

Vail School District
Practice Prompt BM1
8th Grade
Informational

DIRECTIONS: Read the information and writing prompt below. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.

You are going to read three texts about the Great Depression: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s First Inaugural Address, Karen Hesse’s “Debts”, and a short text about the effects of the Great Depression. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an expository essay to your teacher, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your prompt is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informative essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

Background: President Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivers the Inaugural Address following his election to his first of four Presidential terms. The President recounts the nation's current economic hardships during the Great Depression and stresses the importance of addressing this issue. Roosevelt pledges to propose solutions to aid in the economy's recovery, even if it requires unconventional methods to fight this "unprecedented task".

Note: This text has been edited and condensed for length and clarity. The background and speech are found at "Miller Center." *First Inaugural Address (March 4, 1933)-Miller Center.*

Franklin D. Roosevelt
First Inaugural Address
Saturday, March 4, 1933

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our Nation impels. This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days.

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

More important, a host of unemployed citizens face the grim problem of existence, and an equally great number toil with little return. Only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment.

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 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.

Hand in hand with this we must frankly recognize the overbalance of population in our industrial centers and, by engaging on a national scale in a redistribution, endeavor to provide a better use of the land for those best fitted for the land. The task can be helped by definite efforts to raise the values of agricultural products and with this the power to purchase the output of our cities. It can be helped by preventing realistically the tragedy of the growing loss through foreclosure of our small homes and our farms. It can be helped by insistence that the Federal, State, and local governments act forthwith on the demand that their cost be drastically reduced. It can be helped by the unifying of relief activities which today are often scattered, uneconomical, and unequal. It can be helped by national planning for and supervision of all forms of transportation and of communications and other utilities which have a definitely public character. There are many ways in which it can be helped, but it can never be helped merely by talking about it. We must act and act quickly.

Finally, in our progress toward a resumption of work we require two safeguards against a return of the evils of the old order: there must be a strict supervision of all banking and credits and investments, so that there will be an end to speculation with other people's money; and there must be provision for an adequate but sound currency.

These are the lines of attack. I shall presently urge upon a new Congress, in special session, detailed measures for their fulfillment, and I shall seek the immediate assistance of the several States.

Through this program of action we address ourselves to putting our own national house in order and making income balance outgo. Our international trade relations, though vastly important, are in point of time and necessity secondary to the establishment of a sound national economy. I favor as a practical policy the putting of first things first. I shall spare no effort to restore world trade by international economic readjustment, but the emergency at home cannot wait on that accomplishment.

The basic thought that guides these specific means of national recovery is not narrowly nationalistic. It is the insistence, as a first consideration, upon the interdependence of the various elements in and parts of the United States—a recognition of the old and permanently important manifestation of the American spirit of the pioneer. It is the way to recovery. It is the immediate way. It is the strongest assurance that the recovery will endure.

In the field of world policy I would dedicate this Nation to the policy of the good neighbor—the neighbor who resolutely respects himself and, because he does

so, respects the rights of others—the neighbor who respects his obligations and respects the sanctity of his agreements in and with a world of neighbors.

If I read the temper of our people correctly, we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we cannot merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress is made, no leadership becomes effective. We are, I know, ready and willing to submit our lives and property to such discipline, because it makes possible a leadership which aims at a larger good. This I propose to offer, pledging that the larger purposes will bind upon us all as a sacred obligation with a unity of duty hitherto evoked only in time of armed strife.

With this pledge taken, I assume unhesitatingly the leadership of this great army of our people dedicated to a disciplined attack upon our common problems.

We do not distrust the future of essential democracy. The people of the United States have not failed. In their need they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it.

In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come.

Debts

By Karen Hesse

Daddy is thinking
of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men,
to get some new wheat planted
where the winter crop has spindled out and died.
Mr. Roosevelt promises
Daddy won't have to pay a dime
till the crop comes in.

Daddy says,

“I can turn the fields over,
start again.

It’s sure to rain soon.
Wheat’s sure to grow.”

Ma says, “What if it doesn’t?”

Daddy takes off his hat,
roughs up his hair,
puts the hat back on.
“Course it’ll rain,” he says.

Ma says, “Bay,
it hasn’t rained enough to grow wheat in
three years.”

Daddy looks like a fight brewing.
He takes that red face of his out to the barn,
To keep from feuding with my pregnant ma.
I ask Ma
how, after all this time,
Daddy still believes in rain.

“Well, it rains enough,” Ma says,
“now and again,
to keep a person hoping.
But even if it didn’t
your daddy would have to believe.
It’s coming on spring,
and he’s a farmer.”

Sinking Deeper and Deeper: 1929-33

ushistory.org

When the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, few Americans believed that a decade long depression was underway. After all, only 4 million Americans had money invested on Wall Street. 90% of American households owned precisely zero shares of stock. President Herbert Hoover quickly addressed the nation, professing his faith in the soundness of the American economy. But soothing words were clearly not enough to stop the shrinking of a deeply flawed national economic system.

The stock market crash had many short-term consequences. Banks that improvidently lent money to futures traders to buy stock on margin found that many of those loans would go unpaid. Consequently, a rash of bank failures swept the nation. This had a tremendous ripple effect on the economy. If a working-class family was unfortunate enough to have their savings held in trust by a failed bank — too bad for them, all their money was lost.

As Americans saw banks close and savings disappear, less money was spent on goods and services. Many consumers who had bought the new conveniences of the Golden Twenties on the installment plan were unable to make their payments. Businesses began to lay off workers to offset new losses. Many manufacturers had overproduced and created huge inventories.

Unemployment brought even less savings and spending, and the economy slowed yet another notch. The downward spiral continued into 1933. The \$87 billion 1929 New York Stock Exchange was worth a mere \$15 billion in 1932. Unemployment rose from 1.5 million Americans in 1929 to a debilitating 12 million in 1932.

Despair swept the nation. In addition to the nationwide 25% unemployment rate, many laborers were forced to choose between wage cuts and a pink slip. Most people who retained their jobs saw their incomes shrink by a third. Kitchens and charity lines, previously unknown to the middle class, were unable to meet the growing demand for food.

Desperate for income, thousands performed odd jobs from taking in laundry to collecting and selling apples on the street. College professors in New York City drove taxicabs to make ends meet. Citizens of Washington State lit forest fires in the hopes of earning a few bucks extinguishing them. Millions of backyard gardens were cultivated to grow vegetables.

Americans prowled landfills waiting for the next load of refuse to arrive in the hopes of finding a few table scraps among the trash.

The strife was uneven across the land. Oklahoma was particularly hard hit, as a drought brought dry winds, kicking up a "DUST BOWL" that forced thousands to migrate westward. African Americans endured unemployment rates of nearly twice the white communities, as African American workers were often the last hired and the first fired. Mexican Americans in California were offered free one-way trips back to Mexico to decrease job competition in the state. The Latino population of the American Southwest sharply decreased throughout the decade, as ethnic violence increased.

As the days and weeks of the GREAT DEPRESSION turned into months and years, Americans began to organize their discontent.

UsHistory.org. "Sinking Deeper and Deeper: 1929-33." *Ushistory.org*.
Independence Hall Association. March 1934

