *pressing for reasons and evidence*, and *for accountable talk*. Use the prompts for the extension questions below.

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

Select student responses to the “Big Idea” questions, and use them to guide discussion

- Ahead of time, use the Lesson Dashboard to quickly scan your students' responses to the “Big Idea” questions:
 - What happened when farmers disrupted a foreclosure auction?
 - What were farmers trying to accomplish by taking part in a Farm Holiday?
 - What is strong evidence from the document to support your answers? Answer using your own words.
- Identify student responses that reflect understanding of the Big Idea, and good use of supporting evidence, and those that reflect confusion or misunderstanding.
- Select and project a range of student responses to the summary questions. You can choose model responses as well as responses that need development as a way to spark student discussion. (See the PD document and video on “Discussion Phase 1: Formative Assessment of Student Comprehension of Individual Documents” for more support on using students' responses to analyze their reading strengths and needs.)

Discuss the Source It Questions

Help students identify and discuss the following points:

- This is an oral history.

- **Ask** students what this means and support their answers if they are unfamiliar with oral histories.
- Help students to *use the headnote* to establish what time period the document refers to.
 - **Key point:** Students are likely accustomed to dating a document by its publication date (here, 1971). In this case, the more relevant date is the time period the farmer is referring to in his retelling of past events (the 1930s).
- There is not a “right” or “wrong” answer to the reason why Terrell wants to tell this story. Students could convincingly argue that the purpose is “to inform” or “to record.”

Discuss the Read Closely Questions

Ask: Why did some farmers stop other farmers from bringing their crops to market?

Follow-up questions to **ask** might include:

- Why would farmers have wanted to pressure or encourage other farmers to join them?
- Why might they have resorted to acts of violence?

Discuss the Gather Evidence Questions

Ask students to share quotes they highlighted for the first **Gather Evidence** question: According to Henry Terrell, how did farmers fight back against farm foreclosures?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- They was paying ten cents for a plow. And when it was all over, they’d give it back to the farmer.
- It was legal and anybody that bid against that thing, that was trying to get that man’s land, they would be dealt with seriously, as it were.
- They came very near hanging a judge, because they caught this judge foreclosing farm mortgages, and they had no other way of stopping it.

Ask students to share quotes they highlighted for the second **Gather Evidence** question: According to Henry Terrell, how did farmers fight back against falling crop prices?

Focus on key quotes, including:

- The Farm Holiday movement was to hold the stuff off the market, to increase the price.
- They stopped milk wagons, dumped milk. They stopped farmers hauling their hay to market. They undertook to stop the whole agriculture process.

As students are finding quotes for the two **Gather Evidence** questions, **ask** them:

- Why did you choose this quote? How does it connect to the question you are answering? Is there more (or less) of the text we should include here?
- Does anyone else agree? Disagree?
- What does this mean? Can anyone think of another way to explain this quote?
- Is there another place in the text where Terrell discussed farmer actions?
- How were these examples of farmers joining together collectively?

- In what ways were farmers fighting against the economic conditions facing them?

Prompt students to put the quotes *in their own words*:

- What does this mean? Can anyone think of another way to explain this quote?

Discuss the Big Idea Questions

Students move at this stage from connecting the specific details in the document to the Big Ideas about farmer direct actions. Ways to articulate Terrell's Big Ideas about farmer actions include:

- When farmers disrupted foreclosure auctions they prevented banks from taking their farms. They were fighting back against the falling economy.
- By taking part in Farm Holidays farmers tried to raise the price of crops. They did this to try to make more money so they could keep their farms.

Anticipate that students might struggle to *identify and articulate the Big Ideas*.

- They may focus too much on smaller details (*Farmers bid low prices at foreclosure auctions*).
- Or, they may articulate ideas quite generally, without staying connected enough to the document details (*Farmers used direct action to make their lives better*).

Questions to **ask** to help students more clearly *identify and articulate the Big Ideas* include:

- Let's think back to the quotes we identified. What were the Big Ideas?
- Can you make that idea more specific?
- What's the Big Idea behind that detail?
- Why did farmers do these things? What were they trying to accomplish?
- What else did farmers do? How were these actions connected?

The idea here is not to push students towards the "right" answer, there are many possible ways to articulate the Big Ideas, but to push them to engage in a rich discussion with one another in which they have to articulate their ideas and ground their thinking in the document.

Discuss the Think About It Question

Ask the **Think About It** question: Why do you think some farmers were hesitant to participate in Farm Holidays?

- Students will have to infer and hypothesize; the answer is not grounded directly in the text.
- Support students in sharing their ideas and listening to the ideas of their peers.
- Follow-up questions to ask might include:
 - Let's remember, at this time the government had not stepped in to take much action. How did the farmers' actions impact other farmers?

Have students revise their notes. Allow students time to revise their notes after and/or during the discussion. In particular, students may need to be prompted to revise how they have articulated the document's Big Ideas.

CONNECT

[suggested time: ½ session]

Purpose

Before students write in response to a historical question, they need opportunities to talk. They need to clarify their understanding of the documents and how they connect with the larger context and the question they are answering. Your job as a *Zoom In* teacher is to create these discourse opportunities.

Cross-Document Discussion

Discuss with students the ways in which the Big Ideas in the primary source document connect to the historical context. In this discussion the main goal is to help students to synthesize their learning across documents and connect back to the Context and the larger historical question under investigation. This supports the historical thinking skills of corroboration and contextualization.

Three major moves should happen here:

- Re-engage students in the historical inquiry
- Support students in comparing Big Ideas and details across documents
- Support students in articulating their own thinking, while listening and responding to their peers

A) Re-engage students in the historical inquiry

Begin by reminding students of the lesson question and the larger historical context. Do an initial informal assessment of what “big picture” students have walked away with. **Say** to students:

- Before we look at these actions, let’s think back to the Context. What was happening in the economy and to farmers at this time?

In turn-and-talk or table groups, have students discuss the following questions to help them connect the primary source document to the secondary source and historical context:

- Why did the Great Depression affect farmers so much?
- Prompt groups to look at the Context slides and notes as well as the secondary source document. Let groups discuss and then share their responses.
- **Support students in digging deeper into the Big Ideas.** **Say** to students: Given what was happening, let’s think more deeply about the actions farmers took.

The purpose of this initial phase is to prime students’ thinking and to give you an initial assessment of their general level of understanding. You do not need to spend a long time on these questions because you will dig in deeper in the next phases.

B) Support students in comparing big ideas and details in the primary source document

Display the Connect Tab.

Tell students:

- Let’s look at the Big Ideas you identified in the primary source document.

The Connect tab will display the key discussion questions:

- What were farmers trying to accomplish through foreclosure protests and Farm Holidays?
- What did these forms of direct action have in common?
- Why might some people argue these actions were successful even if the farmers were not able to significantly change their own conditions?

Connect will also display a t-chart labeled “Foreclosure Protests” and “Farm Holidays” that displays student notes on the Big Idea questions from the “Iowa Farmers Fight Back” oral history, and their supporting evidence. You can choose one student’s work to project to guide the discussion, or you can project notes you’ve “starred” while using the Teacher Dashboard to review students’ Big Idea notes.

Foreclosure Protests	Farm Holidays
<p>Big Idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disrupting foreclosure auctions kept banks from taking people’s farms. <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> They bid low prices for farm tools and no one bid against each other. After, they gave the tools back to the farmer. 	<p>Big Idea:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Farm Holidays raised the price of crops. <p>Evidence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By keeping crops like milk and wheat out of the market, farmers lowered supply and increased demand.

Engage students in the “Connect” questions. Again, we recommend using turn-and-talk or table group structures to have students engage in these discussions with their peers.

Follow-up questions you could **ask** include:

- What parts of the economy did these actions try to impact? [The market/the price of goods and banking.] Why would farmers have taken economic actions?
- Were farmers just trying to save their farms or do you think they were trying to accomplish even more?
- Why is it important that farmers joined together to take these actions?

Give students time to **edit** their responses in *Zoom In* based on class discussion.

C) Support students in articulating their own thinking

Finally, be sure to allow students time to speak with each other about their own thinking. This can happen at any stage of the discussion through turn-and-talks or small group discussion. Questions to support this kind of thinking include:

- What’s important here? Surprising?
- What are your thoughts and reactions?
- Does this remind you of other forms of collective action we have studied?

WRITING

[suggested time: 1–2 sessions]

In this four-paragraph explanatory essay, students must describe how farmers joined together and used direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression. The focal writing skill is for students to use evidence from the documents to support main ideas. In the introduction, students describe historical context from the Context slides and secondary source about the impact of the Great Depression and the initial government response.

Teacher's Roles During Writing

As students are writing, support them in these key ways according to their needs:

- Circulate and observe students' progress through the template or outline. Take some notes to help you think about mini-lessons in writing you may want to teach to the whole class.
- Conference individually with students on their writing. Support their development through asking probing questions:
 - You seem stuck; where might you find that information?
 - If you don't remember what that quote means, where can you go?
 - Tell me why you introduced that evidence that way? What more do you think the reader might want to know?
 - Can you tell out-loud what the Big Idea is here? OK, how could you put that into writing?
- If you see patterns, pull together small groups of students for mini-lessons, or to review instructions.
- Support students in being peer editors.
- Help students move on to polished writing.

Preparing Students to Write

Tell students that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing. Remind them they will be writing a four-paragraph explanatory essay. The key elements of historical essay writing you will help them with are:

- Further develop historical thinking skills
- Use evidence from documents to support historical ideas

Project the Essay Outline View. Use this to review the writing prompt and preview the essay structure with students. Review explicitly each part of the essay and the role it serves in developing an answer to the historical question. Making these elements of the essay explicit for students will help them to develop the skills to construct essays more independently down the road.

Essay Outline View

Prompt: Write a four-paragraph essay to explain the ways in which farmers joined together and used direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression.

Paragraph-by-paragraph guidance: In your essay you must have the following sections:

- **An introduction in which you describe the impact of the Great Depression on U.S. farmers**
 - State the topic of your essay.
 - Provide some historical context about how the Great Depression impacted the price of farm goods and impacted farmers, and describe the initial government response.
 - Introduce your thesis.
- **A first body paragraph in which you describe one form of direct action farmers took**
 - Provide 2–3 topic sentences that introduce one form of action the farmers took and explain what this form of action was.
 - Provide 1 supporting detail that shows how farmers used this form of action to change their conditions.
 - > Introduce the quote and provide background information about the source.
 - > Explain how this evidence is an example of farmers working together to make change.
 - Optional: Provide, introduce and explain a second supporting detail that shows how farmers used this form of action to change their conditions.
- **A second body paragraph in which you describe a second form of direct action farmers took**
 - Provide 2–3 topic sentences that introduce a second form of action the farmers took and explain what this form of action was.
 - Provide 1 supporting detail that shows how farmers used this form of action to change their conditions.
 - > Introduce the quote and provide background information about the source.
 - > Explain how this evidence is an example of farmers working together to make change.
 - Optional: Provide, introduce and explain a second supporting detail that shows how farmers used this form of action to change their conditions.
- **A conclusion in which you summarize and extend your thinking:**
 - Restate the thesis and your three main ideas.
 - Describe what farmers were trying to accomplish with their direct actions.
 - End strong!

Setting the Level of Writing Support

Using the Teacher Dashboard, you can set the level of students' writing support. (Note: Do this before they begin drafting their essays, or essay writing will be lost.) *Zoom In* offers two levels of writing support. High Support (the default) gives all students sentence-level tips, optional sentence-starters, and guidance in selecting and using evidence. As students show progress as historical writers – especially in using evidence from documents to support their ideas – teachers can set writing support for individual students to Low Support. The system will provide these students with paragraph-level tips only, meaning students will shape and support their essays substantially on their own.

Preparing Students to Write with Low Supports

If most of your students are writing with Low Supports (meaning with outline only, rather than the detailed Writing Template), you may wish to give them more up-front preparation to write their historical essays. The following outline may help.

Overview

- Let students know that the next stage of the lesson will be their writing.
- Remind them that they will be explaining how farmers used direct action to join together to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression.
- Their final product will be a four-paragraph explanatory essay.

Introduction

- Remember, what is the purpose of your essay? Right, you are going to explain how farmers joined together and used direct action to try to improve their conditions during the Great Depression.
- What do the various pieces of this essay need to be? [Review the overarching structure of the paragraphs.]
- What's going to go into this introduction?
- How will you start this essay?
- What background information will you need to provide? Your reader will need to know how the Great Depression impacted the price of farm goods, how these economic conditions impacted farmers, and what the initial government response was. You will need to use information from the Context slides and the secondary document to write about the impact the Great Depression had on farmers.
- What is the thesis statement in an essay like this?

Body Paragraphs One and Two

- OK, now that we have a sense of what needs to go into the introduction, let's think about the body paragraphs.
- It makes most sense to organize your paragraphs by the sub-topic, in this case the type of action. One paragraph will be about Farm Holidays and the other will be about foreclosure protests.
- In each paragraph you will need to use details from the documents to describe why farmers joined together to take this action. Remember to introduce your source and to explain how your evidence connects back to the Big Idea you are writing about.

Allow students time to ask questions for clarification before they move on to independent writing.

Conclusion

- Finally, you will end the essay with a conclusion in which you summarize the Big Ideas and conclude with your own ideas about why these actions were important.

Sample Student Essay

The Great Depression hurt almost all Americans and it was very hard for farmers. The price of crops fell and farmers were no longer able to earn as much money for the crops they were producing. Farmers were losing their farms because they did not have enough money to pay the bank their mortgages. In the beginning, the government did not step in to help the farmers out. Farmers decided that if they were going to change their conditions, they would need to join together to take direct action.

One form of direct action farmers took was Farm Holidays. A Farm Holiday was when farmers tried to stop crops from being sold so that prices would go up and they would get more money. They had to work together because everyone had to agree to stop selling their crops for this to work. According to an oral history from a farmer named Henry Terrell, “The Farm Holiday movement was to hold the stuff off the market, to increase the price. The movement saw violence, too. They stopped milk wagons, dumped milk.” This means that farmers had to work together to stop crops from going to market and sometimes became violent. Terrell also said, “Now they spread it around the country that they were gonna stop all the crop from going through. And believe me, they stopped it.” This means that farmers tried to spread their message so others would join in.

Another form of direct action farmers took was to save their farms from a bank foreclosure. Farmers organized together to prevent people from losing their farms when the banks auctioned them. Terrell also explained, “They was paying ten cents for a plow. And when it was all over, they’d give it back to the farmer.” This means that farmers would come together and all agree to bid a small amount, then they would return the property to the farmer. Terrell also said, “anybody that bid against that thing, that was trying to get that man’s land, they would be dealt with seriously, as it were.” This means that farmers organized and even made threats so that everyone in a community would support this strategy.

The Great Depression made life for farmers very difficult. They lost their farms and their homes and many people went hungry. Farmers did not wait around for the government to help. They decided to take action into their own hands. They joined together as a community and did things like Farm Holidays and protesting foreclosures. They were trying to directly change their economic conditions by putting pressure on banks and markets. Even if these direct actions did not solve all of their problems, it was successful because it put pressure on the government that the government had to do more to help people out.

Assessing Student Writing with the Essay Rubric

For information on assessing student writing, see these documents:

- “Zoom In Essay Rubric” (PDF)
- “Tracking Students' Progress and Assessing Student Work” (PDF)