

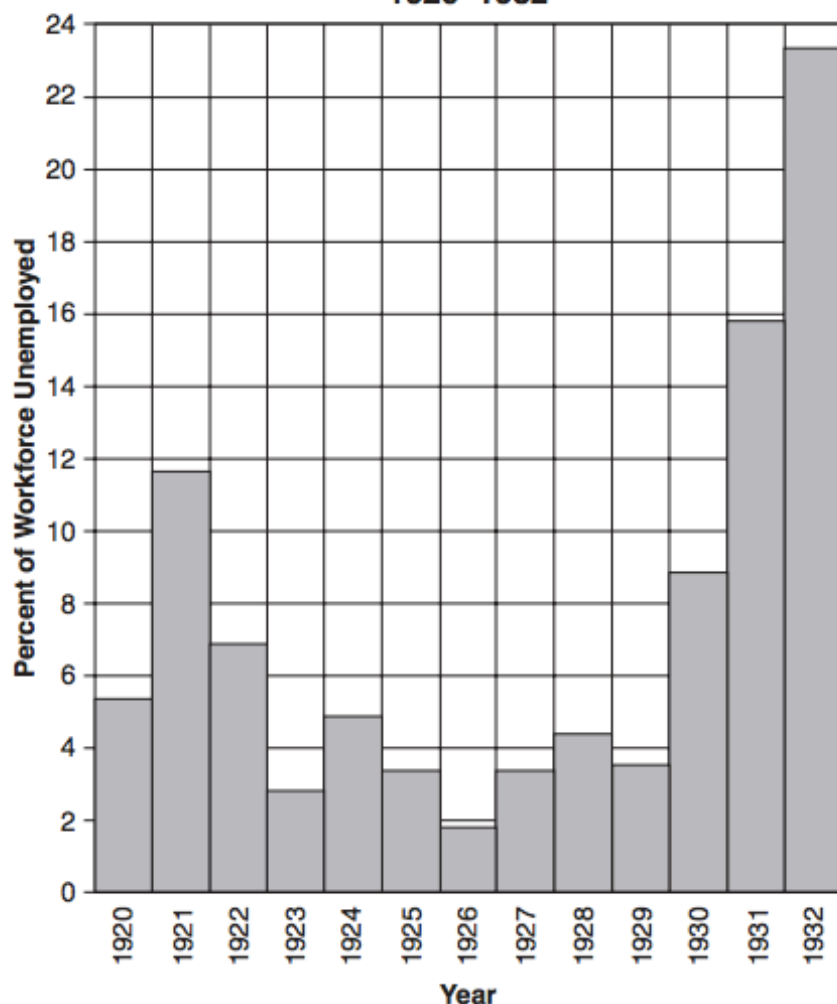
Document 1

. . . For black people, the New Deal was psychologically encouraging (Mrs. Roosevelt was sympathetic; some blacks got posts in the administration), but most blacks were ignored by the New Deal programs. As tenant farmers, as farm laborers, as migrants, as domestic workers, they didn't qualify for unemployment insurance, minimum wages, social security, or farm subsidies. Roosevelt, careful not to offend southern white politicians whose political support he needed, did not push a bill against lynching. Blacks and whites were segregated in the armed forces. And black workers were discriminated against in getting jobs. They were the last hired, the first fired. Only when A. Philip Randolph, head of the Sleeping-Car Porters Union, threatened a massive march on Washington in 1941 would Roosevelt agree to sign an executive order establishing a Fair Employment Practices Committee. But the FEPC had no enforcement powers and changed little. . . .

Source: Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States*, HarperCollins Publishers

Document 2

Unemployment in the United States 1920–1932



Source: *Historical Statistics of the United States*, U. S. Bureau of the Census (adapted)

Document 3

. . . In such a spirit on my part and on yours we face our common difficulties. They concern, thank God, only material things. Values have shrunk to fantastic levels; taxes have risen; our ability to pay has fallen; government of all kinds is faced by serious curtailment [decrease] of income; the means of exchange [money and credit] are frozen in the currents of trade; the withered leaves [failure] of industrial enterprise [business] lie on every side; farmers find no markets for their produce; the savings of many years in thousands of families are gone. . . .

Our greatest primary task is to put people to work. This is no unsolvable problem if we face it wisely and courageously. It can be accomplished in part by direct recruiting [hiring] by the Government itself, treating the task as we would treat the emergency of a war, but at the same time, through this employment, accomplishing greatly needed projects to stimulate and reorganize the use of our natural resources. . . .

Source: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, 1933, FDR Library

Document 4

Lorena Hickok, a former Associated Press reporter, was hired by Harry Hopkins (head of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration) to travel throughout the United States and send Hopkins private reports on the state of the nation and effects of the New Deal programs. This is an excerpt from one of those reports, dated January 1, 1935.

. . . Only among the young is there evidence of revolt, apparently. These young people are growing restive [restless]. Out of some 15 weekly reports from industrial centers all over the country, hardly one omitted a paragraph pointing out that these young people may not tolerate much longer a condition that prevents them from starting normal, active, self-respecting lives, that will not let them marry and raise families, that condemns them to idleness and want. At present there is no leadership among them. College men are shoveling sand, checking freight cars, working in filling stations. High school graduates are offering themselves to industry “for nothing, just experience”—and are being accepted. Boys who normally would be apprentices in the trades are tramping [wandering] the pavements, riding the freights back and forth across the country, hanging about on street corners. One day in November a 21-year-old boy in Baltimore walked 20 miles, looking for work. “I just stopped at every place,” he said, “but mostly they wouldn’t even talk to me.” . . .

Source: Lowitt and Beasley, eds., *One Third of a Nation*, University of Illinois Press, 1981

Document 5

... Suddenly the papers were filled with accounts of highway picketing by farmers around Sioux City. A Farmers' Holiday Association had been organized by one Milo Reno, and the farmers were to refuse to bring food to market for thirty days or "until the cost of production had been obtained." ...

The strike around Sioux City soon ceased to be a local matter. It jumped the Missouri River and crossed the Big Sioux. Roads were picketed in South Dakota and Nebraska as well as in Iowa. Soon Minnesota followed suit, and her farmers picketed her roads. North Dakota organized. Down in Georgia farmers dumped milk on the highway. For a few days the milk supply of New York City was menaced. Farmers in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, organized, and potato farmers in Long Island raised the price of potatoes by a "holiday." This banding together of farmers for mutual protection is going on everywhere, but the center of this disturbance is still Iowa and the neighboring States.

The Milk Producers' Association joined forces with the Farmers' Holiday. All the roads leading to Sioux City were picketed. Trucks by hundreds were turned back. Farmers by hundreds lined the roads. They blockaded the roads with spiked telegraph poles and logs. They took away a sheriff's badge and his gun and threw them in a cornfield. Gallons of milk ran down roadway ditches. Gallons of confiscated milk were distributed free on the streets of Sioux City. ...

Source: Mary Heaton Vorse, "Rebellion in the Cornbelt," *Harper's Magazine*, December 1932

Document 6

Many "kitchens" similar to this one in Chicago in 1931 were opened by various individuals or groups.



Source: National Archives (adapted)

Document 7

This excerpt is from an article about Vera, a college-educated woman in New York City who was deeply affected by the Great Depression.

Vera

. . . Vera has never had a job. Almost every day of her first year in New York was spent in the discouraging routine all too familiar to the inexperienced college graduate looking for work. Employment agencies and prospective employers were usually indifferent to her plight when they discovered her lack of experience. And the money she spent on stamps for answering want ads was wasted; her letters never elicited [brought] replies.

For a time she lived on a small inheritance. But by the summer of 1934 it was gone and she seemed as far as ever from any hope of getting a job. Despite the intense heat and the growing nausea and weakness of slow starvation she continued to look for work for a month after her funds gave out. During this period she did not pay any rent for her furnished room and for food she depended almost entirely on occasional dinner invitations from her friends. There were not many of these invitations because she did not tell anyone how desperate her situation really was. Sometimes, though, she would borrow a dollar which usually went for carfare when she got so tired she couldn't walk further or, contrary to her better judgment, for food.

After four weeks of assuring her landlady that she would soon get a job and pay her rent she came home one night to find that all her clothing and personal belongings had disappeared during her absence. Frantic, she appealed to the landlady who told her that everything would be returned when she paid her rent. The value of her possessions was of course far greater than the amount of unpaid rent and she asked friends to loan her twelve dollars, the sum of her indebtedness. When she went home that night to redeem her possessions she found that a new lock had been put on the outside door of the house and that her key no longer fitted it. She rang the bell and knocked for a long time, but there was no answer. . . .

Source: Ruth L. Porterfield, "Women Available," *The American Mercury*, April 1935