



Suggested Activities to Complete Before Your Visit

Activities with a Social Studies Focus

- * Checking Out Life During the Great Depression
- Creating Personal Histories
- Then or Now? Take a Look at Manhattan
- How We Tell the Story of the Great Depression
- First Hand Accounts
- Picture the Past
- Interpreting the Great Depression to Others
- How Has Your Community Changed?
- * How Much Did Things Cost?
- * Let's See What It Took to Build the Empire State Building
- Empire State Building Biographies
- Getting Permission
- How Similar to Manhattan is Your Community
- Reading A Building
- Skyscraper Statistics
- * Empire State Building Anagrams



Activities

Checking Out Life During the Great Depression

[See Student Worksheet A](#)

This activity focuses on helping students understand how their community fits into national and world events. It helps them understand that what happened in the past affects what is happening in their community today and what happens now will affect what will happen in the future. It helps students discover that events in one place affect life in another place. The period of the Great Depression has been singled out for this activity.

Activity:

For this activity students will be asked to create a *picture* of life during the Great Depression in their community and in other locations around the world and to then compare and contrast them.

Divide your class into groups. Each group will be responsible for researching life during the Great depression in one of the following:

- Their Home Community.
- New York City, New York
- Paris, France
- Topeka, Kansas
- Tokyo, Japan
- Brazilia, Brazil
- Pretoria, South Africa

See our Student Worksheet A: *Checking Out Life During the Great Depression* for questions to help students complete their research.

As much as possible encourage students to use some of the following for their research:

- Official city documents such as birth records.
- Newspaper archives for articles, photographs, wedding announcements, etc.
- Interviews with elders of the community.
- Records of religious institutions.
- The census.
- Historical Societies and Historical Associations.
- Friends and relatives who lived during the period for personal stories, letters journals, etc.

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The National Archives and Records Administration
Transportation and Roads Authorities for early maps.
Preservation organizations.

Present photographs of life during the Great Depression both in cities and in farming communities.

When student teams have completed their research, assemble and present the collected information for everyone to see. Allow each team of students to decide the manner in which they would like to report their findings. For example, one team might provide written information. Another might present objects and/or documents to tell the story of their assigned location. Still another might present a short skit describing the Great Depression in their assigned location.

Help students compare and contrast life in their own communities during the Great Depression with that found in the other locations they researched.

Keep a running documentation of your students as they plan and carry out their research. Taking photographs or videos, keeping journals or writing personal stories as they work are several suggested ways of accomplishing this.

Materials Needed:

Student Worksheet A: *Checking Out Life During the Great Depression*
Photographs of life during the Great Depression
Access to local authorities
Access to the Internet and other research tools
Props and materials for reporting the comparison of cities

Good Websites About the Great Depressions

1. <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dustbowl/safd> --- This site has good information about the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression and the New Deal.
2. <http://www.nara.gov/exhall/newdeal/newdeal.html>.) --- A good site for photographs of the Great Depression.
3. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html> --- This is a site created by the Library of Congress. It contains personal histories taken from 1936 to 1940 as part of the Federal Writers' Project.

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4. <http://history1900s.about.com/library/photos/blyindexdepression.htm> --- This site has good photographs of the Great Depression.
5. <http://newdeal.feri.org/magpie/> --- This site describes life in New York City for teenagers during the Great Depression.
6. http://www.pbs.org/jazz/time/time_depression.htm --- This is part of the PBS site. It presents content and audio excerpts from Ken Burns' film *Jazz: A History of America's Music*.
7. <http://mtungsten.freeservers.com/> --- This site presents the African-American perspective on the Great Depression.
8. http://www.besthistorysites.net/USHistory_GreatDepression.shtml --- This site lists other sites that have great information about the Great Depression.

Books About the Great Depression

Farrell, Jacqueline. The Great Depression. San Diego: Lucent Books, 1996.

Fremont, David K. The Great Depression in American History. Springfield, NJ: Enslow Publishers, 1997.

Lacey, Bill. Depression Soup Kitchen, 1933. Carlsbad, CA: Interact Publishers. Inc., 1995.

Mulvey, Deb, ed. We Had Everything But Money. New York: Crescent Books, 1992.

Nishi, Dennis. Life During the Great Depression. San Diego: Lucent Books, 1998.



Creating Personal Histories

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand that everyone's life is significant. Each day everyone contributes to the society in which they live. Every day they, the students, are making their own contributions. These contributions become history. What they do today will be read by future generations of students as history. It's important to tell and record their stories. It's important to read stories of people from the past. The activity helps students establish temporal concepts and see the flow of history.

Activity

For this activity students will create their own personal histories/personal stories.

Begin by having a class discussion to decide what information students would like to know about each other or what information they think would be important to tell about themselves in order to present a summary of their lives. Help them formulate the questions that need to be asked and answered. They *might* want to include information about:

when they were babies,
their first day at school,
their elementary school years,
their favorite food
their first fishing trip,
the time they learned to ride a bicycle,
first school dance, etc.

Post the questions for everyone to see.

Encourage students to use photographs, items of clothing, personal care items, journals, music, toys, food, letters, etc. to tell their personal stories/histories.

Each student should create a chronological history of his/her own life using the objects and documents.

Have each student present his/her personal history to the class. Discuss common threads among the different student histories.

Have a class discussion about biographies and famous people or people from the past about whom it would be fun to know more. Help each student select a person whose biography they would like to read. After everyone has read the selected biographies, have a few students read to the class short selections that they particularly like from the biographies they read.

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Materials Needed

- A method for posting the questions to be addressed in the personal histories
- Each student's personal objects
- Space for temporary storage of personal objects
- A camera/video recorder to record each student's personal history
- Biographies of all sorts

Resources About Creating Personal Histories

- www.personalhistoryhelp.com --- This site gives good basic information about creating personal histories.
- www.themonthly.com/shopping-11-07.htm --- This is a link to an article in *The Monthly, East Bays Premiere Magazine of Culture and Commerce* about local residents that created personal histories for themselves and their relatives.
- <http://www.personalhistorians.org/> --- This is a link to the Association of Personal Historians, a network of professional personal historians.
- <http://www.thelegacycenter.net/whatwedo.html> --- This is a link to the Legacy Center, an organization that provides education and resources for people who want to create personal histories.
- <http://www.history.navy.mil/faqs/faq87-1.htm> --- This is a link to the Naval Historical Center in Washington, DC which has an active Oral History Program supported by the Naval Historical Foundation. It provides useful information about writing personal histories.
- <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html> --- This is a site created by the Library of Congress. It contains personal histories taken from 1936 to 1940 as part of the Federal Writers' Project.



Then or Now? Take a Look at Manhattan

The purpose of this activity is to help students learn to observe carefully, to analyze and to interpret what they see in the world around them. It reinforces temporal concepts. It also addresses the importance of checking for accurate information. Current and historical photographs of New York City are the vehicle for practicing these skills.

Activity

Present current and historical photographs of Manhattan to your students and engage them in a general discussion about these photographs.

Here are some suggestions for your discussion:

- Have students describe what they see in each photograph.
- Have them describe what they think is happening in each photograph.
- Have students arrange the photographs in chronological order.
- Discuss what clues they used to make inferences about what was happening and about the time period of the photographs.
- Discuss what they **don't see** in the photographs.
- Discuss why certain things might have been left out.
- Discuss the problems of making inferences from partial information.
- Discuss the problem of accepting what is presented without checking its accuracy.
- Discuss how students could go about checking for accuracy.
- Discuss the need to consider different perspectives.
- Help students plan how they will verify what is actually happening in the photographs presented.

After this discussion, have students compare their personal interpretations. Discuss assumptions versus facts and reliable information. Help students make a list of places to visit for reliable information.

Have students research any of their responses to the photographs for which they did not have reliable data.

Display the photographs of New York City in chronological order around the classroom. Have students create captions for the photographs based on reliable data rather than assumptions.

Materials Needed:

Photographs of New York City

Access to the Internet or other research tools

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Websites For Photographs and Maps of New York City:

1. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/nyc100/html/classroom/photos/index.html> --- This site has great photographs of New York City but they are not for reproduction.
2. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/records/home.html> --- This is the home page for the site referenced above. It has great information about New York City
3. <http://pratt.edu/~jkim53/home.html> ---
4. <http://www.historynyc.com/products.asp?cat=89> --- This is a good site for maps and photographs available for purchase.
5. <http://histmaps.research.cuny.edu/pub/maps/home.aspx> --- This site is a a good source of information about New York City maps.
6. <http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/map/map.html> --- This is the website for The Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division of the New York Public Library.
7. <http://www.artnet.com/artist/8884/yvonne-jacquette.html> --- This site has some of the wonderful paintings of New York City by Yvonne Jacquette.
8. <http://www.mcny.org/exhibitions/current/714.html> --- This is the site for the Museum of the City of New York. It has references to a wonderful exhibit it had of New York City paintings by Yvonne Jacquette and photographs by Rudy Burckhardt.
9. <http://unseen-cinema.com/disc5.html> --- This site offers a DVD for purchase. The DVD is a collection of very early short films made of New York City. Two of these early shots were created by Rudy Burckhardt. (We have not personally previewed this DVD.)



How We Tell the Story of the Great Depression

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to life during the Great Depression with a special focus on the way it was experienced in the New York City borough of Manhattan.

Activity

Gather children's books that tell the story of the Great Depression. Have students read several of the books independently then explore the stories in these books as a class. Have students carefully study both the text and the illustrations for clues to life during this period.

Here are some questions for discussion of the books with students:

- Who in this story was affected by the Great Depression?
- How were they affected?
- What could they have done to change their situation?
- What was beyond their control?
- Give examples of people helping other people.
- Give examples of how children helped out.
- What was the worst part of life in this story?
- What was the best part of life in this story?

Below are some **suggested books** for your study. Most of these books describe life in New York City during the Great Depression. Some of them are intended for younger children. We chose these books because we wanted to present the Great Depression and its ramifications in the simplest, yet most powerful, way possible. Here are the books we suggest:

The Gardner, by Sarah Stewart; illustrated by David Small (Grades 2-8) -- --The story takes place in New York City. Lydia, a young girl, is sent from her parents' farm to live with her Uncle in the city during the Great Depression. She is to help him in his bakery. Things are not good and Lydia misses her family terribly! Augmenting the story are the young girl's letters home. The illustrations in this book are particularly enlightening and should not be overlooked!

What You Know First by Patricia MacLachlan; illustrated by Barry Moser (Grades 3 – 5) --- This is another book in which the illustrations are very important. It's also another book about moving to another place. In this story a little girl vows that she is not leaving her home on the prairie, even though her family is. She'll just stay and live in the attic, with the new people. There is a definite feel of loss in this story.

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Dust for Dinner by Ann Turner; illustrated by Robert Barrett (Grades 3 – 6) --- This is the story of a family that loses its farm to the Dust Bowl and chooses to move west. The plot is sparse and the vocabulary is easy so this book is a good option for less skillful readers.

The Babe and I by David A. Adler; illustrated by Terry Widener (Grades 2 – 4) --- This book is set in the Bronx in 1932. It tells the story of how one young boy pitched-in to help during the Depression. His father was not going off to work each morning as he has pretended to do but instead was selling apples on the street. To help out the boy begins selling newspapers near Yankee Stadium. In an effort to attract customers he begins yelling out the exploits of Babe Ruth. Then he actually meets The Babe.

Nothing to Fear by Jackie French Koller (Grades 4 – 7) --- This is a novel that highlights the effects of the Great Depression on two families living in New York City. The Garveys and the Rileys are Irish immigrants living in the same apartment building. Like many children of the Depression, the Garvey's son, Daniel, must help by bringing in money for the family. As things get worse, he resorts to begging on the streets. Eventually his father leaves the family to find work. Their neighbors, the Riley family is in even worse shape.

Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck (Grades 4 – 8)
This hilarious Newberry Award winner is the sequel to *Long Way from Chicago*. Set in the late 1930s in southern Illinois, it's the story of Joey, the older of Grandma Dowdel's grandchildren, who is working in a CCC camp and what happens when Mary Alice also comes to stay with her grandmother because her parents have had to give up their home.

Please use other books as you feel is appropriate.

After discussing the books read, have students create an illustration (or a new illustration) for the story that they found the most interesting or the most powerful.



Materials Needed

Children's literature about the Great Depression (suggestions provided above)
Art supplies for creating illustrations

Good Sources for Reviews of Children's Literature

1. **Book Links** --- This journal is published by the American Library Association and has wonderful, rich information about children's literature.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/productsandpublications/periodicals/booklinks/booklinks.htm>
2. **The School Library Journal** --- <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/>
3. **Bulletin for the Center for Children's Books** --- <http://bccb.lis.uiuc.edu/>
4. **Horn Book** --- <http://www.hbook.com/>
5. **The Barnes and Nobles Guide to Children's Books**
6. Your local children's librarian



First Hand Accounts

The purpose of this activity is to augment students' understanding of the Great Depression on a level that is more emotional than factual. It gives students the opportunity to compare their lives to the lives of children that lived through the Depression. It also emphasizes the connection to the past by asking students to think about the future.

Activity #1

Have students read aloud excerpts from the book *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression*, by Robert Cohen (published by The University of North Carolina Press). Discuss the requests made by the children writing these letters and what their lives must have been like.

Present photographs showing children living and playing during the Great Depression.

Have students each write a letter to a child living in New York City during the Great Depression telling him/her what life in their (your students') community is like today. Then discuss what the child receiving the letter might think about these descriptions of current day life in your community.

Ask students to discuss current issues that worry them. Brainstorm ways to solve these problems. Students may decide to write letters to school or government officials who they think can help. If they wish to do so, facilitate this process.

To get a beginning understanding of how the government responded to the conditions on the Great Depression have students create a collection of cartoons about FDR and the New Deal.

Activity #2

Have students research what schools were like in their community during the Great Depression.

Have students research what schools in New York City were like during the Great Depression. Compare the two.

Activity #3

Have students discuss and make a list of some of the things they have today that did not exist in the time of the Depression (i.e. computers and cell phone).

Have students discuss what items were widely used during the Depression that are no longer used today (i.e. coal furnaces).



Activity #4

Have students write a letter to a child of the future describing what life is like for them today. Have students speculate what a child of the future might think about the descriptions of life as it is today in their community.

Activity #5

Have students keep a personal journal, written or drawn, for a month.

Materials Needed:

- Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression,**
by Robert Cohen
- Paper for taking notes for the entire class
- Paper and pencils for independent letter writing by students
- Photographs of the Great Depression
- Access to the Internet and other research tools
- Political Cartoons about FDR and the New Deal

More Books on the Great Depression:

1. Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin*. New York: New American Library, 1971.
2. Betty and Ernest Lindley, *A New Deal for Youth: The Story of the National Youth Administration*. New York: Viking Press, 1938.
3. Robert McElvaine, *Down and Out in the Great Depression: Letters from the Forgotten Man*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983.
4. Richard A. Reiman, *The New Deal and American Youth: Ideas and Ideals in a Depression Decade*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992.
5. Eleanor Roosevelt, "My Mail". An essay by Mrs. Roosevelt about the mail she received while in the White House and her procedures for handling it.
6. David Tyack, Robert Lowe, and Elisabeth Hansford, *Public Schools in Hard Times: The Great Depression and Recent Years*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
7. T. H. Watkins, *The Great Depression: America in the 1930s*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993.



Good Websites With Information About the Great Depression:

1. <http://newdeal.feri.org/library/a02.htm> --- This is a good site for photographs of the Great Depression.
2. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/fsowhome.html> --- This is a link to the Library of Congress that's very useful for locating photographs of the Great Depression.
3. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html> --- This is a link to the Library of Congress Life Histories Section. It provides written documents describing the Great Depression.
4. <http://kclibrary.nhmccd.edu/decade30.html> --- This site has lots of information about people, music, art, buildings, fads, fashion, etc of the 1930's.
5. <http://history1900s.about.com/library/photos/blygd49.htm> --- This is an About.com site that has links to photographs of the Great Depression.
6. <http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/firesi90.html> --- This is the official site for the FDY Presidential Library and Museum and a link to FDR's Fireside Chats.
7. <http://www.nisk.k12.ny.us/fdr/> --- This is a collection of FDR cartoons collected by the students at Niskayuna High School.
8. http://www.besthistorysites.net/USHistory_GreatDepression.shtml --- This is a very good collection of other websites related to the Great Depression.



Picture the Past

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand how their community fared during the Great Depression and to connect its plight with that of the rest of the country. It also focuses on photography as a way of documenting history. It emphasizes research skills, temporal sequencing and summarizing information.

Activity

Prepare your students to curate an exhibit of photographs that present their community/ neighborhood as it was during the Great Depression. Invite a curator from a local museum to help with the exhibit. Ask for his/her assistance with such things as deciding on the story you want to tell through your exhibit, stating the criteria for the photographs that will be included in the exhibit, evaluating and interpreting the photographs under consideration, understanding how to display the photographs so they can best be enjoyed by all ages, protecting the photographs while they are on display, etc.

Your local historical society might be a good source for expert advice.

Have your students select and invite the expert to help with the project.

Help students brainstorm possible sources for photographs of your community during the Great Depression. Suggested sources are:

- Local historical society
- National Archives
- Local newspapers
- Registrar of deeds
- Local developers
- Local religious congregations
- Local Social Services organizations (government and non-government)
- Local service clubs (i.e. Women's Auxillary)
- Local camera clubs
- Etc.

Arrange students into teams and assign several possible sources of photographs for each team to investigate. When photographs have been located and are considered for the exhibit, have the team that located them lead the discussion, pro or con, for their inclusion in the exhibit.

Create a storyboard for the way the exhibit will look. Then hang/display the photographs according to the storyboards.

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Have an opening for your exhibit. At the opening have students present general remarks about the exhibit and about any of the photographs that are of particular interest to them.

Materials Needed:

- Photographs of your community during the Great Depression
- An expert to help you curate the show
- Space to display the photographs
- A method of displaying the photographs
- Space to hold an opening for the exhibit
- Invitations for the opening
- Food for the opening
- Post exhibit storage for the photographs

Good Websites About the Great Depressions:

1. <http://www.pbs.org/wqbh/amex/dustbowl/safd> --- This site has good information about the Dust Bowl, the Great Depression and the New Deal.
2. <http://www.nara.gov/exhall/newdeal/newdeal.html>.) --- A good site for photographs of the Great Depression.
3. <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html> --- This is a site created by the Library of Congress. It contains personal histories taken from 1936 to 1940 as part of the Federal Writers' Project.
4. <http://history1900s.about.com/library/photos/blyindexdepression.htm> --- This site has good photographs of the Great Depression.
5. http://www.pbs.org/jazz/time/time_depression.htm --- This is part of the PBS site. It presents content and audio excerpts from Ken Burns' film *Jazz: A History of America's Music*.
6. <http://mtungsten.freeservers.com/> --- This site presents the African-American perspective on the Great Depression.
7. <http://newdeal.feri.org/magpie/> --- This site describes life in New York City for teenagers during the Great Depression.



Interpreting the Great Depression to Others

The purpose of this activity is for students to gain more insight into life during the Great Depression. The vehicle for this is children's literature. Students will be looking at this period in history through the eyes of the characters in children's stories. The activity reinforces temporal concepts and looks at different means of *telling* stories. The activity also gives students the opportunity to practice their public speaking skills.

Activity

Assign students to teams and have each team read a selection of children's books about life during the Great Depression. Have students decide which of the books they read would be the best to use to teach a younger child/younger children about life during this period. Here are a few books we suggest:

The Gardner, by Sarah Stewart; illustrated by David Small (Grades 2-8) -- --The story takes place in New York City. Lydia, a young girl, is sent from her parents' farm to live with her Uncle in the city during the Great Depression. She is to help him in his bakery. Things are not good and Lydia misses her family terribly! Augmenting the story are the young girl's letters home. The illustrations in this book are particularly enlightening and should not be overlooked!

What You Know First by Patricia MacLachlan; illustrated by Barry Moser (Grades 3 – 5) --- This is another book in which the illustrations are very important. It's also another book about moving to another place. In this story a little girl vows that she is not leaving her home on the prairie, even though her family is. She'll just stay and live in the attic, with the new people. There is a definite feel of loss in this story.

Dust for Dinner by Ann Turner; illustrated by Robert Barrett (Grades 3 – 6) --- This is the story of a family that loses its farm to the Dust Bowl and chooses to move west. The plot is sparse and the vocabulary is easy so this book is a good option for less skillful readers.

Have each team present the story from one of these books to a group of younger children. Teams should use whatever tools they think are appropriate to deliver their book's message to their audience. They might just read the book and facilitate discussion. They might make it into a play. They might bring music to go with the reading of the book, etc.

Have students discuss their experiences as a class.



Materials Needed

Children's literature about the Great Depression
Props and music, if desired
Several groups of younger children

Sources for Reviews of Children's Literature

1. **Book Links** --- This is published by the American Library Association and has wonderful, rich information about children's literature.
<http://www.ala.org/ala/productsandpublications/periodicals/booklinks/booklinks.htm>
2. **The School Library Journal** --- <http://www.schoollibraryjournal.com/>
3. *Bulletin for the Center for Children's Books* --- <http://bccb.lis.uiuc.edu/>
4. **Horn Book** --- <http://www.hbook.com/>
5. **The Barnes and Nobles Guide to Children's Books**
6. The Children's Librarian at your local library
7. <http://www.emporia.edu/libsv/wawbookaward/masterlists/dusttoeat.htm> --- This page of a larger site all about children's literature suggests books about the Great Depression that are appropriate for middle school students.



How Has Your Community Changed?

This activity will help students attend to the built world around them in order to see change. Young people tend to think things have always been as they are now. We've found they are often amazed and unaware of changes that have occurred right around them. Focusing on the built environment and how it has changed provides a good, *concrete* opportunity to see change. Learning how to read the built environment is vital in understanding how to plan for future change. This activity enhances visual literacy, temporal concepts and verbal expression.

Activity

Have your students work independently on this activity. Each student should select **10** buildings in the community which he/she will research. The research should include the following:

Find out which buildings in their community existed in 1930.

Photograph these buildings as they are today.

Find out the function of each building in 1930.

Find out the function of each building today.

If there has been a change in the function of a building, find out why this change occurred.

Discuss what is likely to be on each spot 100 years from now. Why?

Take or find photographs of each of the buildings.

Have students report their findings to the class in the form of a newspaper article. Each student is to be a newspaper reporter. He/she has researched 10 buildings in the community and now is to write an article about these buildings and the changes they have gone through since the 1930's. The article should address the information the student gathered by addressing the questions listed above. Accompanying photographs and illustrations should be encouraged.

Engage students in a discussion about presenting factual information versus their personal opinion. Take a look at each of their newspaper articles with an eye on this variable.

Invite a local newspaper reporter to help with this project.

Have student articles and photographs included in the school newspaper.

Students might want to create a blog about the ways in which their community is changing.



Materials Needed

Camera
Paper and pencils for taking notes
Access to a newspaper reporter
Access to the Internet or other research tools

Websites About Evaluating News Articles

1. <http://www.wpunj.edu/library/eval.shtml> --- This site provides information about evaluating a news article one reads but it can be used to as the basis for a discussion for creating a good article.
2. <http://www.westgatech.edu/glr/evaluating.html> --- This site provides an outline of things to consider when evaluating resources.
3. <http://www.star.niu.edu/nina/highschool/write.html> --- This is a good site for the basics of writing a good news article.
4. <http://articles.net.au/Article/Writing-a-Good-News-Article---The-Essentials/11997> --- This is another site with information on how to write a good news article.



How Much Did Things Cost? See [Student Worksheet B](#)

The purpose of this activity is to have students understand the change in economics that occurs over time and how this change affects our daily lives. It also highlights temporal concepts and introduces information about life during the Great Depression.

Activity

The cost of goods and services has greatly increased since the beginning of the 20th Century. To begin to appreciate this difference, have students compare the cost of goods and services today to the cost in the 1920's/1930's for the same items.

We have provided a Student Worksheet: *Costs of Goods and Services* ([see Student Worksheet B](#)) for your students to use to make these comparisons. This worksheet lists items and their cost in the 1920's/1930's. There are several ways to use this worksheet.

You might select one or use them all:

Send your students to the store with the Student Worksheet: *Costs of Goods and Services* to find out what items similar to the ones listed there cost today. Then have students figure out the amount of increase in the price of each item since the 1920's/1930's.

Have students decide what they would buy from the list if they had \$3.00 to spend. How about \$5.00? Then have them figure out what the same items would cost today.

Have students use 1930's wages and prices to create a budget for their food and personal/household items for a month. Then have them compare this to the cost of purchasing the same goods at today's prices.

Have students create a collection of advertisements from the 1920's and 1930's and from today.

Discuss why there has been an increase in the cost of goods and services since the beginning of the 20th century. Based on the rate goods have increased in cost since 1930, project how much these goods might increase in the next 10 years. Don't forget to consider the effect of newer materials and technologies and changing ifestyles.



Materials Needed:

Student Worksheet B: *Costs of Goods and Services*
Newspaper advertisements from the 1920's and 1930's
Current day advertisements

Websites about Advertisements

1. <http://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/adaccess/> ----This is the link to Ad*Access a site that provides images and database information for over 7,000 advertisements printed in U.S. and Canadian newspapers and magazines between 1911 and 1955. Ad*Access concentrates on five main subject areas: Radio, Television, Transportation, Beauty and Hygiene, and World War II. The images are preserved in one particular advertising collection available at Duke University. The advertisements are from the [J. Walter Thompson Company](#) Competitive Advertisements Collection of the [John W. Hartman Center for Sales, Advertising & Marketing History](#) in Duke University's [Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library](#). Teachers have permission to reproduce these images for use in their classroom.
2. <http://www.squidoo.com/1920s-cars> --- This site has wonderful information about and illustrations from car advertisements of the 1920s.
3. <http://www.scribd.com/doc/170580/30-Curious-American-Newspaper-Advertisements-from-the-1920s1950s> --- This site has a wonderful collection of vintage advertisements for all kinds of products.
4. <http://clockhistory.com/westclox/company/ads/1930.htm> --- This is a collection of 1930's advertisements for clocks.
5. <http://www.adclassix.com/sitemap.htm> --- This site has vintage advertisements for just about everything dating from the early 20th Century. Within a category you have to scroll to the bottom of the page for the complete list.



Let's See What It Took to Build the Empire State Building

See Student Worksheet C

This activity focuses on temporal concepts and on the economics of the Great Depression. It helps students understand how the way we live our lives depends on the economics of the time. It focuses on the important role the construction of the Empire State Building played in the economy of New York City in 1929/30. It provides information about the many different jobs that were needed to construct early skyscrapers.

Activity

The building of the Empire State Building provided jobs for MANY people during the Great Depression! These jobs enabled many men to provide housing, food and clothing for their families during this difficult time. To give students an idea of just how many jobs were involved have them complete our crossword puzzle of jobs used in the planning and construction of the Empire State Building. **We promise everyone will be amazed!**

There will be some jobs presented in the crossword puzzle that will be unfamiliar to students. Have them try to guess what the function of these jobs might be before completing the puzzle. Then let them try the puzzle and see how they do.

After completing the crossword puzzle discuss all the jobs presented in the puzzle and try again to determine the function of each job. There are several good children's books that explain these jobs (see the resource section below).

Have students simulate some of the more interesting jobs used to build the Empire State Building --- such as the *bucker-up*.

Present your students with several original photographs of the construction of the Empire State Building. These photographs will lend themselves to many interesting topics of discussion. A few of these are:

1. Working conditions then versus now.
2. Where are the female workers?
3. What were the wages in 1929/1930?
4. Who were the workers? What were their backgrounds?
5. How many people worked on building the Empire State Building
6. Safety issues?
7. Who took these photographs and how?

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Materials Needed:

Student Worksheet: *We Built the Empire State Building, A Crossword Puzzle* (LINK C)
 Original photographs of the construction of the Empire State Building
 Props for simulating jobs

Resources for Photographs of the Construction of the Empire State Building

1. <http://www.greatbuildings.com/cgi-bin/glk?http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/photo/hinex/empire/empire.html> --- This link takes you to the New York Public Library website. They have some incredible photos of the construction of the Empire State Building! They also have information and photographs of Lewis Hine, the photographer who took many of these incredible photographs documenting the building's construction.
2. <http://www.skyscraper.org/home.htm> --- This is the website for the Sky scraper Museum. They have wonderful information about the construction of the Empire State Building and the thinking of the time.
3. http://www.encyclomedia.com/empire_state_building.html --- This site has a really good audio and video presentation about the construction of the Empire State Building as well as printed copy.

Books for More Information About the Construction of the Empire State Building

1. Burns, Ric and Sander, James with Ades, Lisa. **New York An Illustrated History**. Alfred Knopf: New York, 1999
2. Craats, Rennay. **Structures, Style and Building**. Raintree: Chicago, 2004
3. Goodman, Susan and Doolittle, Michael J. (photographs). **Skyscraper**. Alfred Knopf: New York, 2004
4. Holland, Gini. **Great Buildings: The Empire State Building How It Was Built and How It Is Used**. Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishers: Austin, TX, 1998
5. Homberger, Eric. **New York City --- A Cultural and Literacy Companion**. Interlink Books: New York, 2003
6. Macaulay, David. **Unbuilding**. Houghton Mifflin: Boston, 1980
7. Mann, Elizabeth and Witschonke, Alan, Illustrations. **Empire State Building**. Mikaya Press: New York, 2003
8. Marshall, Bruce. **BUILDING NEW YORK The Rise of the Greatest City on Earth**
9. Milo, Francesco and Cecchi, Lorenzo, Illustrator. **Master of Art The Story of Architecture**. Studio Galante, Andrea Ricciardi Peter Bedrick Books: New York; printed in Italy, 1999
10. Schoener, Allon. **New York An Illustrated History of the People**. WW Norton & Company: New York, 1998
11. Sullivan, George. **Built To Last Building America's Amazing Bridges, Dams, Tunnels and Skyscrapers**. Scholastic Nonfiction: New York, 2005

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Getting Permission

In this activity students learn about a part of New York City's history that has affected the built environment all over the United States. It requires that students take a look at the city's zoning requirements and speculate what this meant for the built environment there. In a later activity, to be completed on-site in New York City, students will be asked to read the built environment as it relates to these zoning laws.

Activity

Permission to build is called a permit. Sounds easy, right? Like "Please may I build a building right here on this piece of land?" But nothing could be further from the truth! Permits are based on **zoning** regulations and laws. These zoning regulations define how large buildings in a city can be and how these buildings can and cannot be used. In addition, the laws that frame permits can limit or expand what and how a building can look

Here is one of the zoning regulations/laws that greatly affected the design of the Empire State Building and many of its neighbors:

In 1916 New York City was the first city in the United States to create a city-wide Zoning Resolution. This was done as a reaction to the construction of the Equitable Building (120 Broadway). The building was so much taller and bigger than its neighbors that it blocked the windows of these buildings, diminishing the availability of sunshine and fresh air for the people who lived and worked in them

Have students collect all the drawings and photographs possible of the Empire State Building and surrounding buildings and try to determine what affect this law had on the building of these buildings.

*The **Zoning Resolution of 1916** established height controls and required that New York buildings have setbacks (sort of like a wedding cake) to allow sunlight and air to reach the street below). It also divided the city into use districts (residential, business, retail, and unrestricted), area districts, and height districts*

Here is another zoning law that affected the buildings in New York City. Have students study it and discuss the affect they think it had on the city.

In 1961 the city changed these zoning regulations and setbacks were no longer required. Buildings constructed in New York City after this date had more open space inside and could be the same size from street to roof.

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Have students bring all their guesses with them when they visit the Empire State Building and its neighbors. This will be their opportunity to see the effects of these two laws first hand.

Materials Needed

Photographs of the Empire State Building and its neighbors
New York City Zoning Laws 1916 and 1961

Websites for Information About Zoning

1. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/zone/zonehis.shtml> --- This is the Website of the New York City Department of City Planning. It's chocked full of information!
2. http://www.tenant.net/Other_Laws/zoning/zontoc.html --- This site provides a handbook for understanding New York City zoning.
3. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/14/realestate/14GH-Home.html?ex=1331524800&en=ad739d7664c2dc40&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&mc=rss> --- This is a link to an interesting article about zoning variances that appeared in the New York Times in March, 2007. It gives some zoning issues to ponder.
4. <http://www.nyc-architecture.com/LM/LM059.htm> -- This website has photographs of the Equitable Building at 120 Broadway.
5. <http://www.greatgridlock.net/NYC/nyc1a.html> -- This link provides information about several of Manhattans early skyscrapers.

Websites for Photographs of New York Skyscrapers

1. <http://www.petergof.com/nyc/skyscrapers.htm> --- This site has photographs for many of New York City's modern buildings that allow the viewer to easily see the effects of zoning regulations.
2. <http://www.greatgridlock.net/> --- You have to drill down a bit but if you persist you're rewarded with some nice photographs of New York skyscrapers as well as some information about each.
3. <http://www.wirednewyork.com/skyscrapers/> --- This site has photographs of New York buildings as well as information about the architects who designed them.
4. <http://www.mcnyc.org/> --- This is the official site of the Museum of the City of New York.
5. http://www.skyscraper.org/home_flash.htm --- This is the official site of the Skyscraper Museum in New York City. It has lots and lots of good information about skyscrapers.

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Empire State Building Biographies

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to some of the men who were responsible for the planning and construction of this famous skyscraper. By studying their contributions students will gain an understanding of and appreciation for the role that careful planning and organization play in the creation of the built environment.

The activity also attempts to broaden the students' information about the time period. It adds music to the mix and asks students to associate this music with the events of the Great Depression and to the actual building of the Empire State Building. Students are called on to make associations across disciplines to accomplish this task.

Activity

The building of the Empire State Building was an incredible feat! Here are some of the people who were involved in its creation. Each contributed a great deal of skill, knowledge and hard work:

- Al Smith --- Official Boss
- John Jacob Raskob --- Raised the money
- William Lamb --- Designing Architect
- Rambush Studios --- Responsible for the interior design
- Bassett Jones --- Mechanical Engineer
- Starrett Brothers & Eken --- Headed construction
- John Bowser --- Job Superintendent
- Elisha Otis --- Invented the elevator
- Henry Bessimer --- First created steel
- Nick Acson --- Marble cutter
- H.G. Balcom & Associates --- Structural Engineers

Have each of your students extensively research **one** of these men and present a report to the class describing how he was involved with the building of the Empire State Building. **The report should be presented in the first person. The student should become the character researched.**

After presenting the report, have each student sum up his/her report by choosing three (3) succinct words to describe the person he/she researched/portrayed.

After hearing all the reports have students discuss the value of each person to the building of the Empire State Building and whether any person's job could have been eliminated from the process. Why or why not? If a student feels a person could have been eliminated, find out why the student chose this position for elimination?



Present students with music from the 1930's. Have them listen and think about how this music relates to the building of the Empire State Building:

- Can you feel the building going-up in the music?
- Can you feel/hear the air on the steel beams high up on the 86th floor?
- Does the music give you a picture of the construction workers?
- Do you hear happiness or sadness in the music?
- Do you feel hope or despair in the music?
- What about the rhythm?
- Think of ways that an orchestra is like the building of the Empire State

Here are some of the composers and their music that might be fun to explore for this task:

- Duke Ellington --- *It Don't Mean a Thing (if it Ain't Got That Swing)*
- Woody Guthrie --- *I Ain't Got No Home*
- Cole Porter --- *Anything Goes, Begin the Beguine*
- George and Ira Gershwin –
- Ethel Waters --- *Stormy Weather*
- Bing Crosby --- *Brother Can You Spare A Dime*
- Irving Berlin
- The Mills Brothers --- *Tiger Rag*
- Bernnie Meroff & his Orchestra --- *Happy Days Are Here Again*
- Johnny Mercer
- Richard Rodgers
- Cab Calloway & His Orchestra --- *Minnie the Moocher*

Big Band Leaders

- Benny Goodman
- Duke Ellington
- Glenn Miller --- *Moonlight Serenade*
- Tommy Dorsey
- Artie Shaw

Materials Needed

- Music from the 1930's
- Access to the Internet or other research tools
- Photographs of the construction of the Empire State Building

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Good Web Links for Photographs of the Construction of the Empire State Building:

1. <http://www.greatbuildings.com/cgi-bin/glk?http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/photo/hinex/empire/empire.htm> --- This link takes you to the New York Public Library website. They have some incredible photos of the construction of the Empire State Building
2. http://www.skyscraper.org/WEB_PROJECTS/VIVA2/viva2_intro.htm --- This is a link to the website of the Skyscraper Museum. may use.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/thegates/html/artists.html> --- This is a link to a kit for building your own Empire State Building and other tall buildings.

Websites for Music from the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s:

1. <http://www.fortunecity.com/tinpan/parton/2/depress.html> --- This site has a list of lots of great songs from the Great Depression era.
2. <http://www.dismuke.org/Electric/index.html> --- This is a private citizen's website of vintage music. It has information about the music as well as sound clips.
3. <http://www.collateralworks.com/vmp.html> --- This site lists songs and musical arrangements from the 1920s and 1930s but there is not audio component.
4. <http://www.authentichistory.com/1930s/index.html> --- This site has audio clips of music from the 1920, 1930s and the 1940s as well as other primary sources from these years.
5. http://www.pbs.org/jazz/time/time_depression.htm --- This is part of the PBS website. It presents content and audio excerpts from Ken Burns' film *Jazz: A History of America's Music*.



Empire State Building Anagrams

See Student Worksheet D

The purpose of this activity is to reinforce information about the construction of the Empire State Building. The activity uses anagrams as the vehicle for doing this.

Activity

Anagram --- a word made by rearranging the letters in another word.

Have your students solve the anagrams about the Empire State Building provided in Student Worksheet: *Empire State Building Anagrams*. Each of the anagrams presented here describes an important aspect of the building or of its creation.

Good Luck!

After solving the anagrams presented, have students create their own anagrams related to:

The Empire State Building
New York City
The Great Depression

Materials Needed

Student Worksheet: *Empire State Building Anagrams* ([LINK D](#))
Photographs of the construction of the Empire State Building

Good Web Links for Photographs of the Construction of the Empire State Building:

1. <http://www.greatbuildings.com/cgi-bin/qlk?http://www.nypl.org/research/chss/spe/art/photo/hinex/empire/empire.htm>
--- This link takes you to the New York Public Library website. They have some incredible photos of the construction of the Empire State Building that educators may use.
2. http://www.skyscraper.org/WEB_PROJECTS/VIVA2/viva2_intro.htm --- This is a link to the website of the Skyscraper Museum in New York City.
3. <http://www.nyc.gov/html/thegates/html/artists.html> --- This is a link to a kit for building your own Empire State Building and other tall buildings.

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How Similar to Manhattan is Your Community?

[See Student Worksheet E](#)

Communities all across the United States are different on many variables. Some are parts of cities. Others are located in small towns. Still others are communities located in rural areas. Some are in the mountains or located on flat prairies, others are located near the coast. The built shapes of these communities can be as different as their geography and their size. This activity is designed to help students begin to think through these differences and to practice their skills for observing the world around them, including the built environment.

Activity

Assign students different sections of their community and ask that they explore this section. Instruct them to take photographs of or sketch everything they see --

- street patterns,
- buildings,
- windows,
- doors,
- traffic patterns,
- shops,
- people,
- plants,
- shadows,
- animals,
- how things are used,
- what the built environment is made of,
- etc.

Students should be prepared to return to class and discuss **everything** seen in the resulting images. We have provided a Student Worksheet: *Street Scenes in Your Community* for students to use for this activity.

When students bring their photographs/sketches back to the classroom have each student lead a discussion with the class about his/her images and what these images capture/describe about that section of the community.

Create a list of all the words students use to describe their community for everyone to see. (These words will be used in another activity in this curriculum.)



When the discussions are completed relate the photographs/sketches to a map of the community. Have students decide what belongs where. Then have them write a summary of their community. Refer back to the list of words about the community that you created with them earlier.

Have students discuss what they think will change in their community within the next **5 years**. Within the next **10 years**. Within the next **20 years**.

Bring the list of the words students used to describe their community along with you for your exploration of New York City.

Post the photographs/sketches students created about the community so they will be available for comparison and discussion with New York City after your visit there.

Materials Needed:

- Student Worksheet: *Street Scenes in Your Community*
- Maps of your community
- Paper/Writing board for listing words about the community.
- Method for posting photographs and sketches



Reading A Building

The focus of this activity is the use of visual literacy skills. It introduces students to the concept of architectural or building components and helps them begin taking note of these components on/in the built environment in their own community. In this activity students will specifically be introduced to the elements of the Art Deco period of architecture.

Activity

New York has so many interesting buildings to investigate. Before your visit to New York City your students should practice reading buildings and learning what they have to say. This can be done by exploring some of your community's most interesting buildings. Here are a few ways we suggest you have students do this:

Tour your school noting and discussing the architectural or building components you see. After you've completed your tour, check with your building supervisor to make sure you found ALL the details of the building. We're betting you'll miss a few --- like the gutters! Create a master list of all the architectural components students found in the school. Discuss whether all buildings in your community have these exact same details. How about the buildings in your community at the time it was founded? Which architectural details might have been around then and which ones might have been added later? What components/details might not be used in the future?

Help students make a list of the architectural components they **expect** to find when they explore the Empire State Building and other buildings in Manhattan. While they are in New York City they will be asked to generate another, similar list of what they actually discover. They will then be asked to compare and contrast the two lists.

Invite an architect into your classroom to help students understand the breadth of planning that must occur in order to construct a building. If possible have on hand a copy of the actual plans used for building your school. Have the architect look-over the students' list of the architectural components in their school. Discuss this list to find out if the architect has encountered any schools that do not have these components or that have different components.

Invite other tradesmen to come into your classroom and discuss the specific building components with which they work --- plumbers, engineers, Masons, etc. Have students discuss the list of architectural components in their school with the tradesmen.



Have your students research the style of architecture referred to as *Art Deco, Modernistic or Style Modern* design. This is the design they will see in the Empire State Building. Ask them to bring in photographs or drawings of Art Deco buildings, furniture or art objects. Have them focus on searching for Art Deco examples with interesting patterns made by *zigzags, trapezium, curves and broken lines*. They should also look for interesting uses of aluminum and stainless steel.

Display Art Deco items and photographs in your classroom.

Have students bring in samples of music (vintage or modern) they consider expresses the same lines or rhythm (music-wise) as the Art Deco style of architecture.

For extra credit --- have students find out what a *ziggurat* is!

Materials Needed

- Building plans for your school (if possible)
- A local architect who will work with your students
- Local building tradesmen who will work with your students
- Photographs of Art Deco buildings, furniture and art objects
- Access to the Internet or other research tools

Good Websites for Information About the Art Deco Style

1. http://www.behr.com/behrx/inspiration/historical_4.jsp -- This is the Behr Paint Company's website. It has some good information about materials and colors and trims that were part of the style.
2. <http://www.artdecohomes.com/> --- This website shows one architect's Art Deco designs. Some are way-out but all are interesting!
3. <http://artstyleonline.com/design/life-in-art-deco-style/> --- There is not much information here but there are some clear examples of Art Deco buildings, furniture and art objects.
4. <http://artstyleonline.com/design/life-in-art-deco-style/> --- This page is devoted to the ziggurat.



Skyscraper Statistics

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to skyscrapers around the world and to use common statistics as a means of making comparisons among these buildings.

Activity

The Empire State Building is just one of many skyscrapers that exist in the world today. Here are some of its most interesting statistics:

The usual statistics

- It is 1,472 feet in height to the top of the antennae.
- It is 1,250 feet to the 102nd-floor observatory.
- It has a volume of 37 million cubic feet.
- The area of the site it occupies is 83,860 square feet.
- The cost of construction of the Empire State Building was \$40,948,900.
- At 102 floors it surpasses the Chrysler Building in height.

Some unusual statistics

- There are 210 steel columns in the vertical frame.
- About seven million man-hours of labor were involved in the construction.
- 3,439 workers were employed on Thursday, April 14, 1930. This was the day the greatest number of workers were on the job.
- It requires a cleaning staff of 250 to keep it in shape.
- It takes one man a full day just to replace the burned out lightbulbs in the tower alone.
- It has 63 elevators.
- It has 75 miles of water pipes.
- It has 50 miles of radiator pipes for heating.
- It has 64 elevators.
- It has 6,500 windows.

(From *Thirteen Months to Go* by Geraldine B. Wagner)

Discuss these statistics as a class.

Present photographs of the buildings below and have your students find out some of the **usual statistic** for these buildings:

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- Etionas Towers in Kuala Lumpur
- Jin Mao in Shanghai
- Taipei 101 in Taiwan
- Freedom Tower
- Burj Al Arab in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Have your students graph the buildings above, along with the Empire State Building, based on their heights. Discuss the graph. Don't forget to include a discussion about why our society builds these skyscrapers.

Then have your students find some of the **unusual statistics** for the buildings above.

Materials Needed

Access to the Internet or other research tool

Graphing supplies

Photographs of

- Jin Mao in Shanghai
- Taipei 101 in Taiwan
- Etionas Towers in Kuala Lumpur
- Freedom Tower
- Burj Al Arab in Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Useful Websites for Locating Photos of & Information About Skyscrapers

1. <http://www.emporis.com/en/> -- A great site for locating buildings around the world.
2. <http://skyscraperpage.com/> --- This site has lots of information about skyscrapers all over the world. It even has up-dated information about buildings currently under construction.
3. http://www.skyscraper.org/TALLEST_TOWERS/tallest.htm --- This is the website for the Skyscraper Museum. It has lots of information about tall buildings all over the world and also about visions for and construction of skyscrapers.

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