

# IF WE HAVE TO MISS SCHOOL, THIS IS YOUR WORK

- Day 1: Read article on **Scottsboro Boys** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 2: Answer 4 short answer discussion questions on Scottsboro Boys
  
- Day 3: Read article on **Plessy vs. Ferguson** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 4: Answer 3 short answer discussion questions on Plessy vs. Ferguson
  
- Day 5: Read article on **Emmett Till** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 6: Answer 3 short answer discussion questions on Emmett Till
  
- Day 7: Read article on **The KKK** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 8: Answer 2 short answer discussion question on the KKK
  
- Day 9: Read article on **The Great Depression** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 10: Answer 3 short answer questions on The Great Depression
  
- Day 11: Read article on **Herd Behavior** and answer the 5 text-dependent questions
- Day 12: Answer 2 short answer question on Herd Behavior

These are the topics that we study and discuss prior to reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When you return from the absence, we will have a multiple-choice assessment to gauge how well you have read and understood each of these topics. Please do not neglect these assignments. You will only be assessed on the number of assignments that we are out for (Ex: if we miss 6 days, you would only be assessed on Scottsboro Boys, Plessy vs. Ferguson, and Emmett Till).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# The Scottsboro Boys

By Jessica McBirney  
2017

*The trial of the Scottsboro Boys was a historic event in which nine black youths were wrongfully accused and convicted for a crime they didn't commit. Occurring in 1931, the Scottsboro Boys' trials sparked outrage and a demand for social change. As you read, take note of the variety of ways in which the criminal justice system failed the Scottsboro Boys.*

- [1] There are few legal cases in U.S. history that have received as much media attention as the trials of the nine Scottsboro Boys in 1931. The trials of the African American teenagers went on for decades and began to carve out a path for racial equality in the U.S. justice system.

## False Accusations

On the morning of March 25, 1931, nine young black men rode illegally in the back of a freight train chugging across Alabama. Charlie Weems, Ozie Powell, Clarence Norris, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Haywood Patterson, Eugene Williams, and brothers Andrew and Leroy Wright were all unemployed, travelling to a new destination to look for work. The oldest was 19, and the youngest only 13.

During the journey, a fight broke out between the nine young men and some white men who had also jumped onto the freight car. The train had to stop in Scottsboro, Alabama to end the fight, and the white men went to the local authorities to accuse the black youths of assault. As it turned out, two white women had also been hiding in the train car. They falsely claimed the nine black teenagers had raped them.



"7 'Scottsboro Boys' Win: 1932" by Washington Area Spark is licensed under CC BY-NC 2.0.

The accusation was inflammatory<sup>1</sup> in the Jim-Crow South.<sup>2</sup> News of the alleged<sup>3</sup> crime spread rapidly across the county; later that same day, the *Jackson County Sentinel* condemned<sup>4</sup> the "revolting crime." Whites in Scottsboro were so upset that a mob gathered outside the jail where the boys were held, and the Alabama Army National Guard had to step in to control the crowd.

1. **Inflammatory (adjective):** stirring up anger, disorder, or rebellion
2. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, southern states enforced "Jim Crow" laws, which promoted racial segregation.

- [5] The trial was held in Scottsboro just two weeks after the arrests, and an all-white jury quickly recommended the death penalty for eight of the nine boys, all except 13-year-old Leroy Wright. The judge scheduled the executions for mid-July, the earliest the law would allow.

## Anger and Appeals

News of the ruling and severe sentences travelled around the country, and after a demonstration in New York, the Communist Party USA decided to get involved to try to stop the executions. Their legal division convinced the boys' parents to request new trials and launched detailed investigations into the rape accusations. The stir was enough to delay the boys' execution date until the case could be appealed to the Alabama Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the Communist Party USA brought continuous media attention to the details of the case. They hoped to use the baseless accusations and the extreme punishments to shine a light on blatantly<sup>5</sup> unjust legal practices in the South. The Scottsboro Boys became symbols of racial inequality and the need for change.

The Alabama Supreme Court upheld the original convictions, but the boys and their legal counsel brought the case to an even higher court, the U.S. Supreme Court. In the landmark case, *Powell v. Alabama*, the justices determined that the boys had not received access to competent<sup>6</sup> legal counsel — thus, their Fourteenth Amendment<sup>7</sup> rights had been violated, and they would have the right to start new trials.

## Faint Signs of Hope

Even though they had new hope for freedom now, the retrial process was slow and contentious,<sup>8</sup> despite overwhelming evidence of the boys' innocence. One of the strongest pieces of evidence came from an accuser herself. In early 1932, a letter surfaced from one of the accusers, Ruby Bates. In it, she admitted that her rape claim was a sham: “[It] is a lie about those negroes jassing<sup>9</sup> me... Those negroes did not touch me or those white boys.” She blamed the Scottsboro police for coercing<sup>10</sup> her into the original accusation. She further admitted, “I know it was wrong to let those Negroes die on account of me.”

- [10] Still, the retrial process dragged on. In 1933, one of the boys, Haywood Patterson, stood retrial in the courtroom of one Judge James Horton. His defense attorney called numerous witnesses and built a strong argument that the two girls on the train had lied. Their story did not match medical evidence or the stories of other witnesses, and he even got Ruby Bates to testify that the whole story had been made up. The defense seemed inarguable.<sup>11</sup> And yet, after only a few minutes of deliberation, the jury pronounced Patterson guilty and recommended execution.

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3. **Alleged** (*adjective*): said to have happened but not yet proven
  4. **Condemn** (*verb*): to express complete disapproval of something
  5. **Blatant** (*adjective*): very obvious and offensive
  6. **Competent** (*adjective*): having the necessary ability, knowledge, or skill to do something successfully
  7. An amendment passed soon after the Civil War that guarantees equal protection under the law to all people.
  8. **Contentious** (*adjective*): causing or likely to cause arguments
  9. most likely referring to some kind of sexual act
  10. **Coerce** (*verb*): to persuade, especially by force or threats
  11. **Inarguable** (*adjective*): not open to doubt or debate

Judge James Horton knew he had to step in. In an unprecedented<sup>12</sup> move, he reversed the jury's decision and mandated that the trial restart yet again. His courage cost him his judgeship in the next election.

Patterson was not the only one of the Scottsboro Boys to experience stubborn juries in the face of convincing evidence. When another all-white jury convicted Clarence Norris in his retrial, he appealed to the Supreme Court. The 1935 *Norris v. Alabama* case determined that it was unconstitutional to exclude African Americans from serving on juries for African American defendants. Alabama's jury selection process was inherently racially skewed<sup>13</sup> and violated Norris' fourteenth amendment right.

## Digging Up the Past

The legal proceedings continued for several years. A few of the young men managed to get acquitted.<sup>14</sup> By 1938, five of the Scottsboro Boys remained in Alabama prisons. Their sentences had been reduced from the death penalty to decades in jail, a small but significant victory. Over the next 12 years, the remaining five also made it out of the prison system, usually by receiving parole.<sup>15</sup> Haywood Patterson, however, accomplished an impressive escape in 1948.

Years later, in 2013, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles granted posthumous<sup>16</sup> pardons to three of the Scottsboro Boys who never had their convictions overturned: Charlie Weems, Andrew Wright, and Haywood Patterson.

- [15] The Scottsboro incident was one of the earliest signs of the need for racial justice in the U.S. It garnered<sup>17</sup> media attention for several years, and racial equality groups such as the Communist Party USA and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) capitalized<sup>18</sup> on the cases to win support for their cause.

If the Scottsboro Boys' story sounds familiar, it might be because the saga partially inspired two famous novels: Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Lee's novel in particular has some key similarities: in it, a black man is accused of raping a white woman, and the book's protagonist is six years old, about the same age as Lee during the first Scottsboro trials. One reason the Scottsboro Boys appear repeatedly in literature and pop culture is because their story clearly demonstrates the importance of racial equality and freedom.

*"The Scottsboro Boys" by Jessica McBirney. Copyright © 2017 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

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12. **Unprecedented (adjective):** never done or known before
  13. **Skew (verb):** to make something favor a particular group of people in a way that is unfair
  14. to free someone from a criminal charge by a verdict of not guilty
  15. "Parole" is the release of a prisoner before the completion of their prison sentence, on the promise of good behavior.
  16. **Posthumous (adjective):** occurring after the death of the person
  17. **Garner (verb):** to gather or collect
  18. **Capitalize (verb):** to get an advantage from something

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement best identifies the central idea of the text?
  - A. The Scottsboro Boys' trials showed the enormous degree of racial inequality that existed in the United States' criminal justice system.
  - B. The Scottsboro Boys' trials were an unfortunate mistake made in U.S. history that have since been apologized for.
  - C. The Scottsboro Boys' trials proved that a new system of screening witnesses was necessary.
  - D. The Scottsboro Boys' trials showed how disorganized the criminal justice system was at the time and how far it has come since then.
  
2. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "In early 1932, a letter surfaced from one of the accusers, Ruby Bates. In it, she admitted that her rape claim was a sham..." (Paragraph 9)
  - B. "Alabama's jury selection process was inherently racially skewed and violated Norris' fourteenth amendment right." (Paragraph 12)
  - C. "The legal proceedings continued for several years. A few of the young men managed to get acquitted." (Paragraph 13)
  - D. "...in 2013, the Alabama Board of Pardons and Paroles granted posthumous pardons to three of the Scottsboro Boys who never had their convictions overturned..." (Paragraph 14)
  
3. PART A: What is the meaning of the word "inflammatory" used in paragraph 4?
  - A. inspiring disbelief
  - B. causing anger
  - C. spreading quickly
  - D. encouraging reckless behavior
  
4. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "They falsely claimed the nine black teenagers had raped them." (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "News of the alleged crime spread rapidly across the county..." (Paragraph 4)
  - C. "...a mob gathered outside the jail where the boys were held..." (Paragraph 4)
  - D. "The judge scheduled the executions for mid-July, the earliest the law would allow." (Paragraph 5)

5. "The trial was held in Scottsboro just two weeks after the arrests, and an all-white jury quickly recommended the death penalty for eight of the nine boys, all except 13-year-old Leroy Wright" (Paragraph 5). How does the quoted sentence contribute to the development of ideas in the text?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In your opinion, how are African Americans treated by the criminal justice system today? How have things improved and what do you think requires further attention?
2. In the context of the passage, what is fair? How were the accusations made against the Scottsboro Boys an example of a flawed criminal justice system, and the overall unfair treatment of African Americans? What steps have been taken to ensure that the criminal justice system is fair? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. In the context of the passage, how do people create change? How did the Scottsboro Boys bring attention to racial inequality in America, specifically in its criminal justice system? What changed because of this historic and tragic event? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
4. In the context of the passage, what are the effects of prejudice? How did prejudice drive the opinions and actions of those surrounding the Scottsboro Boys from the moment they boarded the train until their final pardons? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Plessy vs. Ferguson

By Jessica McBirney  
2017

*In this informational text, Jessica McBirney discusses a landmark Supreme Court case known as Plessy v. Ferguson. The case challenged racial segregation in public areas in the late 19th century. As you read, take notes on what happened after the Plessy v. Ferguson decision.*

[1] By 1896 the Civil War was over, and the amendments prohibiting<sup>1</sup> slavery and ensuring equal rights for all citizens had been part of the U.S. Constitution for more than 25 years. But racial tensions across the country were incredibly high, and African Americans continued to experience oppression<sup>2</sup> even though they were no longer slaves. 1896 was the year that the Supreme Court ruled on the case of Plessy v. Ferguson. In this case, the court determined that racial segregation in public areas was acceptable and legal, as long as the segregated facilities were "equal." This case cemented the racial tensions and segregation that were heightened during the decades after the Civil War, and it ensured that African Americans would face explicit<sup>3</sup> and legal oppression for the next 60 years.



*"At the bus station in Durham, North Carolina" by Jack Delano is in the public domain.*

## The Case

The case began in 1892 when a man named Homer Plessy purchased a first-class train ticket for a whites-only car in Louisiana. Plessy was one-eighth black by heritage, but in the state of Louisiana he was legally considered black. Two years earlier, the state of Louisiana passed a law requiring racial segregation of train cars. To protest the law, a group of concerned black, Creole, and white Louisiana citizens, called the Committee of Citizens, convinced Plessy to intentionally buy a ticket for a whites-only car. They expected push-back and wanted to challenge the law in court. As they predicted, the train company knew Plessy was coming and had him arrested almost as soon as he stepped into the car.

Plessy's case made its way through the Louisiana court system. His lawyers argued that the law mandating<sup>4</sup> rail car segregation was unconstitutional because of the 14th Amendment, which ensured equal protection under the law for all citizens. Their opponent, the state of Louisiana, argued that the 14th Amendment only applied to nationwide laws, not state-specific laws. The courts all sided against Plessy, but he and his lawyers kept appealing until they made it to the Supreme Court.

1. **Prohibit (verb):** to formally forbid something by law
2. **Oppression (noun):** the state of being subject to unfair treatment or control
3. **Explicit (adjective):** stated clearly and in detail, leaving no room for doubt
4. an official order to do something



## Supreme Court: A Final Verdict

Segregation was common across the country by the 1890s, not just in the South. Even Massachusetts segregated their public schools. It was clear that whatever the Supreme Court decided for Plessy's case, it would have profound<sup>5</sup> and widespread consequences.

- [5] The argument used against Plessy became one of the most famous in American legal history. The state of Louisiana said that mandated segregation did not suggest that blacks were inferior to whites, because the whites-only train cars and the blacks-only train cars were of the same quality. They were equal. Looking at it that way, the segregated-train mandate did not violate the 14th Amendment's equal protection requirement. The train cars were "separate, but equal," and therefore it was constitutional.

The Supreme Court sided with the state of Louisiana and convicted Plessy. There was only one judge who disagreed. Justice John Marshall Harlan wrote an explanation of his dissenting<sup>6</sup> vote, explaining how white Americans saw themselves in a position of power, even if they were technically "equal" with others. He believed it was wrong to undermine the 14th Amendment in this way, when the majority of the country had favored the new law. The law, he argued, was "inconsistent with the personal liberty of citizens, white and black, in that state, and hostile to both the spirit and letter of the constitution of the United States." He predicted that the Plessy decision would become one of the most infamous cases in Supreme Court history, and that it would set a precedent<sup>7</sup> of segregation across the country.

## Long-term Effects: Jim Crow

As it turns out, Justice Harlan was exactly right about the effects of the Plessy v. Ferguson decision. Laws that explicitly segregated the races could not be challenged in court anymore; the Supreme Court had given segregation the legal "okay," and states took advantage of this to establish segregation for decades to come. Although segregation occurred in northern states, especially in public school systems, it was most prevalent in the South. Laws that segregated blacks and whites came to be known as a Jim Crow laws.

Jim Crow touched every part of life. And although the Supreme Court case recognized Louisiana's segregated train cars as relatively equal in quality, this was not true for most segregated areas. Public schools for black children received less funding, less maintenance, and less teacher training. Things like colored bathrooms were poorly constructed and rarely cleaned. Despite this, states recognized them as "separate, but equal."

The Jim Crow laws also led to the disenfranchisement<sup>8</sup> of African American voters. States passed laws requiring literacy or history tests, background checks, proof of land ownership, or other complex processes just to register to vote. Some states even held whites-only primary races to exclude candidates who might be popular among black voters.

- [10] The country may have been "equal" by the standards of Plessy v. Ferguson, but in reality, it was not equal at all.

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5. **Profound** (*adjective*): very great or intense  
6. to differ in opinion  
7. something said or done that may serve as an example  
8. the state of being deprived of a right or privilege, especially the right to vote

## Overtured: **Brown v. Board of Education**

It was not until 1954, almost 60 years later, that the Supreme Court overturned<sup>9</sup> its own decision from Plessy v. Ferguson in a new case, Brown v. Board of Education. Homer Plessy's original plan to fight legalized segregation was finally accomplished.

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9. reversed

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement expresses the central idea of the text?
  - A. Plessy v. Ferguson was the first time that an African American challenged segregation and brought attention to the issue.
  - B. The decision of Plessy v. Ferguson made racial segregation more widely practiced and accepted in the United States.
  - C. While racial segregation continued after the decision of Plessy v. Ferguson, it was not upheld by the law.
  - D. The decision of Plessy v. Ferguson proved that both white and black citizens were largely against racial segregation.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "By 1896 the Civil War was over, and the amendments prohibiting slavery and ensuring equal rights for all citizens had been part of the U.S. Constitution for more than 25 years." (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "His lawyers argued that the law mandating rail car segregation was unconstitutional because of the 14th Amendment, which ensured equal protection under the law for all citizens." (Paragraph 3)
  - C. "He believed it was wrong to undermine the 14th Amendment in this way, when the majority of the country had favored the new law." (Paragraph 6)
  - D. "Laws that explicitly segregated the races could not be challenged in court anymore; the Supreme Court had given segregation the legal 'okay,' and states took advantage of this to establish segregation for decades to come." (Paragraph 7)
  
3. Which of the following describes the relationship between Jim Crow and Plessy v. Ferguson?
  - A. Jim Crow segregation laws compelled Plessy to protest segregated trains.
  - B. Jim Crow segregation laws were made possible by the Plessy v. Ferguson decision.
  - C. Plessy v. Ferguson hoped to end the segregation common during Jim Crow.
  - D. Plessy v. Ferguson made Jim Crow laws widely accepted, but not officially legal.
  
4. How does the author's discussion of Jim Crow help readers understand the consequences of racial segregation laws?
  - A. It emphasizes how African Americans had access to lower quality services and spaces, and more difficulty participating in voting.
  - B. It stresses that African Americans had to travel north if they wanted to avoid the discrimination present in the South.
  - C. It shows how many spaces were reserved for whites, while people of color were not allowed their own spaces.
  - D. It highlights how dangerous it was for African Americans to challenge Jim Crow laws in the South.

5. What does “separate, but equal” mean, and why is it important in the text?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. In the context of the text, how was racial segregation a result of prejudice? How do you think racial segregation continued to negatively impact African Americans throughout their lives? How do you think it would feel to be told that there are certain places you can't go based on your skin color?
2. In the text, supporters of segregation claimed that racial segregation was acceptable because the spaces and services blacks used were "separate, but equal" to those used by whites. Why was this not true? Is it possible to ever have "separate, but equal" spaces and services? Why or why not?
3. In the context of the text, how has America changed over time? What changes was Plessy v. Ferguson responsible for in America? How do you think America would have been different if the Supreme Court had ruled in favor of Homer Plessy? Do you think America would be different today? Why or why not?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emmett Till

By Jessica McBirney  
2016

*Emmett Louis Till (1941-1955) was a fourteen-year-old African American boy from Chicago who was lynched in Mississippi after reportedly flirting with a white woman, Carolyn Bryant. "Lynching" refers to killing someone for an alleged offense with or without a legal trial, and the act is often linked to angry mobs and race. The injustice of his murder inspired many in the Civil Rights Movement. In a book published in 2017, Bryant said she made up her original accusations, sparking further discussion around Till's death and legacy. As you read, note the racial climate of the South in which Emmett Till was killed.*

- [1] The murder of Emmett Till is a crime that continues to resonate<sup>1</sup> with people around the world because of its brutality, and the fact that no one has ever been brought to justice for his killing. There have been varied accounts of what provoked his killers to act but, ultimately, the fact remains that the young boy was kidnapped, tortured and murdered for no other reason than the color of his skin.



*"Emmett Till Before" by Image Editor is licensed under CC BY 2.0*

Emmett Till grew up in a middle-class, predominantly black neighborhood in Chicago, raised by his mother, Mamie Till. His great uncle Mose Wright traveled up from Mississippi to Chicago, in the summer of 1955, to visit Emmett and his mother. When Wright returned to the south, Emmett begged his mother to let him tag along, to visit the rest of the family. She relented,<sup>2</sup> but sent him with a warning: Mississippi is very different from Chicago – make sure to behave yourself around the white people down there. Emmett agreed he would. He was 14 years old.

### Flirting with Danger

He arrived in his uncle's hometown, Money, Mississippi, in late August. On the evening of August 24th, Emmett and several cousins stopped into a local store to buy candy, where they encountered a young white woman named Carolyn Bryant. She and her husband, Roy Bryant, owned the store. Earlier in the week, Emmett had bragged to his cousins about the white girls he'd dated at school in Chicago, so they dared him to say something to Carolyn as she sat behind the counter.

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1. **Resonate (verb):** to create strong feelings or memories  
2. **Relent (verb):** to agree to do or accept something after resisting or refusing

Emmett entered the store alone. Accounts have varied as to what Emmett did or said to her. For a long time, it was believed that he may have wolf-whistled, touched her hand, or asked her on a date. However, in an interview from 2007, Carolyn Bryant said “nothing that boy did could ever justify what happened to him,” and she confessed that she made up her claims that he had made a physical advance on her.<sup>3</sup> Carolyn said that she did not remember what else happened that night, but it is known that she responded to Emmett Till by running outside to retrieve a pistol from her car. When the boys saw the gun, they ran away from the store to avoid more trouble.

## The Murder

- [5] Roy Bryant heard about the incident a few days later and began questioning black men around town to find out who had done it. He eventually traced it back to Emmett. Bryant and a friend, J. W. Milam, broke into Mose Wright’s house in the early morning hours of August 28, 1955, and demanded to know who had “harassed” his wife. They threatened to shoot Emmett, told him to get dressed, and led him outside to their pickup truck.

Bryant, Milam and several other men — both black and white — drove out of town, stopping twice to beat Emmett severely. Later that morning, Emmett’s Uncle Mose called the authorities and reported Bryant and Milam for kidnapping. They were arrested shortly thereafter, and Emmett was presumed still missing.

Three days after the abduction,<sup>4</sup> a fisherman discovered Emmett’s body in the water of the Tallahatchie River. The corpse was so disfigured<sup>5</sup> from the beatings and from being in the water so long that the only way it could be identified was by a ring on Emmett’s finger, bearing his initials.

## The Funeral

When Mamie Till found out about the murder, she insisted that the body be sent back to Chicago immediately, whatever the cost. When she saw Emmett’s mutilated<sup>6</sup> face and body, she also insisted they hold an open-casket funeral, so everyone could see the worst effects of racism in the U.S.

Tens of thousands of people came to see Emmett and show their support for his mother. Newspapers across the country carried the story.

## The Trial

- [10] Bryant and Milam stood trial for Emmett’s murder in late September, 1955. Lawyers for the defense argued that the body was too disfigured to be properly identified, and they claimed Emmett was probably still alive and simply had not turned up yet. Mose Wright testified against his nephew’s murderers, the first black man to testify against white men in the state of Mississippi.

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3. Carolyn Bryant made this confession to author Timothy Tyson during a 2007 interview, and it was published in his book, *The Blood of Emmett Till*, in 2017.

4. the act of kidnapping someone

5. damaged in appearance

6. cut or injured severely, with lasting damage

The jury was made up of entirely white men. After listening to the facts of the case for five days, they deliberated<sup>7</sup> for just 67 minutes before concluding that Bryant and Milam were not guilty. One juror said in an interview, “If we hadn’t stopped to drink pop,<sup>8</sup> it wouldn’t have taken that long.”

Just one year later, in 1956, Bryant and Milam sold their story to *Look* magazine. In the interview they gave their account of the murder for the very first time (they did not speak during their trial). Because they were found not guilty, they could not be tried again in a court of law for the murder. They admitted to everything, including shooting him to death, and filled in many details from the story. According to their account in the interview, their original intent was to beat him up and leave him on a riverbank, just to teach him a lesson. But as they continued to beat him, Emmett called them names and insisted he was just as good as they were. Presumably out of anger, they drove to the edge of the Tallahatchie, shot Emmett in the head, tied a weight around his neck with barbed wire, and threw his body into the water.

Milam explained why he felt he had to kill Emmet: “‘Chicago boy,’ I said, ‘I’m tired of ‘em sending your kind down here to stir up trouble. I’m going to make an example of you – just so everybody can know how me and my folks stand.’” Throughout the interview, the two men never showed any sign of guilt or wrongdoing; in their minds they had done what was right to protect their families and their country – they were heroes. Mamie Till later confirmed that “they never regretted what they had done.... He said he would do the same thing over again, to whoever got in his way. I felt sorry for him.”

## A Symbol for Civil Rights

Reactions to the feature in *Look* shed light on the complex race issues facing the country in the 1950s. Letters to the editor flooded in, some congratulating the interviewer’s bravery. One preacher from Ohio wrote, “You are to be complimented for your willingness to stick your neck out in this manner for the sake of justice.”

- [15] But others condemned the piece: “By this example of opinionated, baseless reporting, *Look* itself pays scant recognition to the traditions of American Justice it claims were ignored,” said one Mississippi reporter. Another writer defended Bryant and Milam, saying, “[They] did what had to be done, and their courage... is to be commended.<sup>9</sup> To have followed any other course would have been unrealistic [and] cowardly.” Reactions like these across the South prompted people to understand the need for greater equality between blacks and whites.

Emmett Till’s murder became one of the most important catalysts<sup>10</sup> of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s. When Rosa Parks famously refused to give up her seat on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in December of 1955, she said later she had been thinking of Emmett and the injustice he experienced. Her action sparked the year-long Montgomery Bus Boycott, which brought the Civil Rights movement to the national stage.

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7. **Deliberate (verb):** to think about or discuss issues and decisions carefully  
8. soda  
9. **Commend (verb):** to praise  
10. **Catalyst (noun):** something that initiates or speeds up a change or action



Two years later, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which set up protections for black voters and established the Civil Rights Division in the Justice Department; federal officials could now get directly involved in cases where civil rights were being abridged. Later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended all forms of segregation<sup>11</sup> in public places and banned employment discrimination.

Mamie Till, who passed away in 2003, understood the significance of Emmett's death. She herself became actively involved in empowering black youth in Chicago. But the pain of her son's murder never left her completely. "This is what really started the civil rights movement, that's what everyone tells me. But I was not trying to start anything. I was just upset that my only child was gone, and so needlessly."

Emmett Till was brutally murdered because of who he was. There is nothing that can explain or justify what happened to him. Even more disturbingly, there have been thousands of other African Americans who were also lynched, and many of their names have been erased from history. Because of the circumstances surrounding his death and Mamie Till's refusal to let his death be in vain,<sup>12</sup> his story has become one of the most well-known.

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11. referring to the separation different races, classes, or ethnic groups, namely the separation of white people and black people in the U.S.  
12. without success or a result

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which TWO statements best describe the central ideas of the article?
  - A. Emmett Till was an innocent boy who was hurt because he was in the wrong place at the wrong time.
  - B. Emmett Till's murder prompted Mississippi to move its justice system to be fairer towards all.
  - C. The national attention received by Emmett Till's murder embarrassed many Southerners into fighting for racial equality.
  - D. Emmett Till was an ordinary boy who became the victim of some Southerners' hate and fear.
  - E. Emmett Till's death turned him into a symbol of America's racial injustice, inspiring many to promote equality for all.
  - F. Emmett Till's death revealed that all Southerners thought he deserved to die for daring to flirt with a white woman.
  
2. PART B: Which TWO of the following phrases from the text best support the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Earlier in the week Emmett had bragged to his cousins about the white girls he'd dated at school in Chicago, so they dared him to say something to Carolyn as she sat behind the counter." (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "'Chicago boy,' I said, 'I'm tired of 'em sending your kind down here to stir up trouble. I'm going to make an example of you – just so everybody can know how me and my folks stand.'" (Paragraph 13)
  - C. "Mamie Till later confirmed that 'they never regretted what they had done.... He said he would do the same thing over again, to whoever got in his way. I felt sorry for him.'" (Paragraph 13)
  - D. "Emmett Till's murder became one of the most important catalysts of the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s." (Paragraph 16)
  - E. "Later, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ended all forms of segregation in public places and banned employment discrimination." (Paragraph 17)
  - F. "'But I was not trying to start anything. I was just upset that my only child was gone, and so needlessly.'" (Paragraph 18)
  
3. Which statement best describes how Mamie Till was affected by her son's death?
  - A. Mamie Till was embarrassed her son was murdered and withdrew from public view.
  - B. Mamie Till felt that she needed to share what happened to her son to show how bad racism was in the South.
  - C. Mamie Till was inspired to fight for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.
  - D. Mamie Till was celebrated after she forgave the killers of her son during an interview with Look Magazine.

4. How does the following sentence from paragraph 13 contribute to the author's portrayal of Southern beliefs about race at the time of the murder: "Throughout the interview, the two men never showed any sign of guilt or wrongdoing; in their minds they had done what was right to protect their families and their country – they were heroes."
- A. A belief existed in some segregated Southern communities that black men who asserted their equality were dangerous to individuals and the social order.
  - B. In the South, everyone believed that all African Americans were dangerous to the community and deserved to be monitored and put in their place.
  - C. Southern white men were threatened by their wives' attraction to African American men and retaliated with aggressive behavior towards black men.
  - D. Defending the home and family is a Southern tradition that prevents people from feeling remorse for hurting others.

5. How does background on Emmett Till's life help us understand the impact of his murder?

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# America's Most Infamous Hate Group: The KKK

By Jessica McBirney  
2017

*The Ku Klux Klan, commonly known as the KKK, is a white supremacy group that promotes the belief that white people are superior to other races. Throughout history, the KKK has used violence and fear against groups or individuals whom they deem inferior. As you read, take notes on when and why the KKK became more popular.*

- [1] The United States has faced deep racial problems throughout its history. One of the most well-known racist groups in the nation has been the Ku Klux Klan, otherwise simply known as the KKK. The KKK believes white people are superior to other races, and that they should be in a dominant position in society. These types of ideas have existed throughout our history, but the KKK has gone through three waves of popularity since the 1800s.



*"KKK" by Michael Casim is licensed under CC BY 2.0*

## The First KKK: 1860s

The Ku Klux Klan first sprang up in Pulaski, Tennessee, sometime near the beginning of 1866. The Civil War had just ended, and six soldiers from the Confederacy<sup>1</sup> formed the group in reaction to the end of slavery and the beginning of Reconstruction.<sup>2</sup> It was designed to be a brotherhood of white men who shared racist ideologies.<sup>3</sup> For instance, they did not believe Black people should be allowed to participate in society. The KKK was not the only white supremacist group that appeared during Reconstruction, but it was one of the most influential and long-lasting.

Members of the Klan wore masks and robes; the costumes served to scare their victims and to protect their identities. They acted as a terrorist group, killing freed slaves and any Republican leaders who were trying to create laws to protect African Americans.

One of their biggest goals was to keep African Americans and Republicans from voting, because they wanted to maintain white Democrat rule in the southern states.<sup>4</sup> To do this, they violently intimidated voters on their way to the polls during election seasons. For example, in Louisiana over 2,000 people were killed or injured in the few weeks before the 1868 presidential election.

1. the group of southern states that attempted to exit the United States to form their own nation
2. "Reconstruction" was the period after the Civil War ended, when the federal government required southern states to end slavery, rewrite their state constitutions, and provide support for freed slaves.
3. **Ideology (noun):** the set of ideas and beliefs of a group or political party
4. While the names for the United States' two-party system have remained the same, the views associated with the Democratic and Republican parties have changed over time. During this time, most newly freed Black Americans identified with the Republican party because Abraham Lincoln was a Republican.

- [5] Northern Republicans, as well as some southern Democrats, began to oppose the Klan and campaigned against their cruel treatment of African Americans. Soon Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1871, which specifically protected people against the KKK. The Klan mostly disappeared by the mid-1870s, although a few smaller white supremacist groups still committed violence against African Americans in the South.

## The Second KKK: 1915 – 1920s

The second wave of the Ku Klux Klan started in 1915, in Atlanta, Georgia. That year, the film *The Birth of a Nation*, directed by D.W. Griffiths, was released. It glorified the actions and legacy of the original Klan from the 1860s, and it inspired William Joseph Simmons to start a new Klan movement on Stone Mountain in Georgia. It stayed local for a while, but by the early 1920s it spread across the Midwest and reached a membership of 1.5 million people. This phase of the Klan was much more organized and structured than the first.

The Second Klan kept the overall vision of white American supremacy, but it also added a religious angle. Two-thirds of Klan members were white Protestant ministers. They wanted to maintain Protestant Christian morals, so they were against behaviors like divorce and drunkenness. But they also hated the many Catholic and Jewish immigrants who were coming to America during this time. They saw themselves and white Protestants as morally superior; however, all mainstream Protestant groups condemned<sup>5</sup> their extreme views. In the South, the KKK still targeted Black people.

The Second Klan still wore gowns, this time white robes with masks and tall, cone-shaped hats — clothing inspired by the depiction of the Klan in Griffiths' film. Another idea that the Klan had taken from the film was the practice of cross burning. They burned large wooden crosses in public and private meetings to emphasize their supposed commitment to Protestant morality.

This time, although there was still some violence (especially in the South), the Klan focused more on political actions. They pushed for legal prohibition<sup>6</sup> of alcohol and opposed any non-Protestant immigration from foreign countries. Many Klan members were elected to local, state, and national political offices, where they enforced their white supremacist, nativist<sup>7</sup> viewpoints.

- [10] Very shortly after its peak, the Second Klan began to dissolve for several reasons. In-fighting<sup>8</sup> and the criminal behaviors of some Klan leaders also affected membership. Lists of Klan members in some communities were leaked, which led many other people to leave the group out of embarrassment and fear that their names would be smeared.<sup>9</sup> States also began to pass laws against wearing the signature costumes, which also took away anonymity. Finally, when the Great Depression hit in the late 1920s, many members did not have the time or money to continue to participate.

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5. **Condemn (verb):** to express complete disapproval of, typically in public  
6. the action of forbidding something, especially by law  
7. a policy of favoring native inhabitants as opposed to immigrants  
8. hidden conflict or competitiveness within an organization  
9. to damage the reputation of someone

## The Third KKK: 1960s – present

Although the formal structure of the Ku Klux Klan fell apart, small white supremacist groups started popping up again in the 1960s. They used the KKK name and wore the same white costumes. These groups became very violent in the South during the Civil Rights Movement.

When the Civil Rights Movement swept across the nation in the 1950s and 1960s, white members of the Klan opposed the expansion of rights for African Americans. Like the first KKK, they used violence to intimidate and oppress African Americans. Bombings, especially of Black churches and activists' homes, were extremely common. They also tried to make deals with southern lawmakers to keep Civil Rights laws from being passed. Fortunately, their efforts were not successful, and the U.S. has passed many laws to protect civil rights for minorities.

There are still some independent Ku Klux Klan groups scattered around the country today, mostly in the South and the Midwest. Their membership continues to decline, but membership in hate groups in general continues to increase in the United States. Some believe that the KKK is less popular because they do not effectively use the internet to recruit new members. Today the KKK also fights against immigration and same-sex marriage.

*"America's Most Infamous Hate Group: The KKK" by Jessica McBirney. Copyright © 2017 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0.*

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the main idea of the text?
  - A. The KKK was an influential political organization in the past, but no longer exists due to a lack of public support.
  - B. While it is believed that the KKK has experienced a recent increase in membership, it is impossible to know due to the secrecy surrounding the group.
  - C. The beliefs held by the KKK have become less offensive over time and no longer resemble the group's original racist ideologies.
  - D. While its presence and power have varied overtime, the KKK has remained consistent in its promotion of exclusionary and prejudiced beliefs.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Soon Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1871, which specifically protected people against the KKK." (Paragraph 5)
  - B. "This time, although there was still some violence (especially in the south), the Klan focused more on political actions. They pushed for legal prohibition of alcohol and opposed any non-Protestant immigration from foreign countries." (Paragraph 9)
  - C. "Lists of Klan members in some communities were leaked, which led many other people to leave the group out of embarrassment and fear that their names would be smeared." (Paragraph 10)
  - D. "Fortunately, their efforts were not successful, and the U.S. has passed many laws to protect civil rights for minorities." (Paragraph 12)
  
3. PART A: How does the author develop the idea that the KKK has been unsuccessful in its goals?
  - A. The author shows how the KKK has not been popular in a wide variety of areas, which has limited its influence.
  - B. The author explains how the KKK has been opposed by both political parties since its initial establishment.
  - C. The author provides examples of laws that have been put in place by the government to protect minorities.
  - D. The author describes how the group was unable to agree on goals to promote and methods to pursue their goals.
  
4. PART B: Which quote from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Soon Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1871, which specifically protected people against the KKK." (Paragraph 5)
  - B. "They wanted to maintain Protestant Christian morals, so they were against behaviors like divorce and drunkenness." (Paragraph 7)
  - C. "States also began to pass laws against wearing the signature costumes, which also took away anonymity." (Paragraph 10)
  - D. "Bombings, especially of Black churches and activists' homes, were extremely common. They also tried to make deals with southern lawmakers to keep Civil Rights laws from being passed." (Paragraph 12)



5. According to the text, when and why did the KKK experience surges and declines in popularity?

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## Discussion Questions

***Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.***

1. In the context of the text, how does prejudice emerge and spread? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.

2. In the context of the text, why do people resist change? How was the creation of the KKK a response to change? How does the ideology of the KKK continue to represent a resistance to changes taking place today?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# An Overview of the Great Depression

By Jessica McBirney  
2017

*From 1929 to 1939, America experienced the Great Depression: the worst economic downturn in its history. In this informational text, Jessica McBirney explores the causes and effects of the Great Depression, as well as how America's economy began to recover. As you read, take notes on the causes and effects of the Great Depression.*

- [1] On a fateful Tuesday in October 1929, American citizens experienced the beginning of the worst economic disaster in the country's history. The day marked the beginning of the Great Depression, a severe<sup>1</sup> economic crisis that lasted for more than ten years and hurt millions of people around the country.

## Why Did it Happen?

The Great Depression had many causes. In fact, economists still debate over all the factors that led to the crisis. The following are some of the most important causes:



*"Huts and unemployed in West Houston and Mercer St. by Berenice Abbott in Manhattan in 1935" by Berenice Abbott is in the public domain.*

### **The Stock Market**

Maybe you have heard your parents or news commentators talk about the stock market. Essentially, it is where people can buy stocks, or very small pieces, of big companies like Walmart or Facebook. If the company makes money, the stock-holder gets also gets a small profit. Investing in a stock is like taking a gamble, because the company could earn a lot of money, or it could lose money.

In the years before 1929 the stock market was an extremely popular way for everyday people to earn some extra money. Because of this, the prices of stocks kept getting higher and higher. By 1929, many prices were much higher than the actual values of companies.

- [5] Some people started getting skeptical. Prices could not keep going up forever. So they started selling their stocks while they were still at high prices. More and more people started catching on, until everyone was scrambling to sell their stocks at once. There was no one left to buy all these available stocks, so the prices dropped steeply.

This caused what is known as a stock market crash. In just one day, on October 29, 1929, the whole stock market lost over \$14 billion.

1. **Severe (adjective):** very great, intense, or harsh

## **Bank Failures**

During the popularity of the stock market, most banks had very few rules about loaning out money. They would loan money to customers so those customers could go use it to buy more stocks.

When the stock market lost so much money, suddenly all those customers had no way to pay back their loans. But when people heard about the crash, they started to panic and wanted to pull the money out of their savings accounts just to keep it safe.

With no money back from all the loans they had given out, the banks did not have enough money supply to also pay out everything from everyone's savings. The bank failures rippled throughout the nation, causing even more economic problems and panic for average Americans.

## **The Dust Bowl**

- [10] A record-setting drought hit the middle states, especially Oklahoma, around the same time. The timing could not have been worse. Farmers, who usually remained stable during economic uncertainty because they could at least grow their own food, were suddenly in just as much trouble as the rest of the country.

The drought brought hot, dry winds sweeping across the plains, blowing huge clouds of dust across the plains and into many peoples' houses and lungs. Families could not stay in the area. They packed up and left the Great Plains,<sup>2</sup> heading west to places like California to find work. Unfortunately, other states already had their own unemployment problems; there were not enough jobs for the newcomers.

## **Effects of the Depression**

At the beginning of the financial problems few people predicted the crisis would last over a decade. But the problems were more extensive and much deeper than analysts realized at first.

One of the most important effects of the Great Depression was unemployment. At its peak in 1933 around 25% of adults were unemployed — this means 1 in 4 adults did not have jobs.

Without steady income, many families were forced out of their homes. Some found other family members to live with, while others had to take to the streets. Some people moved into small shanty<sup>3</sup> towns called Hooverilles, named after the president at the time Herbert Hoover. These people often had to rely on charity soup kitchens to get enough food to eat.

## **Political Interventions**

- [15] In 1932, near the worst of the Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected. He immediately started working to fix the problems. The set of policies and government programs he instituted are known as the New Deal.<sup>4</sup>

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2. the grassland prairie region of North America

3. A "shanty" is a small, crudely built shack.

To address the banking issues, he temporarily closed all banks to give them a chance to restructure themselves. He set guidelines for future bank operations. He also made more rules for how investors on the stock market could buy and sell stocks more responsibly.

To help families affected by unemployment, he created many employment programs. Groups like the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and Works Progress Administration (WPA) used government funds to pay young men for services like building roads and cleaning parks. This gave families some money to start buying necessities again.

President Roosevelt started dozens of programs during his time in the White House. Not all of them were successful, and a few were even deemed unconstitutional, but many did have positive results.

## Culture Amid Crisis

Even though Americans faced one of the greatest challenges in our nation's history during the 1930s, they were able to produce art and entertainment to raise everyone's spirits.

- [20] Radio became a central aspect of many people's home lives. They could listen for free to comedy shows like *Amos 'n' Andy* and *The Jack Benny Show*. President Roosevelt also made regular speeches on the radio, known as his fireside chats, to reassure the American people and explain his newest New Deal policies.

Movies continued to grow in popularity. Many movies featured tough gangsters and witty city-dwellers with exciting plots. Viewers could escape into this world for a few hours any time they watched a movie.

Music portrayed a more complex, and for many people more relatable, view of society during the Great Depression. Some songs recalled the better days of the 1920s when the country was happy. The mid 1930s introduced swing music and the big band genre, full of upbeat and exciting melodies. The dancing that accompanied it was fast paced. But other artists, like Bing Crosby, did not shy away from writing music that reflected the hard times. His song "Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?" became popular.

## Recovery

Even though the worst of the Great Depression came in 1933, its negative effects and high unemployment continued throughout the 1930s.

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, things began to change. The military needed new equipment and supplies, so thousands of new manufacturing jobs opened to support the war effort. This cut down on the still-soaring unemployment rates. Living standards still remained relatively low, because so many factories built war materials instead of everyday goods for households. Still, Americans began to regain their sense of hope for the future. After the war ended, their hopes were realized as living standards rose and economic prosperity spread across the country.

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4. a series of programs that were enacted between 1933 and 1938 in the United states as a response to the Great Depression

[25] The Great Depression lives on through famous literature like John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*,<sup>5</sup> published in 1939. But the Great Depression's legacy may best be seen in the Social Security Act, which was passed by Congress in 1935. Since then the government has provided Americans with pensions<sup>6</sup> for the retired, as well as assistance to the unemployed and those with disabilities.

*"An Overview of the Great Depression" by Jessica McBirney. Copyright © 2017 by CommonLit, Inc. This text is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0*

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5. a novel about the hardships of an American farm family in the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression  
6. a regular payment made during a person's retirement from an investment fund to which that person or their employer has contributed during their working life

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following identifies the central idea of the text?
  - A. The Great Depression was a very difficult time for America, and the government took action to help the economy recover.
  - B. The Great Depression could have easily been avoided if Americans had been more informed on how the stock market and banks operated.
  - C. The Great Depression could not have been prevented, as the previous decades had experienced nothing but growth.
  - D. The Great Depression was a horrible economic time for America, but the government's violation of citizens' rights while helping the economy recover was much worse.
  
2. PART B: Which section from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Because of this, the prices of stocks kept getting higher and higher. By 1929, many prices were much higher than the actual values of companies." (Paragraph 4)
  - B. "In 1932, near the worst of the Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected. He immediately started working to fix the problems. The set of policies and government programs he instituted are known as the New Deal." (Paragraph 15)
  - C. "Music portrayed a more complex, and for many people more relatable, view of society during the Great Depression. Some songs recalled the better days of the 1920s when the country was happy." (Paragraph 22)
  - D. "Even though the worst of the Great Depression came in 1933, its negative effects and high unemployment continued throughout the 1930s." (Paragraph 23)
  
3. How does the section regarding entertainment in America contribute to the development of ideas in the text?
  - A. It shows how hard the Great Depression was on all businesses.
  - B. It emphasizes how the Great Depression affected all aspects of life.
  - C. It proves Americans were unable to afford even basic necessities.
  - D. It shows how the entertainment industry used the Great Depression to their advantage.
  
4. How did President Roosevelt influence the recovery from the Great Depression?
  - A. He pumped money into the economy to inflate it.
  - B. He encouraged women to join the workforce.
  - C. He allowed the economy to recover on its own.
  - D. He created programs that helped citizens find work.

5. How does the description of the government's intervention in the Great Depression contribute to the development of ideas in the text?

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## Discussion Questions

**Directions:** *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Do you think that President Roosevelt's policies were the right choices to help America? What else should he have done, or not done, to help America? Explain your opinion.
2. In the context of the text, how has America changed over time? Cite evidence from this text, your own experience, and other literature, art, or history in your answer.
3. In the context of the text, does money buy happiness? To what extent do you believe America was a completely unhappy place during the Great Depression?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Herd Behavior

By CommonLit Staff  
2014

*"Herd behavior" is a term used to describe the tendency of individuals to think and act as a group. As you read, take notes on the causes of herd behavior.*

## Background

- [1] The term "herd behavior" comes from the behavior of animals in herds, particularly when they are in a dangerous situation such as escaping a predator. All of the animals band closely together in a group and, in panic mode, move together as a unit. It is very unusual for a member of the herd to stray from the movement of the unit.



*"Herd of Goats" by Unknown is in the public domain.*

The term also applies to human behavior, and it usually describes large numbers of people acting the same way at the same time. It often has a connotation<sup>1</sup> of irrationality, as people's actions are driven by emotion rather than by thinking through a situation. Human herd behavior can be observed at large-scale demonstrations, riots, strikes, religious gatherings, sports events, and outbreaks of mob violence. When herd behavior sets in, an individual person's judgment and opinion-forming process shut down as he or she automatically follows the group's movement and behavior.

## Examples of Herd Behavior

Herd behavior in humans is frequently observed at times of danger and panic; for example, a fire in a building often causes herd behavior, with people often suspending their individual reasoning and fleeing together in a pack. People in a crisis that requires escape will attempt to move faster than normal, copy the actions of others, interact physically with each other, and ignore alternative strategies in favor of following the mass escape trend.

Another commonly cited example of human herd behavior is the phenomenon of stock market bubbles. Large stock market trends often begin and end with a mass frenzy of buying (bubbles) or selling (crashes). Many observers see these stock market trends as examples of herding behavior because individuals are driven by emotion rather than reason to "join the crowd"; greed drives mass buying frenzies, and fear drives crashes.

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1. **Connotation (noun):** an idea or quality that a word expresses in addition to its meaning

## Behavior in Crowds

- [5] A more obvious example of human herd behavior occurs in dense public crowds or mobs. Crowds that gather because of a grievance or protest can involve herding behavior that becomes violent. Psychologists posit that a “group mind” can overtake a mob and embolden people to act in ways they would not individually, increasing the likelihood that situations become violent.

Sporting events can also create herd behavior on a violent scale. The football hooliganism prevalent in Europe in the 1980s is a well-known example of sports-related herding behavior and violence. Overzealous fans of football teams often engaged in unruly or destructive behavior in the name of supporting their team and intimidating the rival team, to the extent that people involved could be badly injured or even killed.

Some historians believe that Adolf Hitler purposefully took advantage of herd behavior psychology by planting a significant number of undercover German officers in the crowds at his speeches. These officers would enthusiastically cheer for Hitler, and the rest of the crowd followed suit, making it seem as if the entire crowd supported Hitler. These speeches would then be broadcast to a larger public audience, magnifying the effect.

## Everyday Decision-Making

Herd behavior does not always have such harmful effects; it can be influential in people’s everyday, simple decisions. For example, suppose that a family is walking down the street looking for a restaurant to have dinner. If they pass a restaurant that is empty and one that is relatively crowded with patrons, they are far more likely to choose the crowded one, on the assumption that it’s better because there are more people there. Herding can be subtle in this way; it simply involves people’s tendency to follow a crowd rather than carve out an individual path in many situations.

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## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which of the following best summarizes the central idea of the text?
  - A. Even when acting alone, humans are not as advanced as we would like to think.
  - B. Herd behavior suggests that there are limits to human beings' free will.
  - C. The actions of a large group can greatly influence an individual's decisions.
  - D. Crowds always become violent and chaotic when individuals begin to panic.
  
2. PART B: Which of the following quotes best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "All of the animals band closely together in a group and, in panic mode, move together as a unit" (Paragraph 1)
  - B. "When herd behavior sets in, an individual person's judgment and opinion-forming process shut down" (Paragraph 2)
  - C. "Herd behavior in humans is frequently observed at times of danger and panic; for example, a fire in a building" (Paragraph 3)
  - D. "suppose that a family is walking down the street looking for a restaurant to have dinner" (Paragraph 8)
  
3. Which statement best describes the relationship between the stock market and herd behavior?
  - A. Stock market employees work in a constant state of anxiety, much like herding animals.
  - B. Herd behavior contributes to stock market surges and crashes because it compels stockbrokers to act on emotion rather than reason.
  - C. Both herd behavior and the stock market are motivated mainly by greed, which prevents people from using logic and reason.
  - D. Stock market bubbles and crashes are sometimes caused by herd behavior but are most often caused by fear.
  
4. Why does the author likely include the final section titled "Everyday Decision-Making" in the article?
  - A. to show how not every case of herd behavior is necessarily negative or violent
  - B. to show that herd behavior also occurs in smaller groups
  - C. to demonstrate how herd behavior allows individuals to avoid risks
  - D. to acknowledge that herd behavior is a problem that everyone faces

5. How does paragraph 7 contribute to the development of ideas in the article?

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