

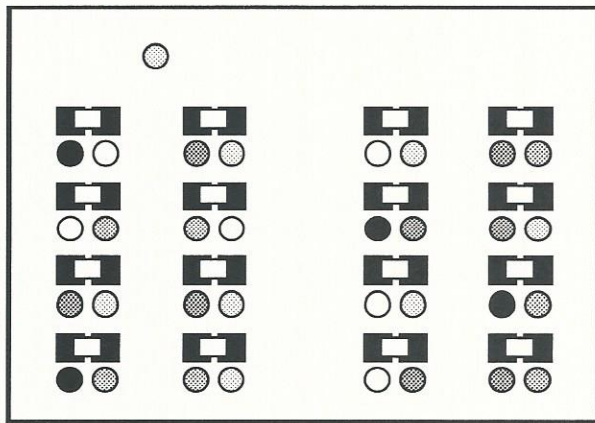


# Graphing Economic Data on the Great Depression

## Social Studies Skill Builder

### Overview

This **Social Studies Skill Builder** challenges students to graph and analyze economic data to understand the causes and the effects of the Great Depression. Working in pairs, students receive a handout with statistics on six areas of the U.S. economy during the 1920s and 1930s: average stock prices, the Gross National Product, unemployment rate, workers' average annual salaries, business failures, and bank closures. Pairs use the economic data to create a series of line graphs. Next, students receive cards—each of which contains a question about the U.S. economy during the Great Depression—and use their completed line graphs to answer the questions. Afterward, students use the economic data to discuss the causes and the effects of the Great Depression.



### Procedures at a Glance

Before class, cut out **Student Handout 2.3A** along the dashed lines and place students in mixed-ability pairs. Tell students they will graph and analyze data on six areas of the U.S. economy to understand the causes and the effects of the Great Depression. Pass out **Student Handout 2.3B** and have students use the economic data to create a series of line graphs. Use **Teacher's Guide 2.3B** to review students' work. Next, give each pair a copy of **Student Handout 2.3C** and one question from **Student Handout 2.3A**. Have each pair read the question, record their answer on **Student Handout 2.3C**, and exchange the question for a new one with another pair. Have students continue this process until they have answered all 16 questions. Finally, hold a class discussion about the causes and the effects of the Great Depression.



## Procedures in Detail

1. In this activity students graph data on six areas of the U.S. economy during the 1920s and 1930s: average stock prices, the Gross National Product, unemployment rate, workers' average annual salaries, business failures, and bank closures. By graphing and analyzing the economic data, students will be better able to understand the causes and the effects of the Great Depression.
2. Before class, cut out Student Handout 2.3A: Questions on the U.S. Economy During the Great Depression along the dashed lines. Divide your students into mixed-ability pairs. Prepare an overhead transparency that shows students who their partners are and how to arrange their desks. Project the transparency, and ask students to move into their correct places.
3. Tell students that in this activity they will graph and analyze data on six areas of the U.S. economy during the 1920s and 1930s—average stock prices, the Gross National Product, unemployment rate, workers' average annual salaries, business failures, and bank closures—to understand the causes and the effects of the Great Depression. Pass out Student Handout 2.3B: Graphing Economic Data on the Great Depression. Review the six economic areas with the class.
4. Once students understand the six economic areas, tell them they will now chart economic data to create a series of line graphs. For each set of data on Student Handout 2.3B, have students plot the data for key dates on the corresponding graph and then connect the coordinates with a line to create a line graph. (Note: Before students begin working, you may want to demonstrate this process once with the class.) When a pair have completed their six line graphs, have both students bring their handouts to you for review. Use Teacher's Guide 2.3B to check their answers. (Option: You may want to make Teacher's Guide 2.3B into an overhead transparency and overlay it on students' graphs to check their answers.)
5. After all students have completed their line graphs, tell them they will now use their completed graphs to answer a series of questions on the U.S. economy during the 1920s and 1930s. Give each pair a copy of Student Handout 2.3C: Answering Questions About the U.S. Economy During the Great Depression and one question from Student Handout 2.3A. Have pairs read the question, use their graphs to determine the answer, and record their answer in the appropriate space on Student Handout 2.3C. Then, have each pair exchange their question for a new one with another pair. Circulate through the room, using the Teacher's Guide to Questions to check students' answers for accuracy and thoroughness.

## Wrap Up

1. After most pairs have finished answering the 16 questions, hold a class discussion about the causes and the effects of the Great Depression. Have students refer to the economic data they learned about to discuss these questions:

- What data most surprised you? Confirmed what you already know?
- Were the 1920s really boom times for the American economy? Explain.
- Did everyone share in the economic prosperity of the 1920s?
- When did the economic collapse occur? How do you know?
- Based on the data, what were the main causes of the economic collapse?
- In what ways were the causes of the Great Depression interrelated?



**Idea for Student Response:** After you have completed this activity, have students pretend they have been hired to write a campaign jingle for a hypothetical candidate in the 1932 presidential election. Tell students to select a simple and well-known melody, such as “Row, Row, Row Your Boat,” and write new lyrics for the song on the left side of their notebooks. The lyrics should mention at least three conclusions that can be drawn by looking at the graphs in this activity. Here is an example of a possible campaign jingle:

**Campaign Jingle**  
(sung to the tune of Row, Row, Row Your Boat)

Un, un, unemployment,  
Up since '29  
Business failures, banking closures,  
Wages—a flat line.

Our, our, our candidate  
She's got a rescue boat.  
Help us turn the economy around,  
By giving us your vote!



## Teacher's Guide to Questions

1. Stock prices increased by \$16.4 per share from 1920 to 1929.
2. Stock prices changed dramatically due to the stock market crash and the overall decline of the U.S. economy.
3. With the exception of a small drop in business production in 1921, the U.S. economy expanded throughout the 1920s.
4. According to GNP figures, business production decreased steadily and dramatically between 1929 and 1932.
5. Unemployment was highest in 1932 at a rate of 23.5 percent.
6. With the exception of 1921, unemployment was relatively low throughout the 1920s.
7. Farmworkers' wages decreased dramatically in 1921, and then remained relatively unchanged for the rest of the decade.
8. With the exception of a decrease in 1922, factory workers' wages gradually increased during the 1920s.
9. Factory workers made about \$200 more per year than farmworkers.
10. Business failures generally increased between 1920 and 1932.
11. Bank closures increased dramatically between 1929 and 1932.
12. The number of bank closures was the greatest in 1931, when 2,294 banks closed.
13. The Great Depression was most severe in 1932, due to the low GNP, the high rate of unemployment, and the high number of business failures and bank closures.
14. The increase in unemployment in the early 1930s was due to the decline of the GNP and the increase in business failures. Employers laid off more workers as their production decreased or their businesses closed.
15. Workers did not benefit from the prosperity of the 1920s in that workers' wages remained relatively unchanged throughout the decade.
16. The decline of the U.S. economy dissuaded voters from electing President Hoover to another term.

## Questions on the U.S. Economy During the Great Depression

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**1. What was the increase in stock prices from 1920 to 1929?**

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**2. What accounted for the dramatic change in stock prices from 1929 to 1932?**

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**3. Given the GNP figures from 1920 to 1929, how would you characterize the health of the economy during the 1920s?**

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**4. What happened to business production between 1929 and 1932?**

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**5. In what year was unemployment the highest?**

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**6. In general, how would you characterize unemployment during the 1920s?**

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**7. In one sentence, explain in general terms what happened to farmworkers' wages during the 1920s.**

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**8. In one sentence, explain in general terms what happened to factory workers' wages during the 1920s.**



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**9. On average, about how much more did factory workers make than farmworkers?**

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**10. Did business failures generally increase or decrease between 1920 and 1932?**

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**11. Did bank closures increase or decrease between 1929 and 1932?**

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**12. In what year did the greatest number of banks close?**

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**13. Given the data on all six graphs, during what year would you say the Depression was most severe? Why?**

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**14. Given the data on all six graphs, what do you think caused the dramatic jump in unemployment in the early 1930s?**

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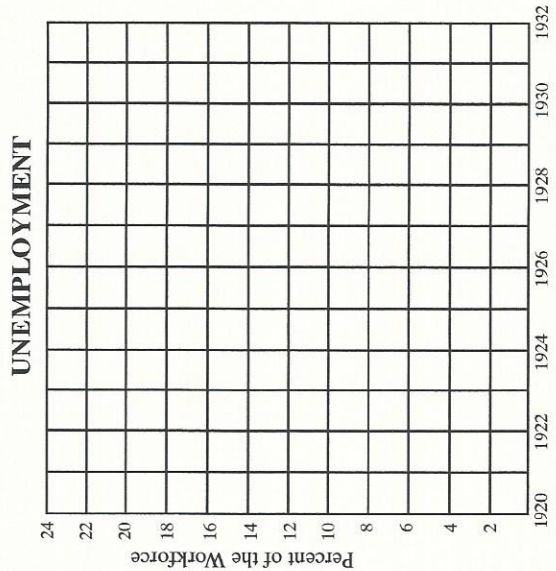
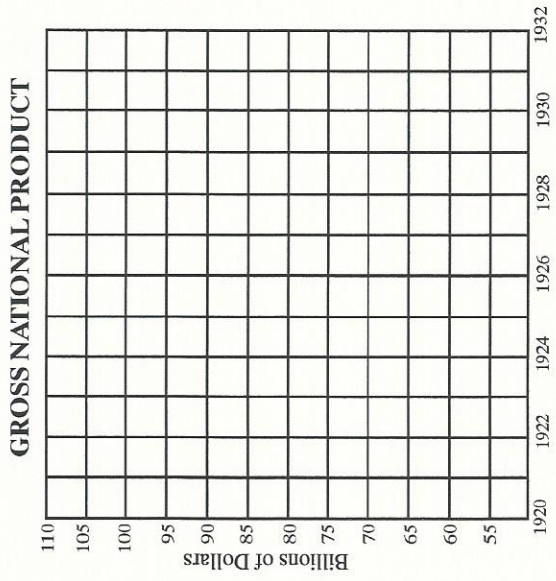
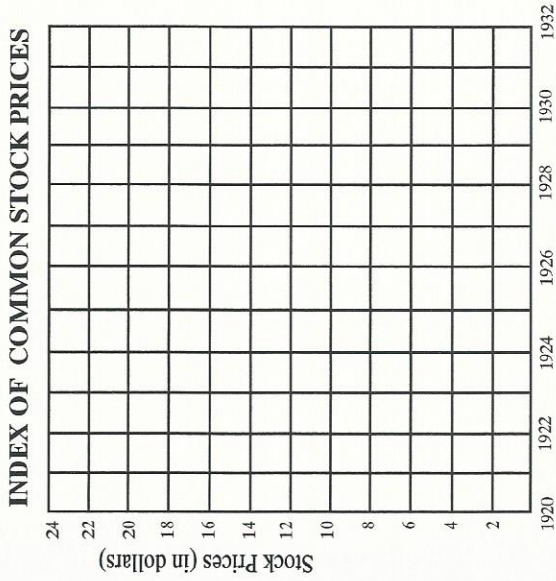
**15. Was the seeming economic prosperity of the 1920s shared by workers? Explain.**

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**16. President Hoover was not reelected in 1932. Given the data, explain the difficulties Hoover faced in trying to get reelected.**

# Graphing Economic Data on the Great Depression

**Directions:** For each set of data, neatly and correctly plot each figure on the corresponding graph. Then, connect the coordinates with a line to create a line graph.

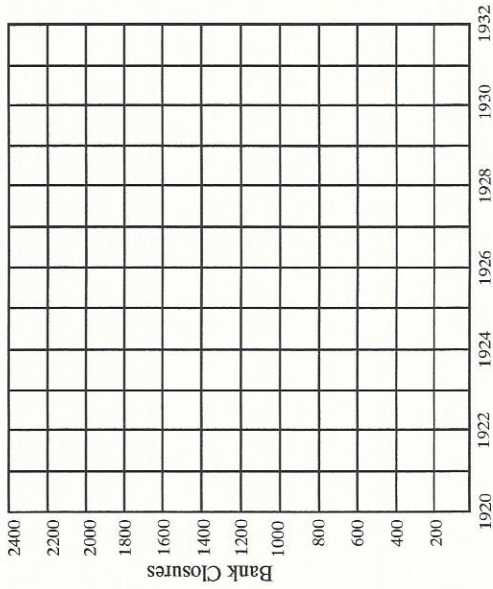


Year	Average Stock Price (IN DOLLARS)
1920	7.6
1921	6.8
1922	8.2
1923	8.5
1924	8.9
1925	10.7
1926	12.0
1927	14.4
1928	18.3
1929	24.0
1930	23.0
1931	15.4
1932	7.3

Year	GNP (IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS)
1920	89
1921	74
1922	74
1923	86
1924	87
1925	91
1926	97
1927	96
1928	99
1929	104
1930	91
1931	76
1932	58

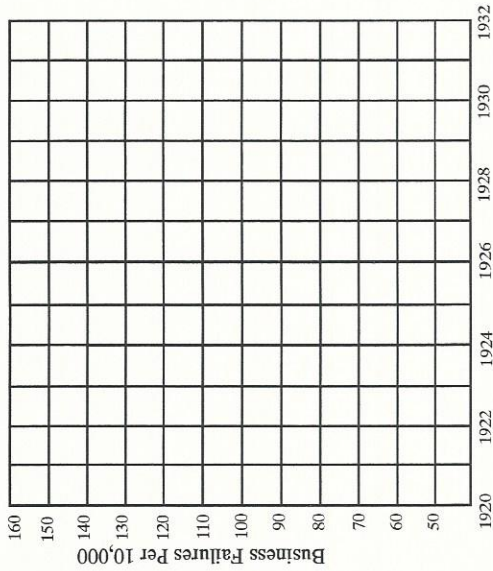
Year	Percent of Workforce
1920	4.0
1921	11.8
1922	7.5
1923	3.2
1924	5.5
1925	4.0
1926	1.9
1927	4.1
1928	4.4
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**BANK CLOSURES**



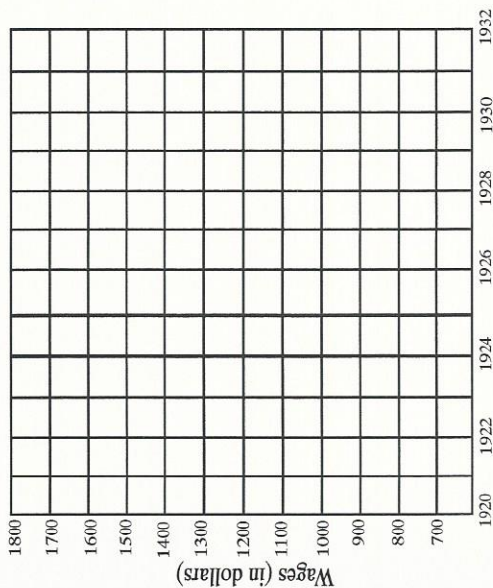
Year	Bank Closures
1920	168
1921	505
1922	367
1923	646
1924	775
1925	618
1926	976
1927	669
1928	499
1929	659
1930	1352
1931	2294
1932	1456

**BUSINESS FAILURES**



Year	Business Failures
1920	49
1921	105
1922	118
1923	90
1924	100
1925	100
1926	103
1927	108
1928	110
1929	106
1930	121
1931	133
1932	155

**WORKERS' YEARLY WAGES**

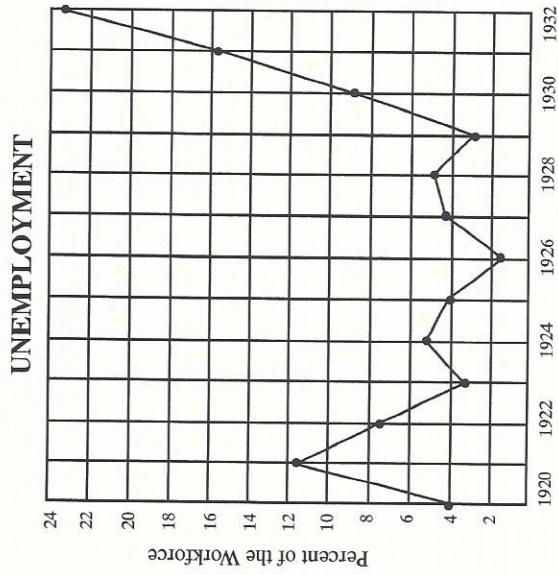
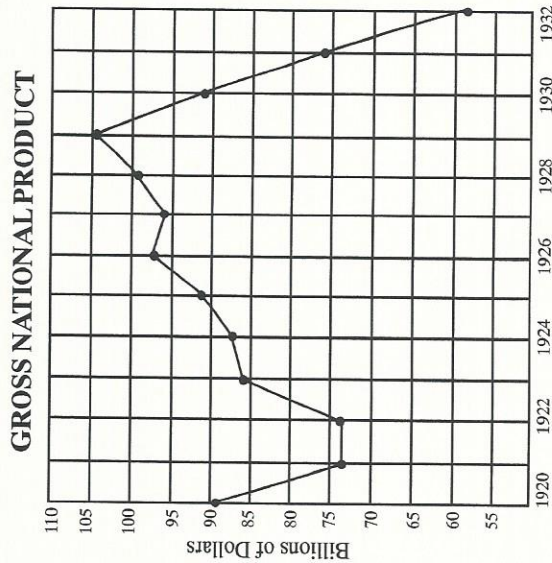
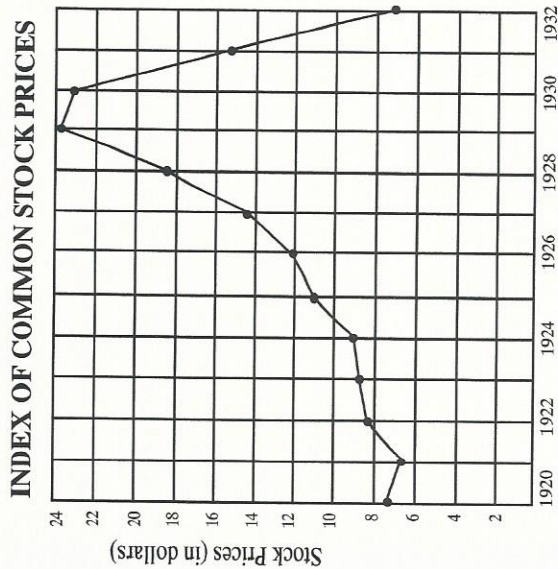


Year	Farm-workers (IN DOLLARS)	Factory Workers
1920	1790	1490
1921	1190	1320
1922	1127	1260
1923	1251	1400
1924	1248	1420
1925	1267	1445
1926	1330	1476
1927	1302	1502
1928	1290	1534
1929	1300	1543
1930	1177	1488
1931	914	1369
1932	669	1150



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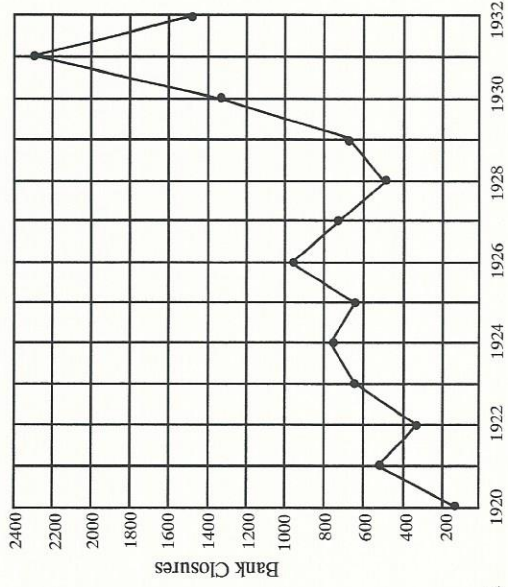
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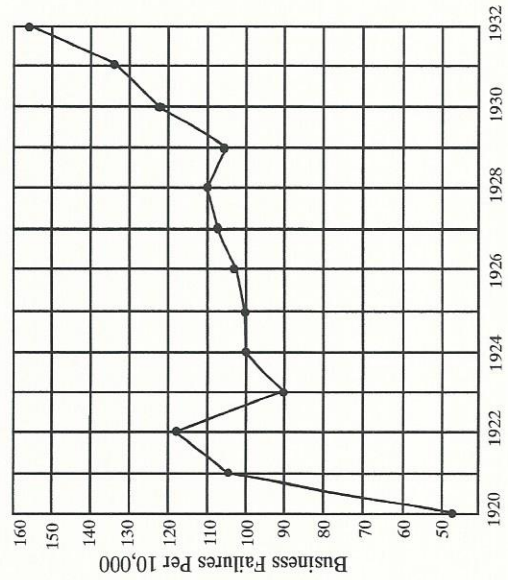
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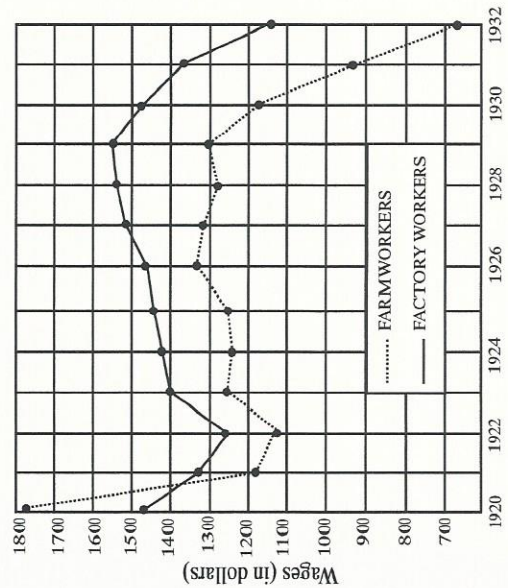
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## Answering Questions About the U.S. Economy During the Great Depression

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