Topic Overview:

After the Stock Market Crash, many people hoped for relief and economic recovery. However, by the late 1930s, banks began to fail in alarming numbers. A state of panic ensued as people ran to the banks to retrieve their money. For many, it was too late. Unemployment in industrialized countries skyrocketed until the onset of World War II. Those who previously lived in economic comfort now lived precariously on the edge of existence. Despair, frustration, and escapism became a way of life for many. The grandiose excitement of the 1920s dissipated into the gloomy despair of the 1930s as the depression truly became great.

Activity Overview:

Students in this recreation simulation will act as married couples living at the end of the Roaring Twenties. They will endure the Stock Market Crash and experience the Great Depression. They will be forced to learn how to manage a meager budget during trying times. To survive in their new lives they will be forced to make difficult decisions, such as leaving their homes and giving up their children for adoption.
Objectives:
1. Students will understand life during the Great Depression by sympathizing with the plight of the average person.
2. Students will describe how people were able to cope during the Great Depression.

Setup:
1. Pair desks to face the front of the room.
2. Place a desk at the front of the room. Post the signs “Work” and “Bank” on it.
3. Make an overhead transparency of the Budget Worksheet.
4. Make per pair copies of the Budget Worksheet.
5. Tape the “Orphanage” sign to one wall and “Jail” to another.

Materials:
1. Newspaper
2. 15 large cardboard boxes
3. Budget Worksheet (p.9-10)
4. Pink Slips (p.11)
5. Great Depression Signs: Orphanage, Bank, Bank Closed, Work, Jail (p.12-13)

Optional Materials:
1. CD player and songs from the Great Depression:
   a. “Brother Can You Spare A Dime”
   b. “Those Were the Days”
2. Several bottles of water or soft drinks
3. Cups and ice
4. Candy
5. Loaf of bread
Activity in Detail:

1. Place students in boy-girl pairs and say: “Today you will encounter the perils of the Great Depression. You are paired up with your new spouse. You will need a piece of paper and a Budget Worksheet. The goal of this activity is to survive financially through 5 rounds.”

2. Hand out the Budget Worksheets and have students write their real and “married” names at the top. Have the wives take the boys’ last names.

3. Follow the directions for each round. Reinforce the idea that food, water, and clothing expenses must be paid every round. Also, every expense listed on the Budget Worksheet except for Recreation must be paid in Round 1.
Great Depression: Round 1

1. Have all couples add $10 to their worksheets as pay for this round and write $110 in the “Total” space.

2. Couples must now pay their bills. They must pay for food, water, and the mortgage every round. Other choices are optional. In this round, they also must pay for their car. Not paying the bills will have future consequences.

3. Now the couples have the option of spending their money on recreational activities. Help dispense drinks and candy if purchased and make appropriate notations on the Budget Worksheets.

4. Have each couple determine the total amount spent (expenses + recreation) during Round 1 and place that amount at the bottom of the chart on Page 1 of the Budget Worksheet.

5. Each couple now records the appropriate numbers in the “Amount Spent” and the optional “Minus Bank Deposit” boxes on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet.

6. After that, read the following consequence:

   a. “If you did not pay your electric bill, the candles you have been using have burned your furniture. This costs you $10 to replace.

   b. Add $10 to the “Consequences” box on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet.”

8. Have students fill out the “Total Left at the End of Round” and “Amount for Next Round” boxes Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet. Circulate and make a note of which couples have deposited money in the bank (some may want to change the amount of money deposited once they hear that the banks have closed in Round 2). Make sure that students have recorded their numbers correctly.
Great Depression: Round 2

1. Announce that the Stock Market has just crashed.
2. Tell the husbands that they have been fired and will not be getting any more money.
   Announce that the banks have loaned out too much money and are now closed.
   Post the Bank Closed sign. Any money the students previously deposited in the bank is forever lost.
3. Announce that each couple has just had a baby. They must draw a picture of and name their child on the piece of paper.
4. Couples now pay their bills. They must include the medical cost of the newborn.
   a. Medical bill for the baby: $10.
   b. Food, water, and clothing expenses are now for 3 people. They do not have to pay their car loan this month.
5. Couples can sell listed assets for cash. Record the amount from a sale in the “Add $ From Resale” box on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet. Cross off sold items.
6. Couples can spend their money on recreational activities. Sell illegal hooch, candy, and movie tickets as necessary.
7. Each couple now records the appropriate numbers in the “Amount Spent” box on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet. After that, read the following consequence: “If you did not pay your car loan, your car has been repossessed. If you did not sell it already, cross it off from the list and you may not sell it in future rounds.”
8. Have students fill out the “Total Left at the End of Round” and “Amount for Next Round” boxes on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet.
Great Depression: Round 3

1. Announce the rules for this round:
   a. “Couples must pay their bills again.”
   b. “You may place your child in the orphanage if you cannot afford to keep it. Only the wives can give up their child for adoption. Wives have to tape their child’s picture to the wall labeled ‘Orphanage.’”
   c. “You may make clothing out of scrap paper instead of paying for it, or can simply draw articles of clothing on book paper and tape it to yourselves. To get credit for it, you must tape it to yourself.”
   d. “Also, you may now sell your house. If you do, your choices are:
      i. “Move in with other couples and share their mortgage payment. This requires that you sit on each other’s desks at the same time.”
      ii. “Move into a ‘Hooverville.’ To make a ‘Hooverville,’ cover 2 desks with a cardboard box and sit under it.”
2. Give couples few minutes to make clothing or “Hoovervilles.”
3. Then, as they work, call out that a work option for the husbands: “I have work available for this round for the first 3 husbands to get to me!” Pay those 3 men $5 each (to record on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet in the “Add $ From Other Sources” box).
4. Have students add up the “Amount Spent” for Round 3 and record it at the bottom page 1 of the Budget Worksheet.
5. Announce the consequence for this round: “If you did not pay your taxes, then you owe the government $10, or you will go to jail.”
6. Send the husbands who could not pay their taxes to the “Jail” area. They must remain there until they can pay their taxes or find someone else to pay for them.
7. Fill out the “Amount Spent” and “Amount for Next Round” on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet.
Great Depression: Round 4

1. Announce the rules for this round:
   a. “Couples must pay their bills.”
   b. “You may purchase recreational activities.”
   c. “Record all expenses.”

2. Ask students: “How much money does each couple have left? The 3 poorest husbands can get food from a breadline, and they do not have to pay for food this round. You 3 form a line to receive enough bread to feed your family for this round. Write an “N/A” in the “Food and Water” box on Page 1 of your Budget Worksheet.”

3. Ask students: “Who has purchased movie tickets and/or candy since Round 2? Since you did so, you now feel so good that you found a job that pays $5 for Rounds 4 and 5.”

4. Add up the “Amount Spent” for Round 4 and record it on page 1 of the Budget Worksheet.

5. Fill out the “Amount for Next Round” on Page 2 of the Budget Worksheet.

6. Announce to class in a DJ voice: “This is a CBS Special Announcement: Today, in an unprovoked attack, the Empire of Japan has attacked the US Pacific Fleet based at Pearl Harbor, HI. I have jobs for any man willing to join the military.” Have boys line up in the front and pay them $10.

7. Ask how many have survived the class Great Depression.
Debriefing:

The Great Depression

I. Causes of Great Depression
   A. Stock Market Crash of 1929
   B. Closing of banks due to excessive expansion of credit

II. Effects of Great Depression
   A. 1 out of 4 Americans were unemployed
   B. People lost savings held in banks

III. Life for Americans in the Great Depression
   A. Selling household items to pay living expenses
   B. Orphanages grew as families could not support children
   C. Many people left their homes
      1. They shared homes with others
      2. They built “Hoovervilles”: shanties named after scapegoat President Hoover
   D. People made clothes by hand and grew their own food
   E. John Steinbeck chronicled this life in the *Grapes of Wrath*

IV. Coping with the Great Depression
   A. Escapism
      1. Movies provided entertainment
      2. Candy and alcohol helped people escape
   B. Crime wave
      1. Sharp increase in theft
      2. Swelling of prison populations

Assessment:

1. Budget Worksheet
2. Essay Question: Describe the lives and survival methods of people in the Great Depression
# Budget Worksheet

**Real Names:** __________  __________

**Married Names:**  Mr. & Mrs. __________ and __________  __________

**Have:** $100  **Pay:** _____  **Total:** _____

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Per Round</th>
<th>Round 1 1929</th>
<th>Round 2 1930</th>
<th>Round 3 1935</th>
<th>Round 4 1937</th>
<th>Round 5 1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Food &amp; Water</td>
<td>- 4 per person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Clothes</td>
<td>-2 per person</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortgage</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxes</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car Loan</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electric Bill</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone Bill</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Bill</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Recreational Activities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Illegal Hooch</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Candy</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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**Amount Spent**

* Must pay.
# Amount Spent and Amount for Next Round

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Round 1 1929</th>
<th>Round 2 1930</th>
<th>Round 3 1935</th>
<th>Round 4 1941</th>
<th>Round 5 1939</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$ at start of round</td>
<td>$110</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minus $ spent during</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the round</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Minus bank deposit</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$ Left in pocket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add $ from resale</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add $ from other</td>
<td></td>
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<td>sources (i.e. begging,</td>
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<td>odd jobs, etc.)</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total left @ end of</td>
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<td>round</td>
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<tr>
<td>Place at top of next</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>round</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Luxury Items and their resale value:

(Cross off an item once it is sold.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Refrigerator</td>
<td>$5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofa</td>
<td>$2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewelry</td>
<td>$2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>$10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>$2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>$1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House (can’t sell until Round 3)</td>
<td>$20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Great Depression Signs

Orphanage

Bank
Great Depression Signs

Bank Closed

Work

Jail