Crisis and Care

How hardship and relief reshaped American lives

SS24.US2.5 "Identify economic and social effects of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl on American society and describe how individuals addressed the challenges and sought to help others in need..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three effects of the Depression or Dust Bowl on people, circle three ways people or programs responded, and write 1 beside a sentence that shows a limit of a response.

Hardship, Help, and Unequal Relief

1 In 1933, a closed mill could turn a steady paycheck into a search for food. Across the United States, bank failures and falling demand cost millions their jobs; families delayed medical care, doubled up in crowded homes, or sent teenagers to earn wages. In the southern Great Plains, drought and intensive plowing left exposed soil vulnerable to fierce winds. Dust storms destroyed crops, deepening farm debt and pushing some families west to seek work. The Dust Bowl was a regional environmental disaster within a nationwide economic crisis, not a storm that covered every state. Neighbors shared meals, and local charities opened soup kitchens.

2 In Alabama, the Depression struck cotton farms already weakened by low crop prices and damaged the market for factory goods. The Tennessee Valley Authority, or TVA, built dams that reduced flooding, improved river navigation, and produced electricity. Construction created jobs, while electric power later reached more homes and businesses. The Civilian Conservation Corps hired young men for conservation projects, sending wages home to families. The Works Progress Administration, or WPA, paid workers to build and repair public facilities, including schools and roads. These programs addressed unemployment and poor infrastructure, but dam construction also displaced some residents from their land.

3 Relief could keep a household together, yet assistance was uneven. Some mothers managed food budgets with donated groceries while fathers searched for work; women also took paid jobs when they could find them. Black workers often faced discrimination in hiring and unequal access to New Deal jobs, especially where local officials controlled placement. The 1935 Social Security Act created old-age benefits and unemployment insurance, but its original coverage excluded many farm and domestic workers, jobs held by many Black Americans and women. Families and churches organized food and clothing drives to fill gaps. Federal programs helped millions, but they did not end unequal treatment.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did the Dust Bowl add to the hardships families already faced during the nationwide Depression? Distinguish where each crisis occurred.

2. What problems did the TVA address in Alabama, and what was one cost of its work?

3. How did the CCC and WPA help Alabama families in different ways?

4. How did the original Social Security rules leave many Black Americans and women without coverage, and how did communities help people facing gaps in relief?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a brief letter from an Alabama resident in 1936 to a cousin in the southern Great Plains. Describe one different challenge in each place, two ways people responded, and one limit or unequal effect of a response; create your own situation using historically accurate details.

ANSWER KEY

Crisis and Care

GRADE 11 · SS24.US2.5

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three effects of the Depression or Dust Bowl on people, circle three ways people or programs responded, and write 1 beside a sentence that shows a limit of a response. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the Dust Bowl add to the hardships families already faced during the nationwide Depression? Distinguish where each crisis occurred.	**The nationwide Depression cost people jobs and strained family budgets. In the southern Great Plains, dust storms also destroyed crops, increased farm debt, and pushed some families west to seek work.**
2	What problems did the TVA address in Alabama, and what was one cost of its work?	**TVA dams created construction jobs, reduced flooding, improved navigation, and produced electricity. Dam construction also displaced some residents.**
3	How did the CCC and WPA help Alabama families in different ways?	**The CCC paid young men for conservation work, allowing them to send wages home. The WPA paid workers to build or repair facilities such as schools and roads.**
4	How did the original Social Security rules leave many Black Americans and women without coverage, and how did communities help people facing gaps in relief?	**The rules excluded many farm and domestic workers, jobs held by many Black Americans and women. Families and churches organized food and clothing drives to help people in need.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Dear Ruth, Your letters about dust storms destroying crops worry me. Here in Alabama, low cotton prices have cut our income, though we have not lived through your dust storms. My brother joined a CCC crew and sends part of his pay home. Our church gathers food for neighbors who cannot find work. A nearby TVA dam promises electricity and jobs, but a family we know had to leave its land for construction. I hope you find work if you decide to move west. Your cousin, Mae

Accept other passage-supported effects and responses. For the letter, look for a clear distinction between Alabama's economic challenges and the southern Great Plains Dust Bowl, plus a historically accurate limit or unequal effect.