

Cotton and Crisis

Tracing economic causes of hardship in Georgia during the Great Depression

SS8H8.b "Explain economic factors that resulted in the Great Depression. (e.g., boll weevil and drought)."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline each economic factor that weakened Georgia's economy, then circle the effect it caused so you can trace each cause-and-effect link.

Why Hard Times Spread

- ① In the 1920s, many Georgia families depended on cotton. Farmers had expanded cotton planting during earlier high-price years, but by the decade's end they were producing more cotton than buyers needed. When supply rose above demand, cotton prices fell. A farmer could harvest a large crop and still earn too little to cover seed, fertilizer, land payments, and household needs. Lower farm income meant rural families had less money to spend at local stores, so business owners also lost customers.
- ② At the same time, boll weevils damaged cotton plants across the South, including Georgia. The insects fed on cotton buds and squares, reducing the amount farmers could sell. Drought added another hardship in some years by drying soil and weakening crops. These losses were especially serious because many farmers already owed money for supplies and equipment. With smaller harvests or lower-quality cotton, they struggled to repay loans. Some families lost farms, while banks and merchants faced unpaid debts.
- ③ Farm troubles did not cause the Great Depression by themselves. Across the nation, some factories made more goods than consumers could buy, and many people bought cars, appliances, or stock with borrowed money. When the economy weakened after the 1929 stock market crash, jobs and wages disappeared. Banks failed, and depositors could lose savings. For Georgia communities already hurt by weak cotton prices, pests, and dry weather, the national crisis made recovery harder. Falling income, debt, reduced spending, and bank failures reinforced one another.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did producing more cotton than buyers needed lower a farmer's income?

2 How did boll weevils and drought make it harder for farmers to repay loans?

3 Why did low farm income hurt local store owners?

4 How did national bank failures make recovery harder for Georgia communities already facing farm problems?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Create a three-step cause-and-effect chain that begins with either crop damage or low cotton prices and ends with a wider community effect. Use arrows, then write one complete sentence explaining the chain.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline each economic factor that weakened Georgia's economy, then circle the effect it caused so you can trace each cause-and-effect link. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did producing more cotton than buyers needed lower a farmer's income?	Extra cotton increased supply above demand, causing cotton prices to fall. Farmers then earned too little from their crops.
2	How did boll weevils and drought make it harder for farmers to repay loans?	They damaged or weakened cotton crops, leaving farmers with smaller harvests or lower-quality cotton to sell.
3	Why did low farm income hurt local store owners?	Farm families had less money to spend at local stores, so store owners lost customers.
4	How did national bank failures make recovery harder for Georgia communities already facing farm problems?	Bank failures could cause depositors to lose savings, adding to falling income, debt, and reduced spending in communities already harmed by farm troubles.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Low cotton prices → less farm income → less spending at local stores. When farmers earned less, store owners lost customers and had less money to pay workers or debts.

Accept any accurate chain that connects a listed farm problem to reduced income or debt and then to a community effect such as reduced store spending, unpaid debts, or bank trouble. The explanation sentence should clearly describe the causal connection.