

CONTEXTUALIZATION—THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Preparation

- Download “Global Great Depression”

Purpose

In this final contextualization activity, you will use your contextualization skills to understand the historical context that led to a global economic depression. By investigating the context for the Great Depression, you will deepen your understanding of how both capitalism and globalization played a role in it. In addition, you'll begin to see how interconnected our world was in the early twentieth century and how this interconnection could be both positive and negative. You will also analyze how these events still impact the world today and the lessons that can be learned from studying the origins and context of this historical event.

Practices

Causation, writing

In this activity, you will be analyzing the causes and consequences of the Great Depression to better understand the historical context and processes that led to this global economic crisis. In addition, you will be writing a three-paragraph mini-essay to analyze this historical event and demonstrate your contextualization skills.

Process

In this activity, you will use the event cards to complete the Contextualization Tool. Then, you'll use the information from your completed tools and evidence from the article “Global Great Depression” to write a mini-essay that includes a contextualization paragraph and answers this prompt:

*What was it about the **economic and political** situation of the early twentieth century that allowed for the global disaster that was the Great Depression?*

First, follow along as your teacher reads the following excerpt from Louis Adamic's *My America*, published in 1938.

The Doorbell Rang: 1932

...At about a quarter to eight one cold morning in mid-January 1932, while we were at breakfast, the doorbell rang...I was confronted by two children: a girl, as we learned afterward, of ten and a boy of eight. Not very adequate for the season and weather, their clothing was patched but clean. They carried school books.

“Excuse me, Mister,” said the girl in a voice that sounded older than she looked, “but we have no eats in our house and my mother said I should take my brother before we go to school and ring a doorbell in some house”—she swallowed heavily and took a deep breath—“and ask you to give us something to eat.”

...

[Adamic invited the children inside and gave them some food. While they were eating, Adamic asked them a few questions about their situation.] “We used



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to live on the fourth floor upstairs and we had three rooms and a kitchen and bath, now we have only one room downstairs, in back.” “Why did you move downstairs?” ...

“My father ... he lost his job when the panic came. That was two years ago, I was eight and Jimmie was six. My father he tried to get work, but he couldn’t, the Depression was so bad. But he called it the panic.” ...

“Where is your father now?”

“We don’t know. He went away four months ago, right after Labor Day, and he never came back, so we had to move downstairs. The landlord didn’t want to throw us out, so he told my mother to move in downstairs.” ...

I went to the school [the children attended] and learned from the girl’s teacher that, while such cases were not yet numerous in that neighborhood, they were increasing. Some children rang doorbells, others brought slips of paper from their mothers, asking teachers to please “get the school” to provide shoes for them; they were unable to do so themselves. The school had no funds for such emergencies; so some of the teachers bought shoes for these pupils out of their own pockets.

Source: Adamic, Louis. *My America*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1938 (pp. 279–280).

Your teacher will either hand out or have you download the Contextualization—The Great Depression worksheet, which includes the Contextualization Tool. You should be a pro at completing the tool, so your teacher may have you complete it on your own. Start by writing the dates and location for the global Great Depression and then divide the event cards into broad and narrow context and place them on the funnel. Then, answer the remaining questions on the tool.

Finally, use your descriptions of broad and narrow context on the tool and information from the “Global Great Depression” article to individually write a three-paragraph mini-essay that answers the following prompt:

*What was it about the **economic and political** situation of the early twentieth century that allowed for the global disaster that was the Great Depression?*

- Paragraph 1 should be an introduction to the essay that includes the broad context and the thesis statement (either at the start or the end of the paragraph).
- Paragraph 2 should focus on the narrow context and include evidence that explains why the economic and political conditions of the early twentieth century led to a global depression.
- Paragraph 3 should be the conclusion with an analysis of how understanding context improves the ability to interpret the Great Depression.

Your teacher will collect your completed worksheet and mini-essay and use them to assess your understanding of this topic and your contextualization skills.

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Name: Date:

Contextualization Tool

Directions: Respond to each of the prompts below.

1. Write the date(s) and location(s) of the historical event being studied.

2. Take the event cards and divide them up into broad and narrow context.
3. Place them on the funnel in their appropriate location. Be prepared to explain your placement.
4. Write three to four sentences that describes the broad context.

5. Write three to four sentences that describes the narrow content.

- **Broad:** Does the context represent broader themes, trends, events, eras, or regions related to the historical development at hand? Does it represent a long-term (underlying) cause or contributing factor?
- **Narrow:** Does the context represent themes, trends, events, eras, or regions that are more closely tied in time/place to the historical development at hand? Does it help us see the short-term (immediate) causes or contributing factors?

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Name:

Date:

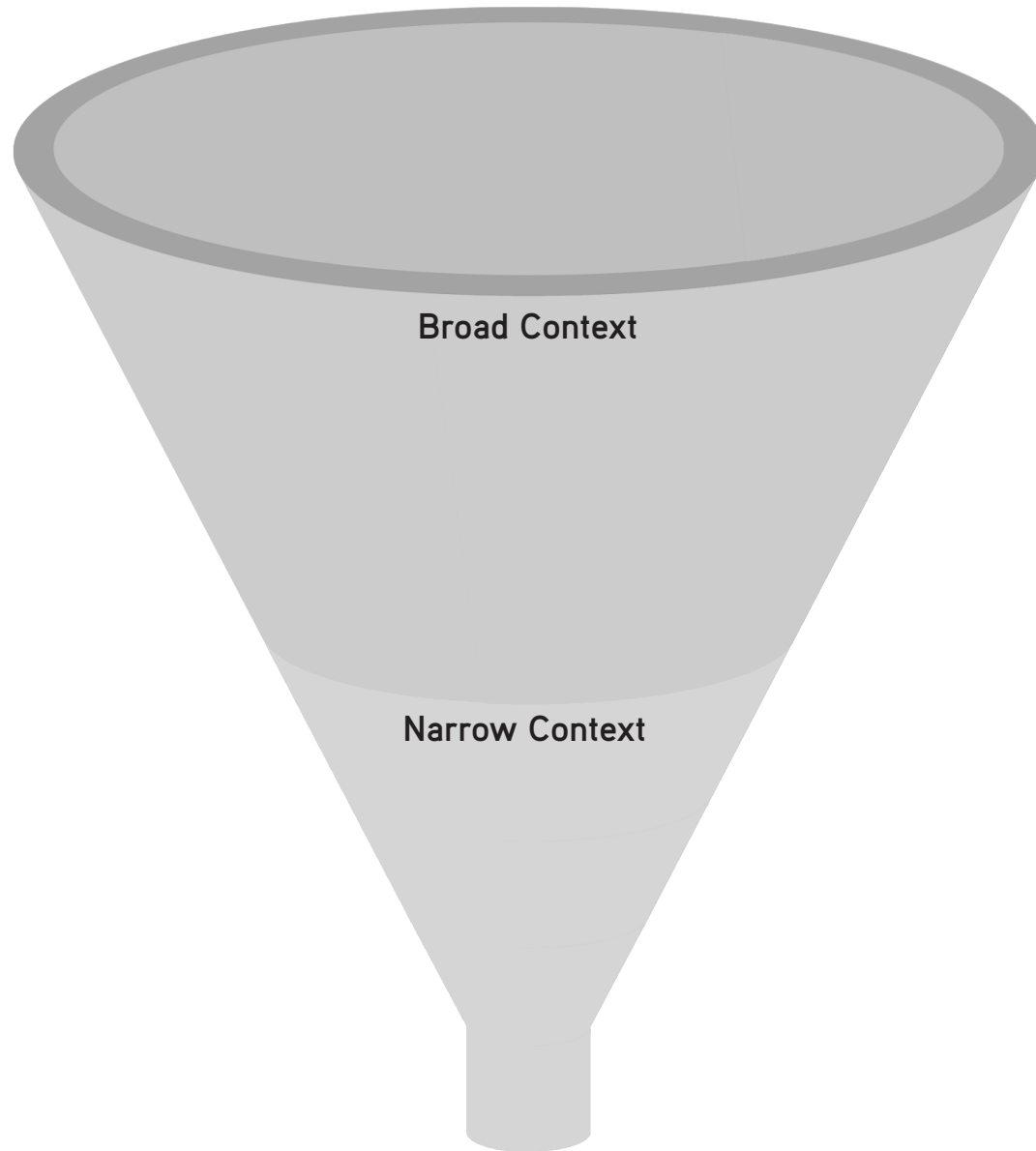
6. Write one to two sentences analyzing how the broad and narrow context help you better understand the historical event.

7. Use information from the Contextualization Tool and the article “Global Great Depression” to write a three-paragraph mini-essay that answers the following prompt: *What was it about the **economic and political** situation of the early twentieth century that allowed for the global disaster that was the Great Depression?*

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Name:

Date:



Historical Event/Development
