



AMERICA

The Story of Us

TERMS TO KNOW:

Before or after watching this episode, encourage students to define and review the terms below. Students may also want to make their own lists of new vocabulary words and identification terms as they watch.

- Adversary
- Aspiration
- Astronomical
- Consumer
- Emblematic
- Foreclosure
- Immortalized
- Mesmerizing
- Resilience



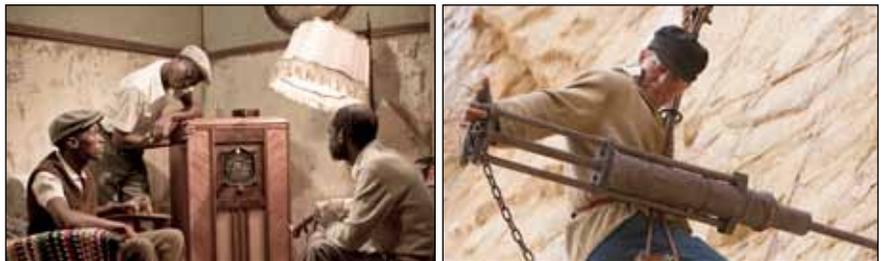
America The Story of Us is useful for American History, Social Studies, and Media courses. It is appropriate for 7th grade students and above, and is an excellent resource for professional development.

EPISODE 9: BUST

INTRODUCTION

In October 1929, Wall Street crashes; the American Dream is in doubt as economic turmoil ensues. The crash coincides with the start of the Great Depression. Unemployment rises sharply and as confidence in U.S. banks disintegrates, bank closures sweep the nation. On the Great Plains, economic difficulties are compounded by natural disaster.

Years of intensive plowing and severe drought dry out the land. Vast dust storms fill the skies and drive people west during the Dust Bowl. Inaugurated in the depths of the Depression in 1933, new President Franklin D. Roosevelt starts to turn things around. The New Deal and public works projects help save America from despair and destitution.



The construction of the Hoover Dam and Mount Rushmore employ thousands of people and signal recovery and hope for the future. However, world conflict is brewing in Europe – brought home to Americans by the symbolic boxing match between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. World War II looms on the horizon as the Nazi Party gains power.





DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was the “bank run” of 1930 and what are some of the reasons it happened? What were the effects of the bank crisis in the U.S. on international politics?
2. How would you describe Frank Crowe? What were some of the innovations that made the construction of the Hoover Dam possible?
3. What was the significance of the construction of the Hoover Dam and Mount Rushmore? How did these projects affect the U.S. economy?



4. Why did the Dust Bowl take place? Looking back now, do you think it could have been prevented?
5. Why were the boxing matches between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling such big stories internationally?

Primary Source:

During the Great Depression, children throughout the U.S. wrote letters to President Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt. The letter below is an example of one letter written by a child affected by the Depression. To see more letters such as these see: Cohen, Robert, editor. *Dear Mrs. Roosevelt: Letters from Children of the Great Depression* (University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Sikeston, Missouri
January 20, 1938

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,
I am writing this letter in hopes that you will answer in my favor.

My father H. C. has been in bed from a stroke for almost a year. We have no money and my brother works but makes \$3.00 a week and there are eight in our family.

My step-mother is very good to me and I try to help her. She takes in washings and I have to walk for six or eight blocks and then carry the washings home. I have to go of a morning before school and it has been very cold here. If you could send me a bicycle to ride when I go after washings for her I shall appreciate it.

I am in eighth grade at school and work very hard to make passing grades. The Principal of the school bought two of my sisters and me a pair of slippers so we would not have to stay at home. If you would do this for me I shall be able to help my step-mother more. If you send me one I would like a girls bicycle. I am about 4 feet 3 inches tall so if you send me one you can judge as to what size.

Loving and appreciating-
A. L. C.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does the child in this letter ask for, and why does she say her family is in need? What does this letter reveal about the ways families were affected by the Great Depression?
2. This is just one of thousands of letters written to President and Mrs. Roosevelt. Why do you think so many Americans thought the Roosevelts could help them? Do you think this would be true of all Presidents and First Ladies?

FURTHER EXPLORATIONS:

What else was going on during this time period? Explore the sites below to learn more about the era of U.S. history covered in this episode.

Learn about the Harlem Renaissance which took place in the 1930s
www.biography.com/blackhistory/harlem-renaissance.jsp

Background on the New Deal from the Library of Congress
www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/newdeal

Learn about the 1936 Berlin Olympics and the rise of the Nazi Party
www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/olympics and
www.history.com/topics/nazi-party

Read about the famous murals by Mexican American artist Diego Rivera
<http://www.biography.com/articles/Diego-Rivera-9459446>

PLACES TO VISIT:

Interested in what you saw in this episode? Visiting historic sites is a great way for teachers, students, and families to learn more about the past. Explore these historic sites, or look for local historic sites in your town or city to visit.

The Hoover Dam
www.usbr.gov/lc/hooverdam

Mount Rushmore National Memorial
www.mtrushmorenationalmemorial.com

The Franklin Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum
www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu

