

The Dust Bowl

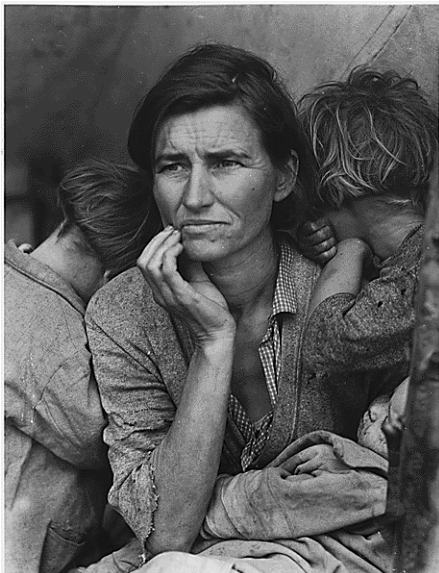
During the 1930's a severe drought hit the Great Plains. The drought, along with over plowing and overgrazing by farmers, combined to destroy farms from Texas to the Dakotas. Huge Dust storms blew across these states carrying soil with them. Farms, livestock and sometimes even people found themselves buried under several feet of dust and dirt. During this time, over 400,000 farmers decided to pick up and move West in search of a better life. These migrant workers traveled from town to town looking for a job and a new life. However, most towns turned them away fearing increased unemployment.



Women and Minorities

Because of the situation of many families, women were forced to go to work whether or not they wanted to or not. Many families were even forced to survive on just the woman's salary. Also, famous women like Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt spoke out enthusiastically for women's rights.

Unfortunately, throughout most of the country more than half of our African American population was unemployed. Throughout many towns and cities jobs were given to white workers instead of blacks forcing them into a life of homelessness and unemployment.



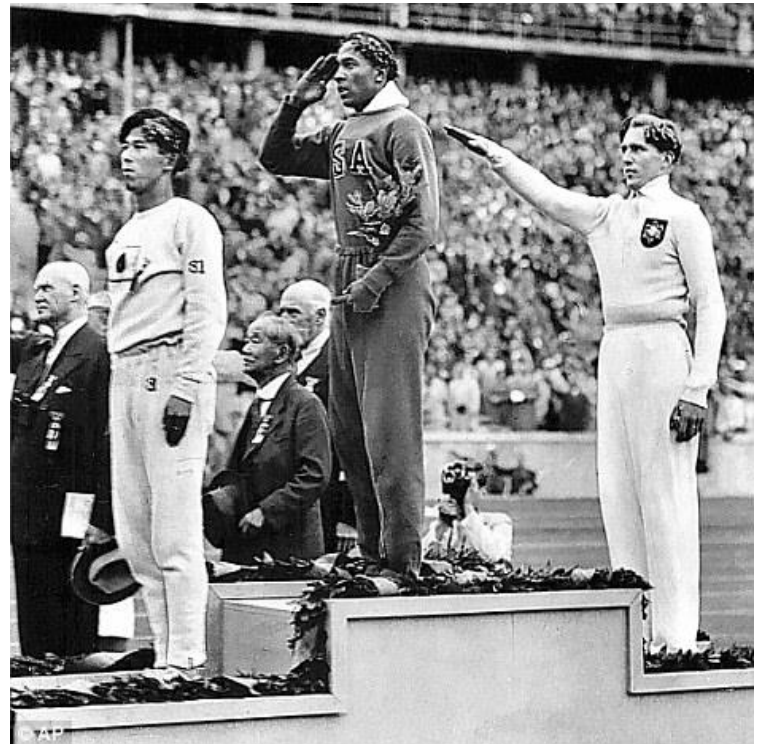
Radio and Movies

During the Great Depression Americans looked to radio and movies to provide an escape from their depressing everyday life. Comedies like the 3 Stooges were very popular because they took people's mind off of their problems. Also, the movie length cartoons from Walt Disney provided not only laughter, but a lesson and a happy ending. The most popular movie of the decade was *Gone With the Wind*, a Civil War love story that showed we had survived tough times before.



Sports

Americans living in the Depression were in need of cheap entertainment. Lucky for them, professional sports was still an affordable way (tickets were usually less than a quarter) to escape everyday life. By far the biggest sports story of the decade was Olympian Jesse Owens. In 1936 the Olympics were being held in Germany, hosted by Adolf Hitler and the NAZIS. Owens, an African American, won 4 Gold Medals there and showed the world that Hitler's ideas about the German Master Race were wrong.



Events in Foreign Countries

In other countries, however, the Great Depression had a different effect. Adolf Hitler, for example, used the poor economic state of his country to get elected. He promised every German a job and a better lifestyle.

Some countries such as Japan and Italy saw the Great Depression as an opportunity to take what they needed from the nations around them. Because everyone was weak, these large, aggressive countries attacked weaker nations who couldn't fight back.



Adolf Hitler of Germany



Benito Mussolini of Italy

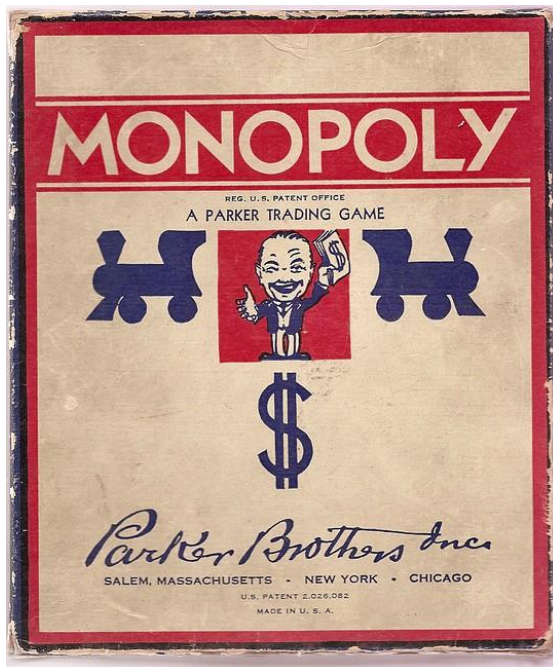
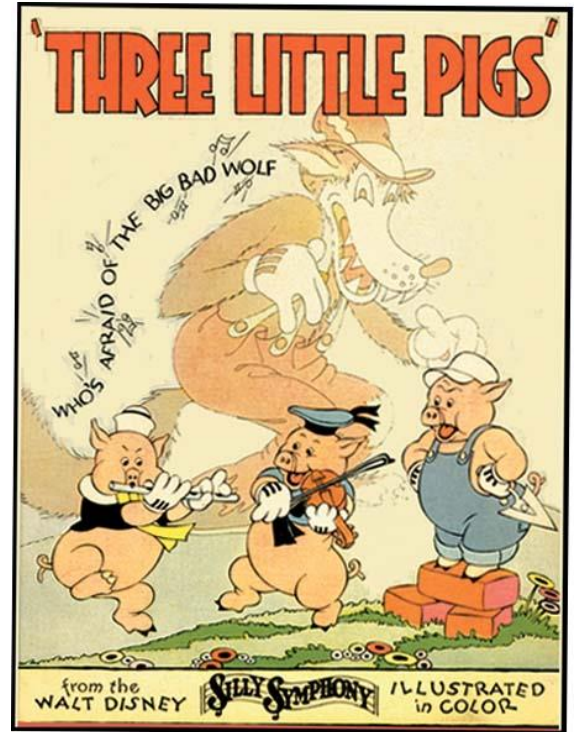


Emperor Hirohito of Japan

By the Numbers

(Pick what you feel are the 4 most important)

- The 3 Little Pigs, produced by Walt Disney, was seen as symbolic of the Great Depression with the wolf representing the Depression and the 3 Little Pigs representing the people working together to survive.
- During the Great Depression the average wage for a factory worker was \$17.00 per week.
- By the end of the 1930's, thousands of schools had shut down leaving 3,000,000 children without schooling. Roughly 200,000 children under the age of 14 had left home and took to hopping the rails and riding trains from town to town.
- In 1939, gas was 10 cents a gallon.
- "Brother Can You Spare a Dime" was the #1 song and "Gone With the Wind" was the #1 movie.
- The average price of a new home was \$1,700.00. Today it is \$240,000.00.\
- World War II was what eventually pulled us out of the Great Depression by creating jobs.
- Monopoly, Scrabble, Sorry and Life were all board games created in the 1930's.



Kids and Teens in the Great Depression

Throughout the Great Depression, children continued to suffer as much as adults. With many communities experiencing high unemployment, schools across the country were closing at an alarming rate. Every year of the 1930's an average of 3 million American kids went without an education because of a lack of school in their communities. Along with this, often times families were not able to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care for their kids. Additionally, having fun was out of the question because it often times cost way too much money. Teenagers also dealt with problems. Often times, they were forced to move out of the house and travel from place to place in search of work because their families couldn't afford to let them stay. It is estimated that over 250,000 teens left home and hopped on trains to travel the country during the Depression. Unfortunately, even though this lifestyle sounds like an adventure, an average of 6,000 teens died "Riding the Rails" each year.

