

Social Studies Content Themes for Middle/High School
From
“The Making of Milwaukee Curriculum”

The Great Depression:

Teaching about The Great Depression in Milwaukee

The following activities are from “The Making of Milwaukee” on-line curriculum.

- **Down and Out In Milwaukee (Photo Analysis and Discussion)**
- **Creating Our Own Milwaukee Textbook**
- **Singing the Blues in Milwaukee (Writing Songs)**
- **Days of Our Lives (Writing Diary Entries)**
- **A New Deal for Milwaukee (Simulation)**
- **Interviews with Milwaukeeans who Lived War and Peace**
- **Who Am I? (Trivia Activity)**
- **What Am I? (Trivia Activity)**
- **Which Event Am I? (Timeline Activity)**
- **Ranking Time (Timeline Activity)**

DOWN AND OUT IN MILWAUKEE

*This activity requires access to the accompanying book, *The Making of Milwaukee* by John Gurda, or the accompanying website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com*

1. Show students the “Hooverville” photograph in Gurda’s book chapter, *Hard Times and Wartime*.

*Or, go to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section of *The Making of Milwaukee* website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com, and choose “Lesson Activity Images” from the pull down menu to find the photo of “Hooverville”.*

2. Ask students to answer the following questions about the photograph. If time permits, the teacher could ask students to act out a scenario as if they were people in the photograph and then experiencing this environment use the following questions:
 - What is going on in this photograph?
 - Describe the objects you see in the photograph.
 - Explain what any of these objects might be used for and why they are in this photograph.
 - Where do you think this photograph was taken?
 - What type of people might be found in this environment?
 - What other types of living conditions could be found in the same location?
 - Do you think people live like this today in the United States? Explain.

3. Explain to students that this photograph was taken during the Great Depression in Milwaukee's Lincoln Park where massive employment and homelessness caused people to live in squalid conditions. Small communities like this one showed up across the nation. They were often called "Hooverilles" to criticize the way President Herbert Hoover was handling the Depression. This particular one in Milwaukee shows one example of how people in the community struggled to survive during the Depression. At the same time, it is important to remind students that most other Milwaukeeans were not necessarily living in these conditions during the Depression. In fact, some Milwaukeeans were still living in mansions along the lake and not having great economic difficulty during this period of time.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

- This photograph could lead to a great opportunity to discuss poverty and homelessness in Milwaukee today. The teacher could discuss how people who are homeless or in poverty struggle in our city and compare this with the lifestyles of other people who live in the community who do not face these challenges. The teacher might even find photographs of poverty in Milwaukee, the United States, or the world today or use statistics from the following source <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/poverty.html>. The teacher could then ask students to make comparisons between this period of time in history and the present. The teacher could also consider discussing ways this problem was addressed during this period of time in Milwaukee's history and ways we can address this problem today.

CREATING OUR OWN MILWAUKEE TEXTBOOK

1. Imagine that your students have been asked by a local publishing company to write a textbook chapter or chapters explaining the history of Milwaukee from 1914 – 1945, which includes Milwaukee during World War I, the Roaring 20's, the Great Depression, and World War II (You may select any or all of these topics based on what video clips you show in this unit. You may also assign different topics to different groups). Students will use information from the video or other sources to create a textbook for other students on these topics. However, just as the people who make textbooks have limited space to describe events, students will only get to create a limited number of pages. (Use your own discretion based on the topic(s) for each chapter. For example, 3 might be a good limit).
2. Divide the students into groups (or you may assign students to do this individually) and ask them to discuss the following questions first:
 - Which individuals, groups, or events should be included in the textbook chapter(s)?
 - Why should these individuals, groups, or events be included?

- Which individuals, groups, or events should receive the most attention and focus?
 - Why should these individuals, groups, or events receive the most focus?
 - What makes some information more important than other information?
3. If students cannot come to some agreement on the general content of the textbook chapter(s), this might be a good time for a class discussion on these same questions.
 4. After students have discussed these questions have them list specific individuals, events, groups, and information related to these topics that they will include in their textbook page(s). They should also discuss where and how they will place any text, photographs, captions, graphs, quotes from primary sources, or other elements of a textbook page. If students are working in groups, they might want to assign roles like text writer, graphic designer, editor, and an individual to select photographs (see archives).

Students can find images for their textbook pages by going to the “Image Library” of the “In the Classroom” section of The Making of Milwaukee website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com. Use the “search” tool to locate images and photographs under the various pull down categories.

5. After students have completed their pages, have each group or individual present their textbook pages.
6. Then, return to the discussion questions listed above and have individuals or groups compare how their newly created textbook pages answered those questions.
7. Finally, this is a great opportunity to discuss how textbooks contain limited and missing perspectives from the past and the way some perspectives get attention over others. The activity should end with a discussion about the perspectives missing from the textbook pages. In fact, the teacher might have each group (or student if they are working on this individually) include a note with their textbook pages describing the missing perspectives and defending why these perspectives are missing.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

The teacher could ask students to look at their own textbooks that they use for the class and discuss the same issues about representation and which individuals, groups, and events get the most attention in relationship to the people, events, and ideas that are left out of the textbook.

SINGING THE BLUES IN MILWAUKEE

During times of war and peace a number of Milwaukeeans faced discrimination, insult, and even violence. Groups and individuals were hated and unaccepted in Milwaukee for a variety of reasons. Historically, one outlet for dealing with oppression has been music. During the early and into the mid-1900's musical forms like the blues became increasingly widespread and well known across the United States.

1. Have students create a blues song that addresses the discrimination and cruelty that different groups in Milwaukee faced during this period of time (e.g. African Americans, Hispanics, German Americans, Catholics, Jewish Americans, etc.). As students watch any of the video chapters from this unit they should pay close attention to groups who experienced discrimination and the ways they were victimized. Students should also consider the ways individuals in these groups may have been affected by this intolerance. The following questions can serve to help guide their thoughts about discrimination against various groups in Milwaukee during this time.
 - Why did this particular group face discrimination?
 - In what ways did this group, as a whole, face discrimination?
 - How were individuals in this group possibly affected by discrimination in different ways?
 - How could or did this group try to fight against discrimination?
 - What lasting impact do you think this discrimination has on the city of Milwaukee today?
2. After students answer or discuss these questions, they can begin to think about writing their blues song.
 - a. If the teacher has a fairly strong understanding of music, the following websites can assist him or her with helping students write a truly unique blues song:

<http://www.wpsweb.com/performingarts/BrownBagJazz/blues.htm>
<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/essays12bar.html>
 - b. If the teacher is new to the blues, the following website offers clips of blues songs that students could possibly use to create their own songs:

<http://www.pbs.org/theblues/classroom/cd.html>
 - c. If neither of the above options works well, simply have students choose one of their favorite sad, slow or moving songs (it does not have to be a blues song) and use the rhythm or melody to write their own song lyrics.

- d. A final option might be to work with the school's music teacher to help students create these songs.
3. After students have written their songs, ask them to perform them for the rest of the class or simply have them discuss the lyrics with the rest of the class. Focus discussion on the multiple ways people faced discrimination during this period of time and the multiple ways people dealt with intolerance.
4. The teacher might want to end the discussion by asking students if they think music is as an effective way to deal with discrimination. Students can also consider how any music today tries to address discrimination.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

- If the school or community has a variety show or talent competition, the teacher might want to encourage students to use their songs and performances as an entry in this activity.

DAYS OF OUR LIVES

Between 1914 and 1945 Milwaukeeans witnessed a wide range of events, experiences and emotions as war, peace, economic depression and war once again shaped the city and its people. Consider the following true story about a man named Les Greget adapted from the accompanying book, *The Making of Milwaukee*, at the beginning of the chapter entitled, *Hard Times and Wartime*. (The teacher may want to read or print this adapted story for the class before doing this activity or summarize the story for students).

Les Greget came to Milwaukee in 1922. He was good at working with his hands and with machinery. He was also looking for opportunities that he could not find in his hometown of Mayville, Wisconsin. He was able to get a good job at Falk Company in Milwaukee and began working on machines. After four years of hard work and studying, he advanced to working at a job where he drilled holes in gears that could be used on ships. "I thought I had it made," he recalled. Les and his wife purchased a \$12,500 brick home on Milwaukee's Northwest Side and proceeded to live in a comfortable lifestyle during the 1920's.

The Great Depression rudely interrupted this good life for them. As the company did poorly, Les Greget lost his job, his savings, and finally his home. He and his wife were eventually forced to move into the top of a flat for \$45 a month. As the bad times got even worse, they asked their landlord to lower the rent to just \$20.

Then came World War II. Les Greget went back to his job even before the United States entered the war, turning out equipment for the Navy which was trying to build more ships. The Falk Company was swamped with orders for the rest of the war. As the fighting intensified, Les found himself working ten hours a day, seven days a week, for four-and-a-half years, more than 1600 consecutive days without a single break!

1. Have students create scenarios like this one between 1914 to 1945 and write a series of diary or journal entries from the perspective of a Milwaukeean describing the changes this person has experienced over the years. To create their diary or journal entries, students should choose a gender, race / ethnicity, age, social class, job or role, and a few years between 1914 and 1945 that show changes in the person's life. (As an alternative, the teacher may also want to assign certain roles from these categories to students in order to have a wide range of experiences represented in the class. For example, a student could be assigned to be a white working class teenage female going to high school in 1927, then getting married, having a family struggling to survive the Depression in 1935, and then working in a war factory by 1943). Students can use any of the video clips from this unit to consider how individuals from different groups may have been affected by the rapid changes taking place during this period of time. It is up to the teacher's discretion to decide how many diary or journal entries each student should write. The following questions can assist students with thinking about what to write in their diary or journal entries:
 - What might happen during a typical day in the life of this person?
 - What experiences might this person have that would be similar to the experiences of other Milwaukeean during this period of time?
 - What experiences might this person have that would be different from the experiences of other Milwaukeean during this period of time?
 - How might this person's race, class, gender, age, or work affect this person's experiences and the way he or she responded to those experiences during this period of time?
 - What might be the benefits and drawbacks to this individual for living in Milwaukee during this period of time?
 - How might this person's life impact the lives of other people during this time?
 - How did this person somehow affect the way Milwaukee is today?
2. After the students write their diary or journal entries the teacher could select students who chose differing scenarios and have them share their diary entries with the rest of the class. Or, the teacher might want to have students get into groups of 3 or 4 to share their diary entries with each other and report what they have learned to the rest of the class.
3. The following questions might serve as a good way to wrap up this activity:
 - What were the most significant factors that affected the lives of individual Milwaukeean during this time?
 - What were the various ways that Milwaukeean responded to the challenges that they faced during this period of time?
 - How did people's race, class, gender, age, and work experiences affect the experiences that individuals had in Milwaukee during this period of time?

- How were the experiences of Milwaukeeans similar and different during this period of time?
- What impact did the experiences of these individuals as a whole have on the way Milwaukee is today?

A NEW DEAL FOR MILWAUKEE

During the Great Depression, the city of Milwaukee received millions of dollars from the federal government through Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs to employ people and make multiple improvements to the city. As the video and the accompanying book *The Making of Milwaukee* suggest, the New Deal left a powerful imprint on Milwaukee's history. (Examples include Whitnall Park, Parklawn (a low income housing project), and a large doll collection and exhibits for the Public Museum). In this simulation, students will be in charge of spending federal money to improve the city of Milwaukee for as many people as possible. Each group (or individual) will create a plan that explains the project(s) they will include to improve the city and they must justify how they will spend the money they receive. Each group (or individual) will only receive a limited amount of money. The following rules will guide the simulation:

1. Every group (individual) will receive the same amount of money - \$1,000,000.
2. The money must benefit as many people as possible.
3. Students must be able to justify why they spent the money in a particular way and also estimate the number of people who will be employed and benefit from each project.
4. Students can select from the following list of possible items to spend: (Please tell students that these are in no way based on actual Depression-era or present day dollar figures):
 - A small park (one third of square mile)– \$250,000
 - A medium sized park (two-thirds of a square mile)- \$500,000
 - A large park (one square mile) – \$ 750,000
 - 1 Park shelter - \$25,000
 - 1 Stone Bridge for a park - \$50,000
 - 1 Waterfall for a park - \$75,000
 - 1 Park statue - \$25,000
 - A small arts and crafts project (e.g. doll collection) - \$25,000
 - A medium size arts and crafts project (e.g. toy project) - \$50,000
 - A large size art project (e.g. orchestra) – \$100,000
 - A small public works (e.g. a recreation center) building - \$250,000
 - A medium size public works (e.g. a school) building - \$500,000
 - A large public works (e.g. water plant) building - \$750,000
 - A small museum exhibit - \$10,000
 - A medium size museum exhibit - \$25,000

- A large public museum exhibit - \$50,000
 - A public greenhouse for a botanical garden - \$100,000
 - A small housing project (50 units) - \$250,000
 - A medium size housing project (100 units) - \$500,000
 - A large housing project (150 units) - \$750,000
 - A public swimming pool - \$50,000
 - A public golf course - \$150,000
5. Student should keep track of the money they spend and make sure it does not exceed \$1,000,000.
 6. These projects are just a start. The students may create their own projects and should then consult with the teacher on what the cost of the project should be.
 7. Students should present their plan to the rest of the class and explain their justification for the items they included in their plan to improve Milwaukee. The following discussion questions might serve as an effective way to wrap up the activity:
 - Was it better to improve the city with smaller, medium size or large projects? Why?
 - What were / would have been the advantages and disadvantages of including small projects in your plan?
 - What were / would have been the advantages and disadvantages of including medium size projects in your plan?
 - What were / would have been the advantages and disadvantages of including large projects in your plan?
 - How does your plan compare to the actual projects that were completed in Milwaukee as a result of the New Deal? (use information from the video for discussion here)
 - What does Milwaukee need most for improvement today? Why?

Follow-up Learning Activity:

- The teacher might want to have students research the actual cost of the projects during the New Deal completed in Milwaukee. Students could also compare their ideas with the money being currently spent on any similar projects by the city of Milwaukee or Milwaukee County today. Budget information for the city of Milwaukee can be accessed on the city website <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us> and budget information for Milwaukee County can be found on the county's website <http://www.co.milwaukee.wi.us>

INTERVIEWS WITH MILWAUKEEANS WHO LIVED DURING WAR AND PEACE

1. Have students find people who grew up in Milwaukee during this time period (1914 – 1945) and do an interview with them about their experiences of growing up in Milwaukee. Students might want to ask questions specifically related to topics discussed in the video such as the Roaring 20's, Great Depression, World War I, or World War II. Although it is increasingly difficult to find people who lived in Milwaukee during this time nursing homes, VFW Posts and organizations, and even relatives or neighbors might be a place for students to begin searching.
2. Have students use their interviews to write up brief biographies of these people and share them with the rest of the class. (Note: Students should get permission from the people they interview before sharing their biographies with the rest of the class)
3. After listening to these stories, have a class discussion on topics like: 1) why people made such sacrifices for their city and country during this period of time 2) the similarities and differences between the challenges that different generations in Milwaukee and America have faced over time 3) how the lives of “ordinary” Americans who lived through time periods like this sometimes receive little attention in history books and 4) the need to record and remember the stories of all people, not just famous ones, who lived through our city's past.

Follow-up Learning Activity:

- Invite people who students interview to class and have them share their stories in person in addition to having students read the biographies. Invite other classes, the whole school, community members, and/or parents to the event to honor those who made sacrifices for their country during this time in history.

WHO AM I?

1. In the following activity students will be given 3 clues about a person who was famous during this time period (1914 – 1945) in Milwaukee's history. The teacher should read the first clue to students and ask them to guess who the person is. If no students guess correctly, the teacher should then read the second clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. Finally, if no students guess correctly, the teacher should read the third clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. If no student guesses correctly after the third clue, the teacher should read the answer. The first person to guess correctly wins. The teacher could assign point values for each clue given. For example, a correct guess after the first clue could be worth 25 points, a correct guess after the second clue could be worth 10 points, and a correct guess after the third clue could be worth 5 points.

An interactive version of this activity can also be found on-line by going to the homepage of The Making of Milwaukee website, www.themakingofmilwaukee.com. Choose the “In the Classroom” section and click on “Interactive Lessons.” Or, to go directly to this on-

line activity, click here now:

http://www.themakingofmilwaukee.com/classroom/who_am_i/index.cfm

On-line directions are also given.

CLUE #1 : I was a welcome distraction to Milwaukee's worries during World War II

CLUE #2 : My story inspired a widely read children's book in the U.S.

CLUE #3 : I laid a clutch of eggs on a piling next to the Wisconsin Avenue Bridge

ANSWER : Gertie the Duck

CLUE #1 : My grandfather was known to some as "Alexander the Great" in Milwaukee

CLUE #2 : I was placed in charge of the entire Allied Air Service during World War I.

CLUE #3 : Milwaukee's airport is currently named after me

ANSWER : Billy Mitchell

CLUE #1 : I issued a very strong warning against the Ku Klux Klan in Milwaukee during the 1920's

CLUE #2 : I was on the cover of Time magazine for being one of the nation's best public servants in 1936.

CLUE #3 : I served as Milwaukee's mayor during the Great Depression

ANSWER : Daniel Hoan

CLUE #1 : I ran the *Milwaukee Leader*, a socialist newspaper in Milwaukee

CLUE #2 : I was convicted for speaking out against the government when my paper ran anti-war editorials during World War I

CLUE #3 : Congress refused to offer me my seat when Milwaukee elected me to the House of Representatives in 1918

ANSWER : Victor Berger

CLUE #1 : I was an assistant city attorney, a stirring singer, and a gifted speaker

CLUE #2 : I defeated Daniel Hoan to become mayor in 1940

CLUE #3 : I quit my job to join the Navy during World War II and declared, “My life is not my own. It belongs to my country.”

ANSWER : Carl Zeidler

WHAT AM I?

1. In the following activity students will be given 3 clues about a place that became famous during this time period (1914 – 1945) in Milwaukee’s history. The teacher should read the first clue to students and ask them to guess what the place is. If no students guess correctly, the teacher should then read the second clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. Finally, if no students guess correctly, the teacher should read the third clue to students to see if someone guesses correctly. If no student guesses correctly after the third clue, the teacher should read the answer. The first person to guess correctly wins. The teacher could assign point values for each clue given. For example, a correct guess after the first clue could be worth 25 points, a correct guess after the second clue could be worth 10 points, and a correct guess after the third clue could be worth 5 points.

CLUE #1 : I was Milwaukee’s biggest defense contractor during World War II

CLUE #2 : I became part of a top secret project to build the first atomic bomb

CLUE #3 : Nearly 20,000 people, enough to fill a small city, worked in my place at the peak of World War II

ANSWER : The Allis Chalmers Company

CLUE #1 : I am a planned community built for working class families during the Depression

CLUE #2 : There are 2 other communities just like me in Ohio and Maryland

CLUE #3 : I was completed in 1938 to surround workers with nature

ANSWER : Greendale

CLUE #1 : I am currently located next to the downtown Milwaukee Public Library

CLUE #2 : I was initially the mansion of Alexander Mitchell

CLUE #3 : I used to house the Deustcher Club before it changed its name during World War I

ANSWER : The Wisconsin Club

CLUE #1 : I am located on Milwaukee's Northwest side, and I became the quintessential 1920's neighborhood

CLUE #2 : My orderly streetscapes reflected the influence of zoning – a 1920's innovation

CLUE #3 : The bungalow became the signature house in my neighborhood during the 1920's

ANSWER : Sherman Park

CLUE #1 : I am Milwaukee County's largest green space

CLUE #2 : A botanical garden was built inside me with funds from the New Deal

CLUE #3 : I am named after a person who created a master plan for Milwaukee County's Park System

ANSWER : Whitnall Park

WHICH EVENT AM I?

1. Have students choose one event from the timeline and write down 3 clues about this event. Then have each student read their clues to the class. The rest of the class should try to guess the event after each clue. The first person who guesses the event earns points. The teacher could assign point values for each clue given. For example, a correct guess after the first clue could be worth 25 points, a correct guess after the second clue could be worth 10 points, and a correct guess after the third clue could be worth 5 points.

RANKING TIME

1. The teacher should select 10 events in the timeline and ask students to rank them in order from the most significant to the least significant.
- 2.. The teacher should then lead a discussion on the events that students chose as the most and least significant.

