The Great Depression

End and Legacy

When did the Great Depression end?

The Great Depression didn't just end one day and everything was all better. The exact date when the Great Depression ended is much debated by historians and economists. Most people put the "start of the end" at the beginning of World War II in 1939.

What caused it to end?

Even more debated is what caused the Great Depression to end. Most historians point to World War II. When the war began, factories went back to full production building war supplies such as tanks, airplanes, ships, guns, and ammunition. Unemployment dropped as young men joined the army and people went to work in the factories. Other people give credit to the New Deal programs of the 1930s for ending the depression.

No doubt, there were a lot of factors that helped to get the U.S. economy going again. World War II, government regulations, a new banking system, and the end of the drought in the Midwest all contributed to the recovery of the economy.

Legacy

The Great Depression left a lasting legacy on the people and the government of the United States. Many people who lived through the era distrusted banks and no longer would buy goods using credit. They bought things with cash and stored emergency rations in their basement. Other people felt that the depression made them and the country stronger. It taught people about hard work and survival.

The New Deal

The many agencies and laws passed by the New Deal changed the country forever. The New Deal changed the way people thought about the role of the government. Perhaps the most important new law was the Social Security Act. This act (through a payroll tax) provided retirement for the elderly, assistance to the disabled, and unemployment insurance. It is still a major part of the government today.

Other New Deal programs that impact our lives today include banking reform (like FDIC insurance which keeps your money at the bank safe), stock market regulations (to keep companies from lying about their profits), farm programs, housing programs, and laws protecting and regulating unions.

Public Works
The works programs, such as the WPA, the PWA, and the CCC, did more than just provide jobs to the unemployed, they left a lasting mark on the country. The WPA (Works Progress Administration) alone built over 5,000 new schools, 1,000 libraries, 8,000 parks, over 650,000 miles of new roads, and built or repaired over 124,000 bridges. Many of these schools, parks, bridges, libraries, and roads are still used today. This infrastructure helped the U.S. economy for decades to come.

Interesting Facts About the End and Legacy of the Great Depression

- The CCC planted almost 3 billion trees throughout the country.
- The Fair Labor Standards Act gave us the forty-hour week, the minimum wage, and established regulations on child labor.
- The WPA also installed over 16,000 miles of new water lines.
- In 1934, the FDIC began insuring up to $2,500 in bank deposits. Today the FDIC insures up to $250,000 in deposits.

Activities

- Take a ten question [quiz](https://www.ducksters.com/history/us_1900s/end_of_the_great_depression.php) about this page.

Test Quiz

Questions on this quiz are based on information from [The Great Depression - End and Legacy](https://www.ducksters.com/history/us_1900s/end_of_the_great_depression.php).

1. What major war do many historians credit with ending the Great Depression?
   a. Civil War
   b. World War II
   c. Vietnam War
   d. Cold War
   e. World War I
2. According to the article, which of the following helped to end the Great Depression?
   a. New Deal programs
   b. New regulations
   c. New banking system
   d. End of the drought
   e. All of the above

3. What series of laws passed during the Great Depression changed the American government forever?
   a. Intolerable Acts
   b. Constitution
   c. Bill of Rights
   d. New Deal
   e. Civil Rights Acts

4. What law provided retirement for the elderly through a payroll tax?
   a. Agricultural Act
   b. Banking Act
   c. Social Security Act
   d. Labor Relations Act
   e. Soil Conservation Act

5. True or False: Some people felt that the Great Depression made the country stronger.
   a. TRUE
   b. FALSE

6. What did the Works Progress Administration build?
   a. Schools
   b. Roads
   c. Parks
   d. Libraries
   e. All of the above

7. Around how many trees did the CCC plant during the Great Depression?
   a. 100,000
   b. 1 million
   c. 5 million
   d. 100 million
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e. Over 3 billion

8. What type of insurance keeps your money in the bank safe?
a. FDIC
b. Automobile
c. Home
d. Life
e. WPA

9. True or False: Most people began to buy goods on credit again right after the Great Depression ended.
a. TRUE
b. FALSE

10. What law set the forty hour work week and a minimum wage?
a. Social Security Act
b. Bill of Rights
c. Fair Labor Standards Act
d. Banking Act
e. Soil Conservation Act