Name:

Date:

The Experience of the Great Depression Questions

**Group #1: Wall Street Stock Broker**

Read: <http://www.straightdope.com/columns/read/2873/who-made-money-during-the-1929-stock-market-crash>

Answer:

1. How did the crash of 1929 affect Jesse Lauriston Livermoreand his family?
2. What was Lawrence’s financial situation like prior and during the beginning of the stock market crash?
3. What was the fate of Jesse Lauriston Livermore and many of his family members?

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The Experience of the Great Depression Questions

**Group #2: American Women**

Read: <http://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-by-era/great-depression/essays/women-and-great-depression>

Answer:

1. How did women feel about The Great Depression?
2. What changed for women during The Great Depression?
3. How were women and their families able to survive The Great Depression and what did it mean to “live lean”?

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The Experience of the Great Depression Questions

**Group #3: White Americans**

Read: *The Worst Times* by Caroline Bird (first two pages, *see below ↓)*

Answer:

1. How did the Depression deepen for white, middle-class, families?
2. How did the sacrifices that the middle-class and poor endure differ? How were they similar?
3. What was the “charitable rich” and President Hoover’s reaction and opinions requiring assisting people who were affected by The Great Depression?

Name:

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The Experience of the Great Depression Questions

**Group #4: African Americans**

Read:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/stories_events_depression.html>

-and-

<http://www.uni.edu/iowahist/Social_Economic/african_american_experience.htm#Mrs.%20Marjorie%20Brown> (Just read the *Mrs. Marjorie Brown* interview summary)

Answer (use both readings above to respond to the following questions):

1. How available were jobs for African Americans during The Great Depression and why?
2. What were the hardships of the Great Depression like for African Americans?
3. How did African Americans survive The Great Depression?

Excerpt from:

# The Worst of Times: 1930 -1933

By Caroline Bird

*A little boy tried to hide his pet rabbit.*

*"He thinks we are not going to eat it,"*

*said his sister, "but we are.''*

You could feel the Depression deepen, but you could not look out of the window and see it. Men who lost their jobs dropped out of sight. They were quiet, and you had to know just when and where to find them: at night, for instance, on the edge of town huddling for warmth around a bonfire, or even the municipal incinerator; at dawn, picking over the garbage dump for scraps of food or salvageable clothing.

It took a knowing eye—or the eye of poverty itself—to understand or even to observe some of the action. When oranges fell off a truck, it wasn't always an accident; sometimes they were the truck driver's contribution to slum kids. A woman burning newspapers in a vacant lot might be trying to warm a baby's bottle. The ragged men standing silent as cattle, in a flatrack truck parked on a lonely public road, might be getting the bum's rush out of town.

Everyone knew of someone engaged in a desperate struggle, although most of the agony went on behind closed doors. The stories were whispered. There was something indecent about them. A well-to-do man living on the income from rental property could not collect his rents. His mortgages were foreclosed, and his houses sold for less than the debt. To make up the difference, he sold his own home. He moved himself and his wife into a nearby basement and did odd jobs for the people upstairs in exchange for a room for some of his six children. He mowed lawns, graded yards, and did whatever common labor he could find in order to pay for groceries, until his health broke down under the unaccustomed work.

By the charitable standards of the rich at that time, these people were regarded as the "deserving poor," as distinguished from the undeserving poor, who were thought to be unwilling to work or to save.

If the "deserving poor" had been few, charitable help might have sufficed. But there were too many, and more all the time. In December 1929, three million people were out of work. The next winter, four to five million. The winter of 1931-1932, eight million. In the fall of 1932, Fortune thought that 34 million men, women, and children—better than a fourth of the nation — were members of families that had no regular fulltime breadwinner.

Many more fortunate people turned away from the unemployed, but some tried to help in the traditional neighborly way. A Brooklyn convent put sandwiches outside its door where the needy could get them without knocking. St. Louis society women distributed unsold food from restaurants.

But there was more talk than help. A great many people spent a great deal of energy urging each other to give, to share, to hire. President Hoover led a national publicity campaign to urge people to give locally and to make jobs.

Results of such appeals were disappointing. Corporation executives answered the pleas by saying that they had no right to spend stockholders’ money hiring men they did not need.

The well of private charity ran dry. A Westchester woman is said to have fired all her servants in order to have money to contribute to the unemployed. "Voluntary conscription" of wages helped steelworkers weather the first round of layoffs in little Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, but the plan broke down as there were more mouths to feed and fewer pay envelopes to conscript. Local charities everywhere were overwhelmed by 1931, and the worst was yet to come.

Kentucky coal miners suffered perhaps the most. In Harlan County there were whole towns whose people had not a cent of income. They lived on dandelions and blackberries. Dysentery bloated the stomachs of starving babies. Children were reported so famished they were chewing up their own hands. Miners tried to plant vegetables, but they were often so hungry that they ate them before they were ripe. On her first trip to the mountains, Eleanor Roosevelt saw a little boy trying to hide his pet rabbit. "He thinks we are not going to eat it," his sister told her, "but we are."

No national charity existed to relieve mass poverty. The American Red Cross was big and efficient, but it had been set up to mobilize outside help for "a temporary condition brought about by some uncontrollable act or acts." Chairman John Barton Payne contended that unemployment was not an "Act of God." If not controllable by the unemployed themselves, and he believed it was, it was the result of some Act of Man and so out of bounds for the Red Cross. But the police could not keep hungry people out of the Red Cross warehouse in Hazard, Kentucky.

A Quaker himself, Hoover went to the American Friends Service Committee. The Philadelphia Meeting developed a "concern" for the miners. Hoover gave them $2,500 out of his own pocket, but most of the contributions seem to have come from the Rockefellers.

"No one has starved," Hoover boasted. To prove it, he announced a decline in the death rate. It was heartening, but puzzling, too. Even the social workers could not see how the unemployed kept body and soul together, and the more they studied, the more the wonder grew. Savings, if any, went first. Then insurance was cashed. Then people borrowed from family and friends. They stopped paying rent. When evicted, they moved in with relatives. They ran up bills. It was surprising how much credit could be wangled. But in the end they had to eat "tight."