



# artsNOW

Integrated learning solutions

## CULTURAL CHARACTERS - THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Grade Band: 4-5

Content Focus: Theatre & Social Studies



### LEARNING DESCRIPTION

In this lesson, students use photos that relate to the Great Depression as a springboard to write a first person monologue embodying the person who is pictured. This monologue explores the character's views on the subject of the second photo that deals with the historical context. Next, students will bring the photo to life in an improvisation. By allowing your students to explore what they have read and learned about the Great Depression through the eyes of another person, they learn empathy and better embody the concept. This exercise is a wonderful tool to increase presentation skills, empathy and ensemble in your classroom.

### LEARNING TARGETS

Essential Questions	"I Can" Statements
What impact does a photograph have on our perception of a society and/or historical event?	I can write a monologue using photography as inspiration.
How can theatre techniques help me better understand the Great Depression?	I can improvise a scene with a partner using photography as inspiration.



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	I can use theatre techniques to help me better understand a historical event.
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## GEORGIA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p><b>Grade 5:</b> SS5H3 Explain how the Great Depression and New Deal affected the lives of millions of Americans. a. Discuss the Stock Market Crash of 1929, Herbert Hoover, Franklin Roosevelt, the Dust Bowl, and soup kitchens. b. Analyze the main features of the New Deal; include the significance of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration, and the Tennessee Valley Authority</p>	<p><b>Grade 5:</b> TA5.CR.1 Organize, design, and refine theatrical work. TA5.PR.1 Act by communicating and sustaining roles in formal and informal environments.</p>

## SOUTH CAROLINA STANDARDS

Curriculum Standards	Arts Standards
<p><b>Grade 5:</b> <b>Standard 2:</b> Demonstrate an understanding of how international events and conditions during the early 20th Century (i.e., 1910–1940) affected the United States and South Carolina. 5.2.E Evaluate multiple perspectives from the period, including the economic, political, and social impacts of World War I, the 1920s, the Great Depression, and the New Deal using primary and secondary sources.</p>	<p><b>Anchor Standard 1:</b> I can create scenes and write scripts using story elements and structure.</p> <p><b>Anchor Standard 3:</b> I can act in improvised scenes and written scripts.</p> <p><b>Anchor Standard 8:</b> I can relate theatre to other content areas, arts disciplines, and careers.</p>

## KEY VOCABULARY

Content Vocabulary	Arts Vocabulary
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>The Great Depression</u> - A severe global economic downturn that lasted from 1929 to about 1939; it was the longest and most widespread depression of the 20th century, and its effects were felt worldwide</li> <li><u>Stock Market Crash of 1929</u> - Often cited as the starting point of the Great Depression, the U.S. stock market crash in October 1929 led to a dramatic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Ensemble</u> - All the parts of a thing taken together, so that each part is considered only in relation to the whole</li> <li><u>Theater</u> - Dramatic literature or its performance; drama</li> <li><u>Improvisation</u> - A creation that is spoken or written without prior preparation</li> </ul>



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loss of wealth and a steep decline in consumer spending and investment

- Expository Writing - Writing with the purpose to demonstrate or explain

- Monologue - A speech by a single character in a play, film, or other dramatic work; often used to give the audience deeper insight into the character's motivations and feelings

- Scene - A division of a play or act that presents continuous action in one place or setting

- Dialogue - The conversation or interaction between characters in a written work

## MATERIALS

- Printed photos of events and people related to the Great Depression
- Index cards and pencils
- Music and sound source

## INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

### Opening/Activating Strategy

*Classroom Tips: This activity works best in an open space with room for students to move.*

- Begin by playing music from the Great Depression era quietly as you pass out the images (photographs).
  - Each student should have one sheet of paper with two images, an index card, and pencil.
  - The first picture is of two people engaged in an activity. The name of the country or event should be written at the bottom of the photo. One of the people should be circled so you can pair up the students to act out the scene later.
  - The second picture is of a prominent figure who played a key role in a specific event related to the Great Depression, such as the Stock Market Crash.
    - The photo should be titled with the reference to the event.
  - Have students write their name in the top right hand corner of their index card.
  - Ask the students to closely observe the person that is circled in the top photo.
  - Ask questions for them to more deeply embody their character.
    - They should list the following on the left hand side of the card:
      - Character's name, character's age, home country, how does the character feel about what is happening or who is pictured in the second photo and how is it affecting them and their people.
      - What is the character's greatest fear?
      - What is the character's greatest dream?
      - Encourage students to use descriptive phrases and relevant details and facts from the unit of study as they fill out their cards.



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- Provide time for students to pair-share or share responses with the class.

## Work Session

- Tell students that they will be writing a monologue in the first person introducing themselves as the person in their photograph.
  - Tell students that a monologue is a speech by a single character in a play, film, or other dramatic work. Monologues are often used to give the audience deeper insight into the character's motivations and feelings.
  - Tell students to turn the card over and write a monologue in the first person introducing themselves and including all of the elements on the front side of the card.
    - Tell students to make sure to summarize the paragraph with their character's greatest dream for themselves and their country.
    - Turn up the volume of the music while students are writing. Give them a set amount of time to write. *This could also be a longer exercise or assignment that they bring in the following class period.*
  - When everyone is finished writing, introduce the next section.
  - Tell students, "Today we are going to learn about the Great Depression (or a specific event related to the Great Depression) through the eyes of the people who lived through it. Each of you have been brought here to help us explore this time. Welcome!"
  - Tell students, "Using a voice different from your own, the voice of the character in the picture, on a count of three, softly but out loud, tell me what you had for breakfast this morning. Now sit like your character sits, different from yourself. Imagine your character is wearing an article of clothing that you don't have on. On a count of three adjust that article of clothing."
  - Next, ask a student to walk to the front of the class as that character would walk.
  - Once they get to the front of the classroom, ask them to pick one person to tell their story to. Ask the student to look at this person as they are telling their story. Have them read their character's monologue aloud.
    - If you desire or time permits, you can open the floor up for questions so the other students can interview the character. Let the class know that they can openly discuss the issues at hand and help the character answer questions that they might know the answers to.
- Now, tell students to find the classmate who has the other character depicted in the photograph on their page. Pass out two index cards to each pair.
  - Have students read their monologues to each other practicing embodying the character they have created.
  - Students should then discuss the historical context from the photographs and establish each of their character's points of view.
  - On each card, students should write a sentence in the first person with the first thing their character wants to say about the event depicted.
  - When you say "action," students bring the photo to life using improvisation.
  - Beginning with the first line they previously generated on their index card, students should improvise a scene between the two characters discussing the event.
  - Say "freeze!" and have students return to their seats.



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*NOTE: Instead of improvising scenes, students can write a script for their scene and present it to the class.*

### Closing/Reflection

- On the back of their index cards students should reflect on the process and how both embodying their character and listening to another character's point of view helped them gain a deeper understanding of the historical event.
- Allow students time to share with the whole class.

## ASSESSMENTS

### Formative

Teachers will assess students by observing students' responses to class discussion around photographs in the opening strategy, consulting with students during the writing process, and observing students' work with their partners creating improvisational scenes

### Summative

- Students can write a monologue in the first person using photography as inspiration that addresses all parts of the prompt.
- Students can use historical context and relevant facts to create a realistic first person account of an event related to the Great Depression.
- Students can work collaboratively to improvise a scene with a partner to investigate a historical context or event.

## DIFFERENTIATION

### Acceleration:

- Challenge students by telling them in the middle of the improvised scene, to swap characters with their partner and continue the scene from the new perspective. This tests their adaptability and understanding of character dynamics.
- Pair two partner teams together to create a new scene with all four characters.

### Remediation:

- Pair English Language Learning students with native English speakers.
- When writing the questions about the pictures, provide the students with a graphic organizer on which to write answers and to assist with organization of thoughts and ideas.
- Have students choose fewer items from the list about the character in the picture.
- Conference with students who struggle with writing.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

NA



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*\*This integrated lesson provides differentiated ideas and activities for educators that are aligned to a sampling of standards. Standards referenced at the time of publishing may differ based on each state's adoption of new standards.*

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