

**Title of Lesson: *The Effect of the Great Depression on Children***  
(Suggested grade level: 4, 6, 11)

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**Background Information:**

- Background information on the Great Depression:
  - <http://www.alabamamoments.state.al.us/sec48det.html>
  - <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/teacher/dep/dep.html>
- Background information concerning the use of *PowerPoint* and [Photo Story](#) may be found on the internet.

**Overview of lesson:**

After the students have studied the problems that Americans faced during the Great Depression, the teacher will lead the students in a discussion about how the Great Depression affected children. Students will view various letters from different people requesting aid from the state to help provide for their children.

**Content Standards:**

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)  
Fourth Grade: Content Standard 12, p. 33  
Sixth Grade: Content Standard 7, p.44  
Eleventh Grade: Content Standard 6, p. 77

[Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts](#) (Bulletin 1999, No. 17)  
Fourth Grade: Content Standard 1, p. 37  
Sixth Grade: Content Standard 21, p. 55  
Eleventh Grade: Content Standard 11, p. 83

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

Standards in History for Grades K-4 (p. 30)

Topic 2, Standard 3D – The student understands the interactions among all these groups throughout the history of his or her own state.

Standards in Historical Thinking for Grades K-4, (p.16)

Standard 5 – Historical Issues – Analysis and Decision-Making

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 117)

Era 8, Standard 1B – The student understands how American life changed during the 1930s.

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Early Grades, Standard 2 – Time, Continuity and Change, p. 70

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

### Primary Learning Objective(s):

- Students will analyze photographs taken during the Great Depression, thereby gaining insight into the condition of families and children.
- Students will analyze two letters from two mothers requesting assistance from the state.
- Students will discuss possible reasons that schools might be closed today.
- Students will discuss possible reasons families might request assistance from the state or other entities today.

**Time allotted:** 30-40 minutes

### Materials and Equipment:

- PowerPoint Presentation-[\*How the Great Depression Affected Children\*](#)
- Copies of letters and photographs to share with students
  - Download the pictures found at the following Web sites to be used in Step 2:
    - [Two African American girls washing laundry.](#)
    - [The Langley Family](#)
    - [Children's department in the Alabama City Branch Library of the Gadsden Public Library](#)
    - [Sharecropper's wife and child in Walker County, Alabama](#)
    - [Farm house in Coffee County with quilts sunning on the porch](#)
    - [Waiting in a project clinic for examinations and treatments by a doctor and nurse in Gee's Bend, Alabama.](#)
  - Download the letters to be used in Step 5 from the Alabama Department of Archives and History:
    - [Letter from Mrs. Deller Williams in Brookwood, Alabama, to Governor Benjamin Miller](#)
    - [Letters between Rachel Wheeler in Selma, Alabama, and Governor Benjamin Miller](#)
- Letter Analysis Worksheet for Extension
- Venn Diagram
- Rubric and assignment sheet for photo essay (attached)

### Technological Resources:

- Interactive Board or LCD projector
- Computer
- Internet access
- PowerPoint (v. '97-2003) – If you have a newer version, [a viewer](#) (free) may be downloaded from the internet.

### Background/Preparation:

The teacher will lead the students in a discussion reviewing the events leading up to the Great Depression and the effects of the Great Depression on Americans. Up to this point the study has been focused on workers, farmers, and families. The teacher will explain that this lesson will deal with the effect the Great Depression had on children.

### Procedures/Activities:

- **Engagement/Motivation Activity:** The teacher will say, “In 1933 at the height of the Great Depression, the population of the United States was 92,950,000 and the labor force was 51,840,000. Almost twenty-five percent of the labor force was unemployed. How do you think this high rate of unemployment

would affect children?” (“How the Great Depression Affected Children” sheet (attached) can be used at the end of Engagement or used as a summary at the end of Step 7.)

<b>Step 1</b>	Show the students the attached <i>PowerPoint</i> , <a href="#">How the Great Depression Affected Children</a> showing pictures of children and their families during the Great Depression. Using the first picture, model how to analyze a picture. Show the remainder of the <i>PowerPoint</i> , and have the students answer the questions accompanying each picture. Remind students that 75% of the labor force was employed and not every family was destitute.
<b>Step 2</b>	Prepare the classroom for a <a href="#">Gallery Walk</a> . Divide the class into six groups. Display the six downloaded pictures around the classroom, and give each group one minute to view a picture and write down comments about it. After the minute is up, each group will move on to the next picture. Once each group has had a chance to study each picture, have the students share their observations.
<b>Step 3</b>	Have the students compile a list of things that they think some children of the Great Depression might have had to do without.
<b>Step 4</b>	Have the students brainstorm ideas of how families could have met their needs. The following ideas should result from their brainstorming: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homemade clothes</li> <li>• Homegrown food</li> <li>• Bartering</li> <li>• Moving to seek a job</li> <li>• Seeking government help</li> </ul>
<b>Step 5</b>	Explain that some of the families wrote to the governor of Alabama requesting that he help them in their time of need. Explain that they are going to examine two of these letters. The teacher will then share with the students the letters from <a href="#">Deller Williams</a> and <a href="#">Rachael Wheeler</a> . After the students read the letters, lead them in a discussion of the problems found in each letter.
<b>Step 6</b>	Have students work with a partner to complete the attached Venn Diagram comparing the letters of Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Wheeler.
<b>Step 7</b>	Ask the students, “What was the greatest concern that these women expressed in their letters to Governor Miller?” Lead students to understand that the welfare of their children was their utmost concern.

**Assessment Strategies:**

- Evaluate the Venn Diagram for accuracy.
- Have students create a photo essay showing pictures of the condition of children during the Great Depression. (Rubric and assignment sheet attached)

**Extension:**

Explain to the students that not only did people appeal to the state for help, but they also appealed to people in Washington, D. C. This can be demonstrated by sharing the book [“Dear Mrs. Roosevelt”](#) with the students. Explain to the students that Mrs. Roosevelt was the wife of the President of the United States. Select one of the letters and read it with the students. Model critical thinking by discussing the chosen letter with the children and modeling the thinking process behind the Letter Analysis Worksheet. Each student will be given a different letter to read and analyze using the worksheet. [Letter 1](#): [Letter 2](#): [Letter 3](#): [Letter 4](#): [Letter 5](#): [Letter 6](#): [Letter 7](#)

**Remediation:**

Give students a copy of the *Power Point*, [How the Great Depression Affected Children](#) for review and study.

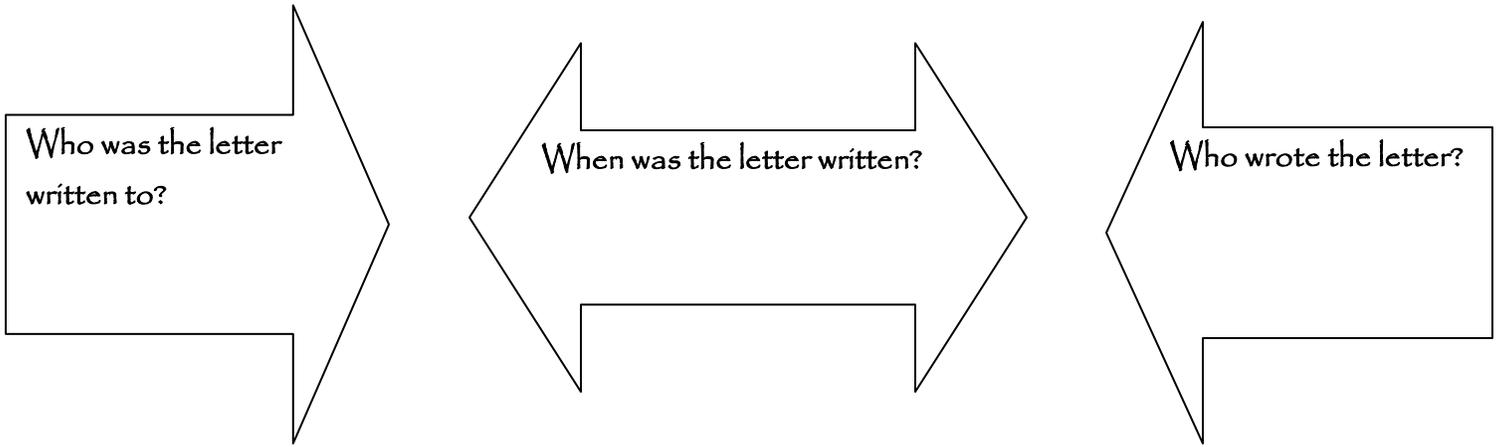
**Accommodation:**

If the student is visually or hearing impaired preferential seating will be made.

**Modification:**

Students can be placed in cooperative learning groups or work with a peer helper. In addition, the teacher may use different instructional strategies based on the learning styles of students.

# LETTER ANALYSIS



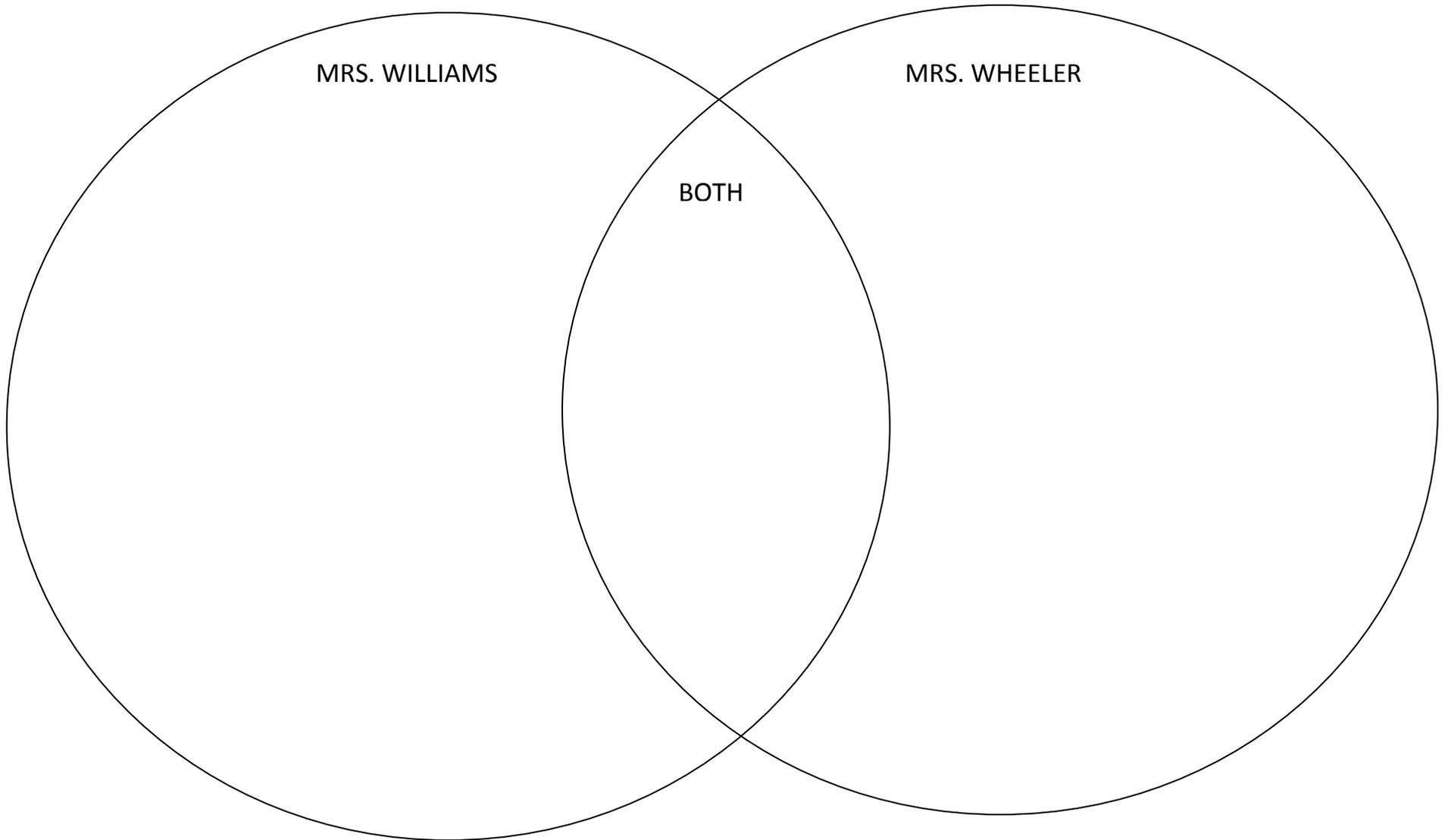
What mode of writing is the author using?  
Descriptive, expository, narrative, or persuasive?

What clues lead you to this conclusion?

What is main idea of the letter?

This letter makes us feel.....

COMPARE AND CONTRAST THE LETTERS OF MRS. WILLIAMS AND MRS. WHEELER  
AND WHAT THEY HAVE ASKED FROM THE GOVERNOR.



## “Children of the Great Depression” Photo Essay

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:**

1. Develop a creative title which describes the condition of children in the Great Depression.
2. Create a photo essay using a minimum of six photos which will illustrate those conditions.
3. Select pictures from the internet or illustrations from magazines.
4. Present your essay on a poster or use *Photo Story* or *PowerPoint*.
5. Write a paragraph stating the reason why you chose this title.

**Rubric:**

Categories	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
<b>Number of Photos</b>	Photo essay contains six or more photos to illustrate the quote.	Photo essay contains five photos to illustrate the quote.	Photo essay contains four photos to illustrate the quote.	Photo essay contains fewer than four photos to illustrate the quote.	
<b>Title</b>	The title is featured prominently on the essay and clearly depicts the conditions of children.	The title is featured prominently on the essay but does not clearly depict the conditions of children.	The title is not featured prominently on the essay or does not clearly depict the conditions of children.	The title is not featured prominently on the essay and does not clearly depict the conditions of children.	
<b>Appropriateness of the Photos</b>	All of the photos illustrate the assigned topic and provide illustration of the topic.	Most of the photos illustrate the assigned topic and provide illustration of the topic.	Few of the photos illustrate the assigned topic and provide illustration of the topic.	The photos shown have little or no relation to the assigned topic.	
<b>Creativity</b>	The photo essay provides a unique and creative comment on the assigned topic.	The photo essay provides a somewhat creative comment on the assigned topic.	The photos selected poorly illustrate the assigned topic.	The photos selected fail to illustrate the assigned topic.	
<b>Paragraph</b>	The paragraph clearly states the reasons why the title was chosen.	The paragraph states the reasons why the title was chosen.	The reason for selecting the title is not obvious in the paragraph.	No reason is given for the selection of the title.	

**Total Score** \_\_\_\_\_

## How the Depression Affected Children

What was it like growing up during the Great Depression? For many people, life was a daily struggle. At the peak of the Depression, 25% of the nation's workers -- one out of four -- were unemployed. No job meant no money to pay the mortgage or buy food and clothes for the family.



Times were hard whether you lived in a city or on a farm, whether you were an adult or a child.

Families unable to pay the mortgage lost their homes and farms.

As a result, about 250,000 young people were homeless in the early years of the Depression. Many became nomads, traveling the highways and railways.

## How the Depression Affected Children



Approximately 20% of America's children were hungry and without proper clothing.

In some coal mining regions, the percentage of malnourished children reached as high as 90%.

Children went without shoes and warm clothes for the winter.

## How the Depression Affected Children

Thousands of schools had to close down because they lacked the money to stay open.

About 3 million children between 7 and 17 had to leave school.

Approximately 40% of young people from age 16 to 24 were neither in school nor working.

