

# The Great Depression

## Section 3



### MAIN IDEAS

1. Parts of the Great Plains came to be known as the Dust Bowl as severe drought destroyed farms there.
2. Families all over the United States faced hard times.
3. Depression-era culture helped lift people's spirits.
4. The New Deal had lasting effects on American society.

## Key Terms and People

**Dust Bowl** region of the Great Plains affected by extreme drought and dust storms

**Mary McLeod Bethune** African American educator appointed as an adviser by President Roosevelt

**John Steinbeck** novelist who wrote about the hardships of the Great Depression

**Woody Guthrie** Depression-era folksinger from Oklahoma

## Section Summary

### THE DUST BOWL

American farmers were already having hard times before the Great Depression. Then the situation got worse. In the early 1930s, a severe drought hit the Great Plains. In the **Dust Bowl** region, topsoil blew away. Farmers could not grow crops; many could not to pay their mortgages and lost their farms.

Although several New Deal programs tried to help farmers, they came too late for most. About 2.5 million people left the Great Plains. Many of them drove to California to look for jobs. They often found that there were already too many workers.

**Why did so many farmers move from the Great Plains to California during the Dust Bowl period?**

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### HARD TIMES

During the Great Depression, many families had to split up as people looked for work in different places. Children dropped out of school to help support their families.

The Great Depression was especially hard on minority groups. Many faced discrimination and

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lost jobs to unemployed white workers. But some found jobs through relief programs. Several African American leaders, including **Mary McLeod Bethune**, advised the president. They became known as the Black Cabinet.

Eleanor Roosevelt was a strong advocate of equal rights. She resigned from the Daughters of the American Revolution when they refused to rent a hall to African American singer Marian Anderson.

**What was the Black Cabinet?**

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**DEPRESSION-ERA CULTURE**

In 1935 the Works Progress Administration put many artists, writers, and actors to work. Musicians went to rural areas to record traditional music. They preserved culture that might have been lost. Writers interviewed Americans from many different backgrounds. They kept a record of their lives and memories.

**John Steinbeck** was deeply affected by the hardships of the Depression. He wrote novels about depression life. Folksinger **Woody Guthrie** crossed the country, writing and singing songs of loss and struggle. At the same time, swing music became popular because it helped people forget about their troubles. Movies were yet another form of escape.

**Underline the name of the New Deal program that helped artists, writers, and musicians**

**Why were lively music and movies so popular during the Great Depression?**

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**EFFECTS OF THE NEW DEAL**

Today, people still disagree about the effects of the New Deal. Critics argue that recovery did not occur until the U.S. entered World War II. Supporters say it gave Americans hope in a time of crisis. The New Deal did expand the role of the federal government. Some of its programs, such as Social Security and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, are still important today.

**Circle the names of two New Deal programs that still exist today.**

**CHALLENGE ACTIVITY**

**Critical Thinking: Writing to Explore** Imagine what it would be like to grow up during the Great Depression. Write a short poem about what your life might have been like.