

# Vocabulary

**Arkies**—Migrant workers from Arkansas displaced by crop failures and dust storms.

**Black Tuesday**—Tuesday, October 29, 1929. The New York Stock Market crashed. Generally referred to as the event which marked the beginning of the Great Depression, more accurately, it was only the first major visible sign of the Depression.

**Ditchback Camps**— Slang term for shanty-town buildings located in the fields near irrigation ditches. These small unsanitary shacks were generally located in the back of the camps.

**Drought**—A long period without precipitation.

**Dust Bowl**—Term used to describe much of the south western Great Plains in the 1930's, which experienced frequent dust storms and loss of agricultural income.

**Dust Storm**—Huge clouds of dirt caused by a combination of drought, high winds, and poor conservation practices. A dust storm could last up to three days, and cover large areas.

**Evict**—To remove people from someplace against their will; usually land or a building such as a home.

***The Grapes of Wrath***—The John Steinbeck novel about an Oklahoma farm family that moved west to California and became migrant workers.

**Great Depression**—(1929-1941) Period of economic downturn during which wages decreased dramatically and nearly 25% of the US labor force was unemployed; the Great Depression had worldwide effects.

**Greenbelt Towns**—An experimental federal housing program consisting of a planned town surrounded by agricultural land. There were Greenbelt towns constructed by the Resettlement Administration in Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**Jim Crow Laws**—Laws passed in the South after the Civil War that segregated or separated people by race in public places.

**Jobs Programs**—Unemployed people are given work by the federal government building roads and bridges, planting trees and even painting murals and writing guide books.

**Migrant Worker**—A person, generally an agricultural laborer, who moves from place to place in search of work.

**My Day**—The series of daily newspaper columns written by Eleanor Roosevelt beginning in 1936 and continuing until just before her death 1962. These articles chronicled her many interests and activities.

**Okies**—Migrant workers from Oklahoma displaced by crop failures and dust storms.

**Propaganda**—Information designed to promote or refute a particular cause or idea.

**(Anna) Eleanor Roosevelt (1886-1962)** —Wife of Franklin D. Roosevelt, she served as First Lady of the United States from 1933 to 1945 and was known as a reformer and humanitarian intent on advancing social justice, human rights, freedom and liberty. She was called “The First Lady of the World” by President Harry Truman and served on the first United States delegation to the United Nations, where she helped draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

**Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945)** —As the Thirty-second President of the United States, Roosevelt was elected four times and led the country through the two major crises of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Depression and World War II. Roosevelt believed that the government should take an active role in ensuring the economic well-being of the average citizen and brought relief, recovery and reform through his many New Deal programs. During World War II Roosevelt along with the leaders of England and the Soviet Union, crushed Hitler and the Axis powers.

**Rural**—Having to do with farming, a way of life outside the city.

**Urban**—Having to do with life in an industrialized, city environment.

**Sharecroppers**— Farmers who work land owned by someone else in return for a portion (share) of the crops grown. This practice gained popularity in the South following the Civil War and was common during the Great Depression.

**Socialistic**—A system of government or community control of land, capital, and industry.

**Tenant Farmer**—A person who rents land from a landowner for the purposes of growing crops or raising livestock.

**Tenement**—A low rent apartment building that generally includes very few amenities and is usually characterized by overcrowded conditions.

## **Government Agencies, Organizations and/or Programs**

**Farm Security Administration (FSA)** — Tasked with improving conditions for the rural poor. This goal was advanced by photographing the severe conditions faced by American farmers during the Great Depression, and the government's efforts to bring relief.

**Federal Arts Project (FAP)** — The FAP was a part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) which provided work for unemployed artists, actors, musicians and writers.

**Library of Congress**—This is the oldest federal cultural institution in America and the largest library in the world. It serves as the research arm of the Congress and has countless collections housed on more than 530 miles of bookshelves. The FSA photos are kept in the Library of Congress.

**New Deal**—The term given to the collection of more than forty federal government programs created by Franklin D. Roosevelt to help America out of the Great Depression and through World War II. Examples include the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Social Security, and the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

**Office of War Information (OWI)** — This agency was set up to educate people on the major issues of World War II and the importance of American involvement in postwar issues.

**Resettlement Administration (RA)** — This agency was formed to improve land-use practices and help those affected by land misuse such as exploitative farming, lumbering, mining, and oil drilling. It also constructed camps for migrant workers and resettled farmers to more productive land.

## **Geographic Regions**

**Northeast**—A region of the United States generally considered to include New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine.

**South**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas.

**Midwest**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota.

**Great Plains**—A region of the United States generally considered to include North

Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Nebraska, and Oklahoma.

**Southwest**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and Nevada.

**Rockies**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah.

**Pacific (Northwest)**—A region of the United States generally considered to include Oregon, Washington.

**California**—The western most state in the continental United States. It comprises nearly two-thirds of the west coast.

# LIFE



## DUST BOWL FARMER IS NEW PIONEER

This man is one of the great army of farmers driven from their land by the dust blight. A Resettlement Administration photographer met him in a battered car on the Oklahoma-California highway, took his picture but not his name. He has joined the pioneers who are seeking new lives on the Pacific Coast, as their fathers trekked

went to Oklahoma before them. His courageous philosophy was expressed to the photographer thus: "A man can't make out no ways by standin' and watchin' his crop burn up. I heard about this here migration [in California]. I figured that in a place where some people can make a good farm I can make one a little."



A WOMAN PACKING HOUSE WORKER, near Belle Glade, Fla., tries to bathe her child.



MOST MIGRANT VEGETABLE PICKERS live in shacks like this, without water or light.



CHILDREN OF THE MIGRANT WORKERS are often left alone all day—rarely go to school.



AN AGRICULTURAL WORKER eats his dinner in an old toolhouse near Homestead, Fla.



MIGRANT WORKERS really want to be clean—living conditions make it almost impossible.

## 'GRAPES OF WRATH' GROW IN GEORGIA, TOO

LOOK out, Georgia! Here they come, 50,000 strong—the migratory farm workers. What are you going to do about them?

They're in Florida now, picking beans, and they'll stay there through the strawberry, celery, fruit and cabbage seasons. But along about February they'll be moving north again. And when you move north from Florida, you move right into Georgia.

Some of the workers will find jobs here—temporary ones, picking tomatoes and digging potatoes or maybe working in the cotton fields. Such jobs don't pay much, but a man can make a living at it if his wife and kids join him in the fields. And if there "ain't" much work in Georgia, maybe he'll send the kids to school and rest up for a spell. Maybe he'll live on his savings, if he has any, for awhile. He and the wife and kids won't have three square meals every day, but corn meal is cheap and filling. They can always live in shanties or barns, or maybe just out under a lean-to if they haven't got the price of a regular shelter.

Along about April some of these workers will move on to South Carolina, where there's jobs to be had picking fruit. They'll get along somehow until early May, when the "season" gets going in North Carolina. There are strawberries, peaches, beans and cantaloupes to be picked.

And so these workers move on, out of North Carolina into Virginia for the apple season, up into Maryland, New Jersey, and even as far north as Maine. By the end of summer they have worked their way straight up the east coast. They're ready to go back to Florida and start all over again.

Where do these migratory workers come from? Don't they have permanent homes somewhere? The Farm Security Administration has just completed a study of these workers and their living conditions. Between 40 and 50 per cent of these migratory families once owned or rented farms in Georgia. The remainder come from North and South Carolina, Alabama and Florida. When times got hard and they couldn't make a living on the farms they moved on, helping with harvests whenever they went, picking up a dollar here, a dollar there, but never making enough money to buy a little piece of land and settle down anywhere.

When they descended on Florida late last summer, they created quite a problem. There weren't homes enough to go around, and even if there had been, who could have paid rent for a nice house? The migrant families settled down near Belle Glade where there were jobs to be had picking vegetables. A few lucky families got homes in the Florida Migratory Labor Camps, built by the FSA to solve the migratory housing problem, but they don't solve the problem. There are only two such camps in Florida (none in Georgia) and they cannot possibly accommodate the thousands of workers. Three other camps are under construction in the Florida lake region, but even these will not help much.

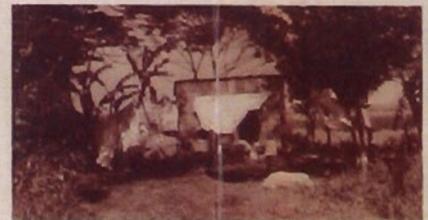
What's to be done about the workers? They want to be clean, they want to eat three meals a day and settle down on their own farms. They want to send their children to school. But can they? That's what the FSA is trying to find out now, with the co-operation of the various state departments of labor. The pictures on the left give you an idea of Florida workers' living conditions outside the labor camps. Georgia will be faced with Florida's problems in about a month when the workers come north.

Pictures on the right were taken at the Osceola Migratory Labor Camp, Belle Glade, Fla., where the families have decent, sanitary quarters and medical care. Unfortunately, there are more workers than there are camps to accommodate them.

—Photos by F. S. A.



THERE ARE MADONNAS, even among the laborers.



WASH DAY is a problem when water costs a cent a bucket.



THERE ARE complete laundry facilities in the FSA camps.

The Atlanta Journal, January 5, 1941



THERE ARE SHOWERS for everyone and water aplenty at the Osceola Migratory Labor Camp.



COMPARE THESE NEAT, clean houses at the FSA camp with the shack across the page.



CHILDREN AT THE GOVERNMENT CAMP play games in clean buildings; are taught to read.



WORKERS AT THE FSA CAMPS are taught to can food, to keep their homes tidy.



WATER IS EASILY AVAILABLE at the head of each shelter unit at the government camps.

# 'Oakies' at Our Door

Misery and Squalor of Migratory Workers Along Eastern Seaboard Matches 'Grapes of Wrath,' Says FSA Report



## Teaching Activities and Assignments

The following activities have been developed for teachers to use in the classroom or as homework assignments. They are grouped under the following topics: history; civics, citizenship, and government; writing; geography; fine arts; and hands-on-learning. Each assignment has been designed in a way that allows students to utilize a variety of skills including: reading for understanding; interpreting audiovisual materials; analyzing photographs, letters, reports, correspondence, and speeches; writing with clarity; roleplaying; and researching historic evidence. Each of the activities can be adapted to suit your students' needs and your own teaching style.

The educational impact of these activities will be greatly enhanced by a class visit to the National Archives Southeast Region. There is no fee for this field trip. We encourage you to contact our public programs department at 770-968-2100.

### History

- 1) **Photographs used as historical evidence:** Use the photographs provided as the basis for a discussion on the use of photography as historical evidence. When doing so have your students consider the following questions:
  - a. What is happening in the photograph?
  - b. What are the specific details that provide clues to what is happening?
  - c. Are there any details that suggest a date or a time of the event?
  - d. Are there any details that suggest the event is happening in a particular place?
  - e. What is your general impression of the photograph?
  - f. What general conclusions can be drawn from the photograph?
  - g. What do you think prompted the photographer to take this particular picture?
  - h. What might an appropriate caption be for this photograph?
  - i. What biases or assumptions surround the photograph?
  
- 2) **The importance of keeping and maintaining historic records:** Describe the importance of keeping and maintaining historic records. Remind students that historical evidence can come in the form of photographic images, written and printed documents, three dimensional objects and artifacts, sound recordings, and oral histories. Have students read letters and diaries, examine period objects and artifacts from the Great Depression, and discuss how they contribute to our understanding of the era.

## Fine Arts

- 3) **Photographs used for observation:** Use the photographs provided to engage students in photographic observation. Encourage them to discover and observe such elements as: composition, balance, rhythm, focal point, perspective, cropping, lighting, modes of transportation, style and condition of clothing, architectural styles and features, geographic and topographic features, fixtures and furnishings, and technology. Ask students to consider the possible points of view and motivations of the photographer. Ask students to compare each of these elements to conditions today.
- 4) **Art imitates life.** Have students read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, or arrange for them to view the classic film version of the book. How do the images conjured up in their minds, or presented on the screen, compare to those taken by the photographers of the FSA? What are the sub-themes that run throughout the book, film, and FSA images?

## Civics, Citizenship, and Government

- 5) **Documenting government efforts:** Explain that the photography project was begun by the Farm Security Administration to document rural poverty and the government efforts to alleviate it. Lead a discussion of the use and effectiveness of images in conveying a story and influencing public perception. Share and discuss how more modern examples, such as President Bush flying on to an aircraft carrier anchored just off the coast of California or the 1988 image of Michael Dukakis driving around in a tank have influenced public opinion.
- 6) **Photographs then and now:** Ask students to select one of the photographs provided in this packet and find a contemporary photograph from a current newspaper or magazine that shows a similar situation or a totally contrary situation. Then have them explain the similarities or differences. Ask them to research if there is a government agency or program designed to address the situation and have them assess the success or failure of the program.
- 7) **A President speaks to the nation:** Have students listen to a copy of President Roosevelt's March 4, 1933 Inaugural Address in which he proclaims, "This great nation will endure." Ask the students to juxtapose the upbeat, confident and, enthusiastic tones and phrases of the President's speech with the conditions facing the subjects featured in the FSA photographs.

## Writing and Journalism

- 8) **In their own words:** Ask students to select a photograph and complete one of the following writing assignments:
  - a. A diary entry that describes in detail a typical day in their life of one of the people shown.
  - b. A diary entry that describes in detail the hopes and fears of one of the people shown.
  - c. A letter to a friend written from the perspective of one of the people shown in the picture, which describes in detail his or her feelings about the FSA photography project.
- 9) **A picture is worth a thousand words:** Ask students to select the ten most moving or meaningful photos in the exhibit or the packet provided. Have them write a brief statement about each photograph that explains why they think it important and meaningful. Ask them to write a caption that captures the essence of the image as they see it.
- 10) **FSA cub reporter:** Assign students one of the photographs included in this packet. Have them imagine that they are newspaper or magazine writers, and ask them to write an article that would accompany the photograph if it were to appear in print. Remind them that they must completely and carefully answer the who, what, when, where, and how questions that are the basis of good journalism. Have them prepare a catchy headline for the article and an appropriate caption for the photograph.

## Geography

- 11) **From sea to shining sea:** Copy the map provided in this packet and ask students to outline the following geographic areas: the Northeast, the South, the South West, the Great Plains, Midwest and California. Have them identify where the “Oakies” and “Arkies” originated and where they were going. Ask them to circle the area considered to be the Dust Bowl.

## Hands-on Learning

- 12) **Jr. FSA agent:** Provide your students with inexpensive disposable cameras and a ‘shoot script’ similar to the one provided to the Farm Security Administration photographers. Allow them time to photograph people and places in their communities and then collect the pictures and organize them into a photo exhibit that mirrors the *‘This Great Nation Will Endure’* exhibit at National Archives.

- 13) **Living history:** Have students review the brief biographies of the FSA photographers and select one that they will role-play in a presentation before the rest of the class. Ask each student to select one representative photograph from among those taken by his or her preferred photographer to present and interpret for the class. Encourage the other students to study the photographs and to ask questions that probe the photographer's background and possible biases.
- 14) **Can we talk?** Provide students with the following copy of Carl Mydan's 1964 quote:

*"[I] don't think that the quality of the Farm Security Administration's pictures was notably great. I think what they portrayed was notably great. . . They were great pictures then and they are now, many of them because they told the universal story of people . . . of all qualities that we find in ourselves and in each other."*

Then have the students prepare a list of interview questions they can use to prepare their own 'oral histories' of individuals in their community who experienced the Great Depression firsthand.

# Photograph Analysis Worksheet

(Created by the National Archives and Records Administration Education Staff)

## Step 1. Observation

Study the photograph for 2 minutes. Form an overall impression of the photograph and then examine individual items. Observe the people, objects, and activities that take place in this photograph.

## Step 2. Inference

Based on what you have observed above, list three things you might infer from this photograph

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## Step 3. Questions

- A. What questions does this photograph raise in your mind?
  
- B. Where could you find answers to them?



## Written Document Analysis Worksheet

|   |  |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1.  | <p>TYPE OF DOCUMENT (Check one):</p> <table><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Newspaper</td><td><input type="radio"/> Map</td><td><input type="radio"/> Advertisement</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Letter</td><td><input type="radio"/> Telegram</td><td><input type="radio"/> Congressional Record</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Patent</td><td><input type="radio"/> Press Release</td><td><input type="radio"/> Census Report</td></tr><tr><td><input type="radio"/> Memorandum</td><td><input type="radio"/> Report</td><td><input type="radio"/> Other</td></tr></table> | <input type="radio"/> Newspaper                 | <input type="radio"/> Map          | <input type="radio"/> Advertisement  | <input type="radio"/> Letter              | <input type="radio"/> Telegram | <input type="radio"/> Congressional Record | <input type="radio"/> Patent   | <input type="radio"/> Press Release | <input type="radio"/> Census Report | <input type="radio"/> Memorandum | <input type="radio"/> Report | <input type="radio"/> Other |
| <input type="radio"/> Newspaper                 | <input type="radio"/> Map  | <input type="radio"/> Advertisement             |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
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| 2.  | <p>UNIQUE PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DOCUMENT (Check one or more):</p> <table><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Notations</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Typed</td><td><input type="checkbox"/> Other</td></tr><tr><td><input type="checkbox"/> Seals</td><td></td></tr></table>  | <input type="checkbox"/> Interesting Letterhead | <input type="checkbox"/> Notations | <input type="checkbox"/> Handwritten | <input type="checkbox"/> "RECEIVED" stamp | <input type="checkbox"/> Typed | <input type="checkbox"/> Other             | <input type="checkbox"/> Seals |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Seals                  |  |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
| 3.  | <p>DATE(S) OF DOCUMENT:</p>  |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
| 4.  | <p>AUTHOR (OR CREATOR) OF THE DOCUMENT:</p><br><p>POSITION (TITLE):</p>  |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
| 5.  | <p>FOR WHAT AUDIENCE WAS THE DOCUMENT WRITTEN?</p>   |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |
| 6.  | <p>DOCUMENT INFORMATION (There are many possible ways to answer A-E.)</p> <p>A. List three things the author said that you think are important:</p><br><p>B. Why do you think this document was written?</p><br><p>C. What evidence in the document helps you know why it was written? Quote from the document.</p><br><p>D. List two things the document tells you about life in the United States at the time it was written.</p><br><p>E. Write a question to the author that is left unanswered by the document:</p>   |   |                                    |                                      |   |                                |  |                                |                                     |                                     |                                  |                              |                             |





Transcripts from “Stories from the Great Depression”

Opening Text: **The Great depression affected many people from coast to coast: the young and the old, the rich and the poor.**

**These are the stories of those who endured, those who survived, and those who remembered...**

Opening Music

(Title Screen) The National Archives Southeast Region presents  
“Stories from the Great Depression”

FDR quote, “This great nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

**Narrator: Henry Smith** As Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke these simple and inspiring words in 1933, Americans from coast to coast, weary from years of economic hardship, were willing to take the freshly minted President at his word. He offered them hope, which was all that many people had left. The economic hardships brought on by the Great Depression had reached a pinnacle by the spring of 1933. On March 4 an unprecedented event had occurred: each and every bank had closed its doors. For some this measure was only temporary, but for a large number the economic crisis was a permanent reality. The banking system was near collapse, a quarter of the labor force was unemployed, and prices and production were down by a third from their 1929 levels.

During his first inaugural speech, President Roosevelt looked over the tense crowd in front of the capital, anxiously gathered before him and with unquestionable conviction stated, “This nation asks for action, and action now.”

**Bob Arnold:** My father was a cotton mill worker, and so we moved a lot (laughter). By the time I was 21 years old I had moved 21 times. But uh, we didn’t have a big house back then and uh, you didn’t have carpet or anything like that, you had uh, linoleum floors, uh wooden floors with linoleum rugs down on top them to keep the air out. Because, uh, some of the places we lived in you could see the ground through the floor...

**Ed Trippe:** We ran a country grocery store; we ran a grits mill, and a cotton gin. In the south cotton was the king and you couldn’t get anything for the cotton. And then the government came along and had us take and uh, cut out cotton production.

**Jack Gray:** Back in the depression, uh, we saw a lot of people come from the southeast Kentucky and eastern Tennessee because they wanted to get better jobs. There was nothing going in the coal mines, so we had a lot of people come in and uh, that we’re in

bad shape and they also went across the river to Cincinnati. There were almost, uh, little enclaves of them, the people, hoping they'd get some day of to Detroit.

**Peggy Sides:** People found ways to get money, to do a job, to get employment, to keep the family going

**Text: The New Deal**

**Narrator: Henry Smith** In the first one hundred days of the new administration, fifteen measures flowed from the White House to Congress. Fifteen new laws assured absolute government action: to employ the jobless, to improve the Tennessee Valley, to support crop prices, to prevent home foreclosures, to insure bank deposits, and to stabilize the economy. Franklin D. Roosevelt called these programs a "New Deal" for the nation.

**Mary Evelyn Tomlin:** My mother got a job with the W. P. A., one of the New Deal agencies. She worked in the public library and I think she really enjoyed that job; she talked about it a lot and it was the only job that she ever had in her entire life. Later on after she married she did not work outside the home, and uh, but she talked a lot when she would take us to the library as small children she would tell us about her experiences working for the WPA and the public library.

**Fred Munguia:** During the Depression, many people from Oklahoma and other states affected by the Dust Bowl moved to San O'Quinn valley looking for work. Some families were lucky and were able to get jobs in Tehachapi, working in the cement plants and the women's state prison. My parents bought a house on the edge of town, and we had no gas or sewer line. I can still remember when the gas line was laid through the alley, the workers wrapping a material that looked like Saran Wrap around the pipes. The house next door was rented mostly by family from Oklahoma. One family built a small square shack behind the house using rolls of roofing material to cover the outside walls and migrant families would live in the shack for a while before moving somewhere else looking for work.

Our house was close to the railroad tracks and I remember men knocking on our back door, asking for water and something to eat. My mom would make them a bologna sandwich on white bread. Back then these men were not called homeless people but were called hobos or tramps that rode the trains.

**Bob Arnold:** A lot of people will remember what things cost but they don't remember what they made and that makes a whole lot of difference. You know, you could buy a coke for a nickel or a hamburger for a nickel, but the trouble was you didn't have a nickel to buy them with mostly and just things like that, so, you know your memory clouds things a little bit and uh, you tend to remember the good things.

**Peggy Sides:** My husband uh, when he was a small boy, he was brought up in Walker County, Alabama. It is the coal mining district, and uh, he was paid ten cents a shot to go into the coal mines and to light the fuse on the blasting powder and then run like blazes to get out before the thing exploded and (laughter) men wouldn't do it, grown men wouldn't

do it, because they couldn't move fast enough so they hired him, because he was small and wiry, and he would just "shhh" get out of there, before it blew up. Well when his father found out about it he whooped the tar out of him (laughter).

Text: **Relief, Recovery, Reform**

**Narrator: Henry Smith** The President's first priority was relief for the millions of Americans who suddenly found themselves without work, without food, without shelter and without hope. He concluded that help for the down-trodden must come from beyond the traditional private or local government sources. He believed that the federal government needed to take on a larger role in providing for the well-being of the American people. Of his many initiatives, the Works Progress Administration was the largest. It was created in the spring of 1935 and further extended the national relief effort. The primary goal of the WPA was to alleviate the high unemployment rate and provide assistance for the discouraged American work force.

**Brenda Wright:** One of the benefits from working with the WPA was that he was given fabric and my mother has told me several times of this story of where they got the fabric and it seems that the fabric was all one color and one design, so everybody knew if you had that fabric, that it was the WPA type part of their job, uh, part of their pay. My grandmother made dresses for all the girls, and my mother was real excited because that meant that she had two dresses and uh, in this day and time we don't think of that many, but uh, she was very excited about wearing her new dress to school, but when she got there the other girls who had a little bit more money, uh kind of laughed at her because she had on the WPA but I laughed at her, at her statement she said I didn't care I had another dress and that was the most important thing.

**Suzanne Munguia:** My uh, grandmother was a seamstress, she worked all of her life, all of her married life, and uh, she would send this aunt out to collect remnants from the clothing factories and uh, so clothes was not a problem, it was not an issue because my grandmother could make something out of nothing always. She said however shoes, they didn't have shoes because grandma couldn't make shoes (laughter). One of my aunts who was 85 shared so many stories with me she said that she didn't feel that the depression had made that much of an impact on them because they were a family of nine children so life was just always a struggle and uh, she didn't really notice that much because everyone in the neighborhood and all the other family members were working just as hard and struggling just as hard.

**Brenda Wright:** One of the stories that my mother tells is that the Rolling Truck would come to their farm once a week, and if they had worked hard for their family that week they got one egg, each child. There was twelve children and they got one egg, and when the truck came they could trade that egg for a piece of candy. And my mother tells to this day, how good that candy tasted because that was the only candy they got for another whole week.

**Jack Gray:** When we were little, we had to go out near the dump and play ball, you know, use rocks and stones for bases.

**Mary Evelyn Tomin:** My brother and I, one of the things that we'd love to do all the time in the summertime was to go and pick blackberries, blackberries are plentiful if their free; they grow wild in the woods and we would always come home and I would help her make a pie, blackberry pie and we loved it and she would tell me that we were using her mother's recipe and blackberry pie is very simple dish to make, it doesn't cost very much if the blackberries are free, uh it's just a little sugar and then a little crust made with flour and lard and a she would tell me that there were times during the depression when blackberry pie was all that they had to eat.

**Text:** "...for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people."

**Jim McSweeney:** "We were raised in the sunset district of San Francisco, my dad had an office job and like so many people in the prosperous nineteen-twenties he was doing well then the great depression hit. My dad lost his job in 1930, his savings were depleted. We were forced to accept charity. The term welfare was not in vogue at the time. The procedure was once a week the associated charities of San Francisco would deliver boxes of food to needy families. We would watch as the boxes were brought to the men. At first one or two families were getting aid, but as the depression deepened, most of the families were receiving assistance. It was sad to see men selling apples on the street corners, their clothes were old and shabby and usually consisted of a pair of old pants with a suit coat, trying to stay warm on a typical foggy day. We lost our house, a cottage at 1933 Eighth Avenue, which still stands and is presently occupied." Edward McSweeney June, 1994."

**Stanley Blackburn:** My grandfather used to talk a whole lot about the depression and he often stated that uh, during the depression that money was real tight and I remember a story he telling me about his oldest son he said, uh, if you do it right living on the farm you could always eat and he said he didn't have to stand in the soup line or anything like that because he was able to raise his own food and also uh, he had plenty of cows and chickens and hogs for food so he wasn't hungry but some of the other things like clothing, his family didn't have many clothes or anything like that they didn't have much money to buy and he stated that his son was barefooted and he wanted him to go to school and he didn't have shoes. And he found a nickel and with that nickel he went and bought his son a pair of shoes. My grandmother, she stated that she was mad at President Hoover at the time and she felt at that particular time that the work she had to do was not much better than the work that her grandparents had to do and you know, they were slaves and she stated that wasn't much better than slave labor.

**Guy Hall:** My maternal grandmother was born in Maine in 1920. In the summer of 1929, when she was nine years old her parents decided to move to Michigan because some other family members had found work there. They had a substantial amount of money in

the bank when the stock market crashed in October of 1929; the banks closed and they had no access to their funds. Over time they both lost their jobs. They struggled for a couple of years in Michigan, in fact, they lived near a state prison and my great uncle told me that he remembered people talking about breaking into the prison because the prisoners were able to get a lot of fresh foods from the gardens that they grew. After struggling for a couple of years in Michigan, my great grandparents received a letter from a relative in Maine who said that he could provide a job for my great grandfather in the logging industry. The relative who offered this job wrote to the state officials on behalf of my great grandfather. And the state agreed to provide him \$25 and a model T. Ford to travel back to Maine with. It was a journey of mishaps, the model T. Ford that they were given had no fuel pump like modern cars, and the gas was gravity fed into the engine so that the car had to go up steep hills in reverse. In fact, the car was so slow at times that the family would just get out and walk beside it. But they eventually made it back to the Maine woods where my great grandfather worked as a logger for a while near the town of Andover. I know that during that time loggers who worked hard could make about a dollar a day cutting cordwood. They used bucksaws and axes and hauled the trees out of the woods using horses and if they were lucky, they could cut 4 to 6 cord of wood the day.

**Narrator: Henry Smith** The 1930s was a decade of tremendous technological advancement and by 1939 over 80% of Americans had a radio set. Although primarily used for entertainment, radio broadcast quickly became a tool to inform the public of the increasing crisis in Europe. Roosevelt steered a steady course and kept the American audience informed about his plans and progress through a series of radio addresses which came to be called “fireside chats.” These broadcasts were centered on specific topics and issues and were delivered in a warm and simple language that made people feel they were partners in the efforts the President was putting forth. When Franklin Roosevelt, poised and self-assured, addressed his audience as “my friends” most Americans believed they were exactly that.

**Mary Evelyn Tomlin:** My grandfather had a store, a little country store, and he sold food but also some other types of items too and he was very successful with his business until the depression came along. And he had extended credit to a lot of people and of course people were out of work and they were not able to pay, if they didn't pay him, he then could not afford to operate the store so he lost his business. The family's struggled for a long time after that because, uh, there were no jobs, and it took a long time for him to find work, particularly in that part of the country.

**Suzanne Munguia:** My grandfather was a grocer, always had been a grocer, and that I noticed in the city directories that they were always moving and she said that was because he was always looking for a better location, a better neighborhood where business would be better and they might be able to improve their finances. But uh, he eventually went out of business after 25 years of being a grocer. His ruin had been his compassion for the poor people; he gave credit and they couldn't pay him back.

**Brenda Wright:** They didn't know that they were poor as such, because they had food, they had a place to live, she knew she didn't have a lot of things but she did know that she had the basics things that she needed, and a big family and they all take care of each other.

**Jim McSweeney:** My mom was born in 1918; my dad was born in 1920. Both have passed way in the last eighteen months or so. What I remember most about them, they were great parents, great providers, and they were great teachers to all the McSweeney children. As a kid growing up, I remember them speaking not about the hard times during the 1930s, they spoke rather about Roosevelt's hope and the optimism and they would tell us stories over and over again about old time radio, Jack Armstrong, the All-American boy, Jack Benny, Amos and Andy. They would talk about all the famous sports teams, the Gas House Gang, and baseball, the New York Yankees. They told us about how they would go to the cinema for 5¢ and see the Marx brothers, a young Betty Davis, Walt Disney films etc. Just a tremendous period to be a young child growing up and I guess as testimony to their own parents they kept that side of the Great Depression, in terms of the negative image, away from us.

**Bob Arnold:** We were aware to a degree, but most of our friends were in the same boat we were. So, we, we didn't know much about the discrepancy. We would see the big houses, uh, people had big homes and things like that but we never came in contact with them much or talked to them much. So we just knew they had a lot more than we had, but uh, there was no hope out there. We never really,uh, desired to be rich because we knew it was hopeless.

Text: **"We face the future with confidence and with courage. We are Americans.**

**Susanne Pike:** When I met President Roosevelt in 1935, I don't remember too much about the dinner but I was uh, saw him standing at the door, uh he was shaking hands with all the patients that was coming to dinner that day and he asked me my name. He said, "Little girl, what is your name?" and I said, "Suzanne." "I love the name Suzanne but I would like to call you Susie, is that alright?" And I said, "Uh-Huh", and guess what we called him "Rosie." And the other children called him "Doc Roosevelt."

Text: **April 12, 1945**

**(News Reel)**We have a late bulletin, here is a flash, President Roosevelt passed away this afternoon...he died in Warm Springs, Georgia...this afternoon at his little white pine cottage a top of Pine Mountain...the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in his sixty-third year in his home in Warm Springs, Georgia...at the home which was affectionately called the Little White House. They said that beyond a doubt it was cerebral hemorrhage. The grieved allied world is pouring out its sympathy. The president's death came without warning...at 4:35 p.m. eastern war time the president died without pain...at 5:45 p.m.

eastern war time in Washington, former press secretary Steve Hurley announced the earth shaking news...

**Suzanne Pike:** He was sick when he got back from Yalta; he thought well, if I can get down to Warm Springs, I can get my strength back. And uh, he looked bad, he was 63 years old and um, but he had been, he looked like he was tired, and um, but he would always smile when you would see him.

**Narrator: Henry Smith** When the news came on April 12, 1945 that President Roosevelt had died, all Americans felt the severity of this loss. Millions mourned over the death of a man that most had never met. President Roosevelt died, confidently believing that victory was assured, but never able to fully realize the success of all that he had accomplished.

**Henry Smith:** In the Federal programs there seem to be no discrimination, so that a black person could get a job with the WPA just as soon as a white person. They loved FDR and uh, they loved the Federal programs because as black families they felt that they were uh, really benefiting this program's.

**Jack Gray:** My mother you know, who was uh, she came over here in 1914 but she thought Roosevelt was the greatest thing walking. So, uh, yeah, she took it badly, and a lot of the neighbors did, it was a labor town ...

**Bob Arnold:** He was a savior back then, (laughter) because as things were so bad...

**Mary Evelyn Tomlin:** It was a very difficult time and it had uh, uh, it just left so many memories with people and I think sometimes they are reluctant to talk about those.

Text: **The FSA Project**

**Narrator: Henry Smith** During the 1930s and early 1940s, the Farm Security Administration, a federal agency created to ease the plight of the farmer, employed a remarkable group of photographers— Dorothea Lange, Gordon Parks, and many others—to document the lives and struggles of Americans enduring the Great Depression. Their work includes some of the most powerful images of the nation to emerge from those difficult years. Many of these photographs have reached iconic status in American culture.

For those born after the 1930's, the Great Depression is something that can only be visualized through photography and personal oral histories. These photographs, on exhibit at the National Archives Southeast Region, inspire family historians to examine their past and reflect on their family's life during one of the most difficult times in American history. Through the public programs of the National Archives Southeast Region these histories will be remembered and preserved for future generations.

Through our holdings, students, educators, family historians, and the general public have the opportunity to “rub elbows” with presidents, war heroes, civil rights leaders, and the greatest scientific minds that the world has ever known. Just as importantly, our records give voice to immigrants fleeing war –ravaged homelands, small town merchants in the Depression-era, parents opposing segregated schools and communities, and military heroes from our own families.

The National Archives in Atlanta, GA is home to thousands of original records documenting the settlement and development of the southeast. These documents tell intriguing stories of the people who once inhabited this land and the history of this unique area. We invite you to visit us in Georgia and discover “your” history. Visit us at [www.archives.gov/southeast](http://www.archives.gov/southeast).

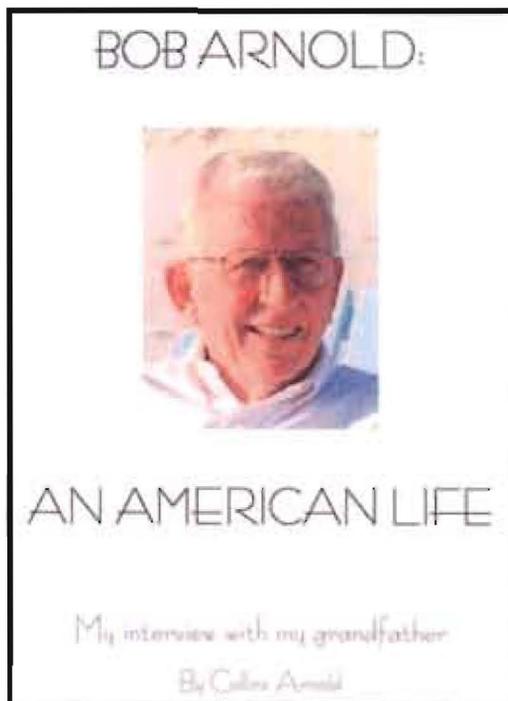
## **Exhibits and Educational Programming at the National Archives Southeast Region**

The Southeast Region of the National Archives is a center for the study of the history of the South, a diverse region rich with family tradition. Native Americans were living on the land when the first settlers arrived. African slaves were then brought over, and later came Irish, English, Italian, Russian, and Cuban immigrants. Their stories, told in the seemingly incongruous records of the federal government, provide evidence of the universal human drama that is American family life. Records in the National Archives tell the story of southern families and communities, technological advances that changed lives, and social and economic forces that shaped the makeup of our society.

In addition, the Southeast Region works continuously to further our long and distinguished work in public outreach and education programs. We engage Americans in the study of their own history through records that document that history, that tell the stories of the American people. We safe-guard the records of our Government, ensuring that all people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage.

From March 10 through May 20, 2007, the Southeast Region held its first oral history and essay contest in conjunction with *The Way We Worked*, an exhibit created by the National Archives with the support of the Foundation for the National Archives and organized for travel by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibit Service. Local sponsors included the Georgia Humanities Council and Barnes & Noble Booksellers. *The Way We Worked* includes 86 black-and-white and color photographs from the National Archives holdings spanning the years 1857-1987. It explores five themes: WHERE we worked, what we WORE to work, HOW we worked, CONFLICT at work, and DANGEROUS or UNHEALTHY work.

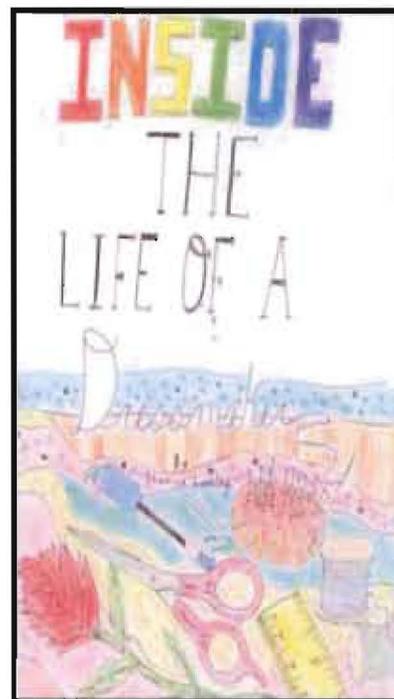
The Southeast Region's contest for elementary, middle, and high school students consisted of two parts: an oral history interview and an essay based on the interview. Subjects of the essays were individuals who were in the workforce prior to 1975 and who witnessed changes in how Americans work.



**Bob Arnold: An American Life**

By Collins Arnold

**First Place Winner - Elementary School**



**Inside the Life of a Dressmaker**

By Shanice Lumley

**First Place Winner - Middle School**

To assure broad participation, the Southeast Region secured the support of a group of social studies coordinators who disseminated the information to local schools. A total of 112 students conducted an interview and submitted an essay. Winners were recognized at a special ceremony at the regional office. Over \$1,000 was awarded in prizes, and all students received a certificate of participation. All winning essays are posted at [www.archives.gov/southeast/education/essay-contest](http://www.archives.gov/southeast/education/essay-contest).

From July-November of 2007, the Southeast Region held another statewide challenge, encouraging students to explore both their artistic and written talents in a photography/essay contest. Students were asked to capture images similar to those taken by FSA photographers during the Great Depression and to write a brief essay explaining the photograph's historical significance. This contest was based on the Southeast Region's latest exhibit, *"This Great Nation Will Endure" Photographs of the Great Depression*.



Over 75 students participated from across the state. Winners were honored at a formal ceremony at the regional office. Once again, over \$1,000 was awarded in prizes, and all students received a certificate of participation that was presented by special guest "Eleanor Roosevelt" from Warm Springs, Georgia. The winning photographs are now on display at the Southeast Region and are also available for viewing at [www.archives.gov/southeast/education/photo-contest](http://www.archives.gov/southeast/education/photo-contest).