Hard Times, Hard Choices

How the Great Depression changed work and family life

SS24.5.7a "Explain how the Great Depression impacted Alabamians and the nation, including increased labor tensions."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two effects of the Great Depression in Alabama and circle two effects across the nation. Number the sentences that explain why workers and employers disagreed.

When Work Was Hard to Find

1. In 1929, the U.S. economy began to collapse. Banks closed, and many families lost savings they had placed there. Businesses sold fewer goods, so they cut jobs. Across the nation, people waited in lines for free meals. A worker who lost a paycheck could no longer buy as much food or clothing. That meant stores sold less, and even more workers faced losing their jobs.

2. In Alabama, falling cotton prices hurt farm families who already earned little. Sharecroppers, who farmed land they did not own, could be pushed off that land when crops brought in less money. Coal mines and steel plants around Birmingham also cut jobs. Families with no steady pay struggled to afford food and rent. Some moved to search for work, but jobs were scarce in other places, too.

3. As jobs disappeared, workers and employers argued over pay and working conditions. In 1934, textile workers across the nation, including some in Alabama, went on strike. They stopped working to demand better pay and treatment, while many mill owners resisted their demands. Such disputes raised labor tensions. In Alabama and other states, New Deal programs later paid some unemployed people to build roads and schools, but those jobs did not end every family's hardship.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How could one worker's lost paycheck lead to more job losses across the nation?

2. Explain one way the Depression hurt Alabama farm families and one way it hurt Alabama families who worked in industry.

3. Why did labor tensions rise between textile workers and mill owners during the Depression?

4. How did New Deal jobs help people in Alabama and other states, and what problem remained?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine your family leaves an Alabama farm and moves to a mill town to look for work. Write a short letter to a cousin in another state explaining how the Depression could change your family's choices, why mill workers and owners might disagree, and how your cousin's community might face a similar problem. Include at least two cause-and-effect links.

ANSWER KEY

Hard Times, Hard Choices

GRADE 5 · SS24.5.7a

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline two effects of the Great Depression in Alabama and circle two effects across the nation. Number the sentences that explain why workers and employers disagreed. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How could one worker's lost paycheck lead to more job losses across the nation?	**The worker could buy less, so stores would sell less and might cut more jobs.**
2	Explain one way the Depression hurt Alabama farm families and one way it hurt Alabama families who worked in industry.	**Low cotton prices could cause sharecroppers to lose the land they farmed. Mines and steel plants cut jobs, leaving industrial workers without steady pay.**
3	Why did labor tensions rise between textile workers and mill owners during the Depression?	**Workers struck to demand better pay and treatment, but many mill owners resisted those demands.**
4	How did New Deal jobs help people in Alabama and other states, and what problem remained?	**The programs paid some unemployed people to build roads and schools, but they did not end every family's hardship.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Cousin, cotton brings in so little money that we left the farm to look for work near a mill. Jobs are scarce here, and workers want better pay because their families need food and rent money, but the mill owners may resist. If workers in your town lose their paychecks, stores there might sell less and cut jobs too. I hope we find steady work, but moving has not made these hard times disappear.

Accept other cause-and-effect explanations supported by the passage. The letter should apply the ideas to a possible family experience rather than claim that its imagined events actually happened.