

In Common: Effective Writing for All Students Collection of All Student Work Samples, K-12

By The Vermont Writing Collaborative, with Student Achievement Partners and CCSSO

Ninth and Tenth Grade On-Demand Informative / Explanatory Writing Samples

Grades 9-12, Prompt for Informative / Explanatory Writing

Common Core Standard W.CCR.2

Great historical events often have deep effects upon the people who live through them. Depending on the person and the situation, those effects can be very different – or not.

The Great Depression of the 1930s, in the United States, was one of these events. Lasting for nearly ten years, the Great Depression closed thousands of banks, put millions of people out of work, and seared itself into the memory of those who lived through it.

The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, responded by creating new government programs to help Americans, known as the New Deal.

You are going to read four texts about the Great Depression: a memoir called *Digging In* by Robert Hastings, a poem “Debt” by Karen Hesse, a short text about the programs of the New Deal of President Roosevelt, and President Roosevelt’s second inaugural address to the nation in 1937. As you read and re-read these texts, think about what the texts show you about how the Great Depression seems to have affected the individual people who lived through it.

Finally, using these texts, you will write an essay, explaining your thinking.

For the essay, your Focusing Question is:

According to these texts, what effect did the Great Depression have on people who lived through it? Be sure to use evidence from the texts to support and develop your thinking.

Remember, a good informational essay:

- *Has a clear introduction*
- *States a focus/topic clearly, precisely, and thoughtfully*
- *Uses specific evidence from the text(s) to support and develop the topic and explains that evidence*
- *Concludes effectively*
- *Uses precise language*
- *Shows control over conventions*

You will have three class periods to complete this reading/thinking/writing task. The essay will have a single draft, and you may want to take some time to plan your writing before you begin work. When you have finished, be sure to proofread.

Informative / Explanatory Writing
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9-12

Teacher Directions

- The texts provide the information needed to address the prompt, and students should independently read the texts carefully before writing. Encourage students to refer back to the text while writing and to take notes, and to mark up the text as much as is helpful to them.
- Students should be given three sessions for the prompt. Allow approximately 45 minutes for each, but the prompt should not be strictly timed. Students should be given as much time as needed to plan, write, and proofread.
- The writing must be done without help, but students may have access to personal dictionaries, or any other resources to support spelling and mechanics that they are accustomed to using while writing.
 - Be sure students have paper to take notes or do whatever pre-planning they might choose to do.
 - If students are writing by hand, provide lined paper from your classroom for writing. If they are using a word processor, make sure they save their work so it can be accessed the next day.
- This will be first draft writing, but encourage students to proofread and correct any errors they find.

Digging In

By Robert J. Hastings

The closing of Old West Side Mine meant the end of anything resembling a steady job for the next eight years. From 1930 on, it was a day's work here and a day's work there, a coal order from the welfare office, a few days on WPA, a garden in the back yard, and a few chickens and eggs.

We weathered the storm because of Dad's willingness to take any job and Mom's ability to stretch every available dollar. It was not so much a matter of finding a job as of filling in with odd jobs wherever and whenever you could, and most of the "jobs" were those you made for yourself.

My diary shows that Dad sold iron cords door to door, "worked a day in the hay," bought a horse to break gardens, rented an extra lot for a garden on the shares, picked peaches, raised sweet potato slips, traded an occasional dozen of eggs at the grocery, hung wallpaper, "painted Don Albright's house for \$5," picked up a day or two's work at the strip mines, guarded the fence at the county fairgrounds, cut hair for boys in the neighborhood, sold coal orders, and when he had to and could, worked intermittently on WPA.

With no dependable income, we cut back on everything possible. We stopped the evening paper, turned off the city water and cleaned out our well, sold our four-door Model T touring car with the snap-on side curtains and isinglass, stopped ice and milk delivery, and disconnected our gas range for all but the three hot summer months. There was no telephone to disconnect, as we didn't have one to start with!

We did keep up regular payments on two Metropolitan Life Insurance policies. Page after page of old receipt books show entries of 10 cents per week on one policy and 69 cents a month on another. As long as we could, we made house payments to the Marion Building and Loan, but a day came when we had to let those go, too.

Fortunately, we were able to save our house from foreclosure. When so many borrowers defaulted, the Marion Building and Loan went bankrupt. Creditors were allowed to pay just about any amount to satisfy the receivers. But that was the catch – who had "just about any amount" to pay? A house behind ours sold for \$25. Many good houses in Marion sold for \$5 to \$100 and were torn down and moved to nearby towns. We settled with the loan company for \$125, or ten cents on the dollar for our \$1250 mortgage. I'll never forget the day Dad cleared it all up, making two or three trips to town to bring papers home for Mom to sign. He was able to borrow the \$125 from his aunt, Dialtha James, who as the widow of a Spanish-American war veteran had a small pension.

Looking back, I find it amazing what we did without. A partial list would include toothpaste (we used soda), toilet paper (we used the catalog), newspaper or magazine subscriptions, soft drinks, potato chips and snacks, bakery goods except bread and an occasional dozen of doughnuts, paper clips, rubber bands and restaurant meals. We had no water bill, sewer bill, telephone bill, no car expenses – gasoline, tires, batteries, licenses, insurance, repairs – no laundry service, no dry

cleaning (we pressed woolens up with a hot iron and wet cloth), no bank service charge (no bank account), no sales or income tax. We sent no greeting cards except maybe half a dozen at Christmas...

Typical of the simple economies Mom practiced was keeping the electric bill to \$1 a month and the gas bill to \$1 a month in June, July, and August....Since our only appliance was an electric iron, the chief use of electricity was for lighting. With only a single bulb suspended by a cord from the ceiling of each room, there weren't many lights to burn...On winter evenings, Mom would turn on the kitchen light while she cooked supper. If I had lessons I brought them to the kitchen table or sprawled on the floor between the kitchen and dining room.

After supper we "turned off the light in the kitchen" and moved to the dining-sitting room, where another light was switched on. If we wanted to read on winter afternoons, we sat as near a window as possible, with the curtains pinned back, to save the lights until it was nearly dark...

Dad had some old-fashioned shoe lasts, and he would buy stick-'em-on soles at the dime store to patch our shoes in winter. With simple barber tools he cut my hair and that of other kids in the neighborhood, for maybe ten cents a head. In cold, wet weather, when he worked outdoors on WPA, he often cut strips of cardboard to stuff in the soles of his shoes and keep his feet warm.

We took care of what we had. Every cotton cloth was used over as a dish cloth, wash cloth, dust cloth, shoe-shining cloth, window-washing cloth, to scrub and wax floors, make bandages, make quilt pieces, make kite tails, or to tie boxes and papers together. The cotton bags from flour, salt, and cracked chicken feed were washed, bleached, and cut into dish cloths and towels. Some neighbors made curtains or even dresses from feed sacks. Every paper bag was saved for lunches or cut and used for wrapping paper. String was wound into balls for later use.

Each August Mom would find someone who was a year ahead of me in school, and buy his used books. One exception was a spelling book used in all eight grades. Since it was to be used for eight years, we decided it would be a wise investment to buy a new one when I started first grade. In the seventh grade, I dropped that speller in the snow. I thought Mom was unfair when she sent me all the way back to school, retracing my steps to look for the book...

Before the Depression, we hung a four-cornered black-and-white cardboard sign in the front window each morning. The figures in the corners told the iceman how many pounds to bring – 25, 50, 75, or 100. But ice was one of the casualties of the Depression, although we managed a small piece two or three times a week for iced tea. About eleven in the morning I would pull a little wagon, filled with a gunny sack and assorted old quilts and tarpaulins, down to the neighborhood ice house to buy a "nickel's worth of ice," which was half of a 25-pound chunk. By wrapping it carefully and storing it in a cool, damp spot under the house, we could stretch that piece of ice for two or three days. In rainy, cool weather, maybe four days! It was our glistening prize, and any left over from tea was emptied back into a pitcher of ice water, or used for lemonade that afternoon. So as not to waste any, we chipped only what was needed, with much of the same care used by a diamond cutter.

Whatever was free was our recreation. This may have included playing records on our wind-up victrola or listening to the radio. You might watch a parachute jump at the airport or a free ball game at the city park, with perhaps a free band concert afterwards...the band concerts survived only the first two years of the Depression...

We liked music, and one of my earliest memories is of Dad singing to me:

Two arms that hold me tight,
Two lips that kiss goodnight;
To me he'll always be,
That little boy of mine.

No one can ever know,
Just what his coming has meant:
He's something heaven has sent,
That little boy of mine.

At one point in the Depression, the cupboard was literally bare of money. We weren't hungry, but we were penniless. Then Dad went back in the pantry and came out with a jar in which he had saved a few nickels and dimes for such an emergency.

Later, Mom said to me, "I've learned that whatever happens, your Daddy always has a little dab of money put back somewhere..."

Excerpted from "Digging In", 1986. Found in *Dark Days*, Perfection Learning, 2006
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Debts

By Karen Hesse

Daddy is thinking
of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men,
to get some new wheat planted
where the winter crop has spindled out and died.
Mr. Roosevelt promises
Daddy won't have to pay a dime
till the crop comes in.

Daddy says,
"I can turn the fields over,
start again.
It's sure to rain soon.
Wheat's sure to grow."

Ma says, "What if it doesn't?"

Daddy takes off his hat,
roughs up his hair,
puts the hat back on.
"Course it'll rain," he says.

Ma says, "Bay,
it hasn't rained enough to grow wheat in
three years."

Daddy looks like a fight brewing.

He takes that red face of his out to the barn,
To keep from feuding with my pregnant ma.
I ask Ma
how, after all this time,
Daddy still believes in rain.

“Well, it rains enough,” Ma says,
“now and again,
to keep a person hoping.
But even if it didn’t
your daddy would have to believe.
It’s coming on spring,
and he’s a farmer.”

March 1934

The New Deal

In 1932 [Franklin Delano Roosevelt](#) was elected overwhelmingly on a campaign promising a New Deal for the American people. Roosevelt worked quickly upon his election to deliver the New Deal, an unprecedented number of reforms addressing the catastrophic effects of the Great Depression. Unlike his predecessor, [Herbert Hoover](#), who felt that the public should support the government and not the other way around, Roosevelt felt it was the federal government's duty to help the American people weather these bad times.

Together with his "brain trust," a group of university scholars and liberal theorists, Roosevelt sought the best course of action for the struggling nation. A desperate Congress gave him carte blanche and rubber-stamped his proposals in order to expedite the reforms. During the first 100 days of his presidency, a never-ending stream of bills was passed, to relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic recovery.

His first act as president was to declare a four-day bank holiday, during which time Congress drafted the Emergency Banking Bill of 1933, which stabilized the banking system and restored the public's faith in the banking industry by putting the federal government behind it. Three months later, he signed the Glass-Steagall Act which created the FDIC, federally insuring deposits

The [Civil Conservation Corps](#) was one of the New Deal's most successful programs. It addressed the pressing problem of unemployment by sending 3 million single men from age 17 to 23 to the nations' forests to work. Living in camps in the forests, the men dug ditches, built reservoirs and planted trees. The men, all volunteers, were paid \$30 a month, with two thirds being sent home. The [Works Progress Administration](#), Roosevelt's major work relief program, would employ more than 8.5 million people to build bridges, roads, public buildings, parks and airports.

The National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and the National Recovery Administration (NRA) were designed to address unemployment by regulating the number of hours worked per week and banning child labor. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), created in 1933, gave \$3 billion to states for work relief programs. The Agricultural Adjustment Act subsidized farmers for reducing crops and provided loans for farmers facing bankruptcy. The Home Owners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) helped people save their homes from foreclosure.

While they did not end the Depression, the New Deal's experimental programs helped the American people immeasurably by taking care of their basic needs and giving them the dignity of work and hope.

from Public Broadcasting Service www.pbs.org

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President Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1932, during the worst depression American had ever known. The stock market had crashed in 1929, thousands of banks had failed, millions of people were unemployed. Until 1932, there was no safety net for the country, with no government help, so people were on their own.

During his first term of office, Roosevelt created a program called the New Deal, in which government took a huge role in putting people back to work, creating Social Security, and creating many types of government assistance for people.

Roosevelt was overwhelmingly re-elected in 1936. What follows is the speech he made at the inauguration for his second term.

Second Inaugural Address, President Franklin D. Roosevelt

January 20, 1937

My fellow countrymen. When four years ago we met to inaugurate a President, the Republic, single-minded in anxiety, stood in spirit here. We dedicated ourselves to the fulfillment of a vision—to speed the time when there would be for all the people that security and peace essential to the pursuit of happiness. We of the Republic pledged ourselves to drive from the temple of our ancient faith those who had profaned it; to end by action, tireless and unafraid, the stagnation and despair of that day. We did those first things first.

Our covenant with ourselves did not stop there. Instinctively we recognized a deeper need—the need to find through government the instrument of our united purpose to solve for the individual the ever-rising problems of a complex civilization. Repeated attempts at their solution without the aid of government had left us baffled and bewildered...

We of the Republic sensed the truth that democratic government has innate capacity to protect its people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems once considered unsolvable. We would not admit that we could not find a way to master economic epidemics just as, after centuries of fatalistic suffering, we had found a way to master epidemics of disease. We refused to leave the problems of our common welfare to be solved by the winds of chance and the hurricanes of disaster.

In this we Americans were discovering no wholly new truth; we were writing a new chapter in our book of self-government.

This year marks the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Constitutional Convention which made us a nation. At that Convention our forefathers found the way out of the chaos which followed the Revolutionary War; they created a strong government with powers of united action sufficient then and now to solve problems utterly beyond individual or local solution. A century and a half ago they established the Federal Government in order to promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to the American people.

Today we invoke those same powers of government to achieve the same objectives.

Four years of new experience have not belied our historic instinct. They hold out the clear hope that government within communities, government within the separate States, and government of the United States can do the things the times require, without yielding its democracy. Our tasks in the last four years did not force democracy to take a holiday.

Nearly all of us recognize that as intricacies of human relationships increase, so power to govern them also must increase—power to stop evil; power to do good. The essential democracy of our nation and the safety of our people depend not upon the absence of power, but upon lodging it with those whom the people can change or continue at stated intervals through an honest and free system of elections. The Constitution of 1787 did not make our democracy impotent.

Our progress out of the depression is obvious. But that is not all that you and I mean by the new order of things. Our pledge was not merely to do a patchwork job with secondhand materials. By using the new materials of social justice we have undertaken to erect on the old foundations a more enduring structure for the better use of future generations...

In this process evil things formerly accepted will not be so easily condoned. Hard-headedness will not so easily excuse hardheartedness. We are moving toward an era of good feeling. But we realize that there can be no era of good feeling save among men of good will.

For these reasons I am justified in believing that the greatest change we have witnessed has been the change in the moral climate of America.

Among men of good will, science and democracy together offer an ever-rich life and ever-larger satisfaction to the individual. With this change in our moral climate and our rediscovered ability to improve our economic order, we have set our feet upon the road of enduring progress.

Shall we pause now and turn our back upon the road that lies ahead? Shall we call this the promised land? Or, shall we continue on our way? For "each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth."

I see a great nation, upon a great continent, blessed with a great wealth of natural resources. Its hundred and thirty million people are at peace among themselves; they are making their country a good neighbor among the nations. I see a United States which can demonstrate that, under democratic methods of government, national wealth can be translated into a spreading volume of human comforts hitherto unknown, and the lowest standard of living can be raised far above the level of mere subsistence.

But here is the challenge to our democracy: In this nation I see tens of millions of its citizens—a substantial part of its whole population—who at this very moment are denied the greater part of what the very lowest standards of today call the necessities of life.

I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs over them day by day.

I see millions whose daily lives in city and on farm continue under conditions labeled indecent by a so-called polite society half a century ago.

I see millions denied education, recreation, and the opportunity to better their lot and the lot of their children.

I see millions lacking the means to buy the products of farm and factory and by their poverty denying work and productiveness to many other millions.

I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.

But it is not in despair that I paint you that picture. I paint it for you in hope—because the nation, seeing and understanding the injustice in it, proposes to paint it out. We are determined to make every American citizen the subject of his country's interest and concern; and we will never regard any faithful law-abiding group within our borders as superfluous. The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.

Government is competent when all who compose it work as trustees for the whole people. It can make constant progress when it keeps abreast of all the facts. It can obtain justified support and legitimate criticism when the people receive true information of all that government does.

If I know aught of the will of our people, they will demand that these conditions of effective government shall be created and maintained. They will demand a nation uncorrupted by cancers of injustice and, therefore, strong among the nations in its example of the will to peace.

Today we reconsecrate our country to long-cherished ideals in a suddenly changed civilization. In every land there are always at work forces that drive men apart and forces that draw men together. In our personal ambitions we are individualists. But in our seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people.

In taking again the oath of office as President of the United States, I assume the solemn obligation of leading the American people forward along the road over which they have chosen to advance.

www.historymatters.gmu.edu

File Name: I9-10P Gains of the Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 9-10

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Gains of the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, millions of people lost jobs, and families struggled to find financial footholds. It lasted for ten years,

leaving very strong memories of dramatically dark times. Throughout those years, people found new ways to cope with the struggles, and

interestingly enough, new emotions and belief in the ideals of America.

Everybody learned the importance of being resourceful, while also keeping hope for the future and growing more unified and patriotic as a country.

One important effect of the Great Depression was how it made people and families resourceful. That quality is largely a part of the memoir Digging In, where a man who lived during the Depression talked about his family's

frugality, and how they had to "cut back on everything possible" in order to save money. Some of the things they had to cut back on included city

Integrates quotations effectively into analysis

water, selling their car, and discontinuing purchases of toothpaste, toilet paper, and snacks, just to name a few. They also "took care of

Introduces the topic:

The writer gives strong context that sets the stage for the essay; includes **topic** / focus of the piece, which previews what is to follow

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

Analyzes ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections

Organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions:

The writer cites several texts but organizes the essay mainly by abstract **concept** (e.g., resourcefulness, patriotism), not text.

Develops the topic with well-chosen, relevant, sufficient, accurate facts and concrete details

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the

what [they] had", and listed all the ways they used a cotton cloth, which included using it as a dish cloth, bandage, quilt piece and more. These qualities of being frugal and resourceful weren't bad; they taught people to not be wasteful and to not spend money on things that aren't necessary. Being resourceful became a part of life during the Depression as a way to help families stay financially afloat.

Establishes and maintains a formal style, objective tone while attending to norms and conventions of discipline in which the student is writing

More significantly the Great Depression, in a broad sense, brought a sense of patriotism and more unity as a country. Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt enriched his second inaugural address with these ideals. He said that the greatest change he had witnessed was the "change in the moral climate of America" and that they were on the road of progress. Another quote of his was "in seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people." What Roosevelt was implying was if the people wanted their country to go in the right direction, they all had to work together. Working together wouldn't be hard, due to the entire country's new sense of belief in their country, also known as patriotism. The United States' stronger sense of unity that came about during the depression helped citizens work through the hard times.

Uses appropriate, varied transitions to clarify relationships among ideas and concepts and create cohesion

Analyzes evidence

Most importantly, the Depression oddly enough brought a sense of hope. In some cases, farmers had to keep hope for the future and that it would bring rain for their crops so they could get money, as a farmer had in a poem called "Debts". In an article about "The New Deal", an explanation was given about how Roosevelt gave the country hope by creating many reforms that were aimed to "relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic

Develops topic with well-chosen, relevant, sufficient, accurate facts and concrete details from New Deal text

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic

recovery". This hope for the future gave people something worth living for during times when suicide didn't seem like a bad idea. Indeed, this sense of hope was a very important effect that the Great Depression had on the people who lived through it.

Reminds audience of the focus / topic / main point of the essay.

Even though the Depression devastatingly affected tens of millions of people, the way it changed people's outlooks was inspiring. Instead of tossing a cotton bag in the garbage, people learned to be resourceful and used them as towels and dish cloths. A stronger sense of pride in their country helped them work through the hardships together, with patriotism and unity. Above all else, without hope for the future, people would've given up on trying to fix their severely wounded economy. These enhanced senses of resourcefulness, unity, along with patriotism and hope were all ways that the Great

Makes an important distinction, demonstrating understanding of the complexity of the topic

Provides a conclusion that follows from and supports the information presented by articulating implications and the significance of the topic

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer provides some context about the severity of the Great Depression in the introduction and then states his main points (the Great Depression taught people to be resourceful as well as inspired unity), which serves to preview what follows.

The writer organizes ideas, concepts, and information clearly by concept, using textual evidence to support the main points. While he uses the texts extensively, they are not the organizing principle; rather, the concepts of resourcefulness and unity are. The writer uses appropriate, varied, and strong transitions to clarify relationships and create cohesion (for example, *"Indeed, this sense of hope..."*). Within each chunk of the essay, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to name and explain the effects, which he has identified from the texts he has read. The writer analyzes evidence thoughtfully throughout so that the reader grasps the complexity of the topic.

While the essay is compelling and even dramatic, it has an appropriately formal style. The conclusion follows from and supports the information presented, and in it the writer analyzes the implications and significance of the topic.

Depression affected Americans.

File Name: N9-10P Gains of the Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grade 9-10

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Gains of the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, millions of people lost jobs, and families struggled to find financial footholds. It lasted for ten years, leaving very strong memories of dramatically dark times. Throughout those years, people found new ways to cope with the struggles, and interestingly enough, new emotions and belief in the ideals of America. Everybody learned the importance of being resourceful, while also keeping hope for the future and growing more unified and patriotic as a country.

One important effect of the Great Depression was how it made people and families resourceful. That quality is largely a part of the memoir Digging In, where a man who lived during the Depression talked about his family's frugality, and how they had to "cut back on everything possible" in order to save money. Some of the things they had to cut back on included city water, selling their car, and discontinuing purchases of toothpaste, toilet paper, and snacks, just to name a few. They also "took care of what [they] had", and listed all the ways they used a cotton cloth, which included using it as a dish cloth, bandage, quilt piece and more. These qualities of being frugal and resourceful weren't bad; they taught people to not be wasteful and to

not spend money on things that aren't necessary. Being resourceful became a part of life during the Depression as a way to help families stay financially afloat.

More significantly the Great Depression, in a broad sense, brought a sense of patriotism and more unity as a country. Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt enriched his second inaugural address with these ideals. He said that the greatest change he had witnessed was the "change in the moral climate of America" and that they were on the road of progress. Another quote of his was "in seeking for economic and political progress as a nation, we all go up, or else we all go down, as one people." What Roosevelt was implying was if the people wanted their country to go in the right direction, they all had to work together. Working together wouldn't be hard, due to the entire country's new sense of belief in their country, also known as patriotism. The United States' stronger sense of unity that came about during the depression helped citizens work through the hard times.

Most importantly, the Depression oddly enough brought a sense of hope. In some cases, farmers had to keep hope for the future and that it would bring rain for their crops so they could get money, as a farmer had in a poem called "Debts". In an article about "The New Deal", an explanation was given about how Roosevelt gave the country hope by creating many reforms that were aimed to "relieve poverty, reduce unemployment, and speed economic recovery". This hope for the future gave people something worth living for during times when suicide didn't seem like a bad idea. Indeed, this sense of hope was a very important effect that the Great Depression had on the people who lived through it.

Even though the Depression devastatingly affected tens of millions of people, the way it changed people's outlooks was inspiring. Instead of tossing a cotton bag in the garbage, people learned to be resourceful and used them as towels and dish cloths. A stronger sense of pride in their country helped them work through the hardships together, with patriotism and unity. Above all else, without hope for the future, people would've given up on trying to fix their severely wounded economy. These enhanced senses of resourcefulness, unity, along with patriotism and hope were all ways that the Great Depression affected Americans.

File Name: I 11-12P Hope During the Great Depression

Informative / Explanatory

Grades 11-12

On-Demand Writing, Uniform Prompt

Hope During The Great Depression

Life is difficult. Sometimes, it is devastatingly so. Yet the human race can be defined by the dual characteristics of perseverance and hope. We, the human race, are the infamous turtle of Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*, we take each obstacle in stride and keep on going on. The Great Depression is one of the best examples of humankind's tendency towards both perseverance and hope. The fact that so many people managed to live through the terrible poverty of the Great Depression is a testament to the tenacity of hope and optimism in humans, and Americans in particular.

Introduces the topic: The writer provides context, acknowledging the **complexity** of the **concept** of life's difficulty.

Uses the domain-specific technique of metaphor (the turtle in *Grapes of Wrath*) **to manage the complexity of the topic**

Develops topic with appropriate, accurate, facts and concrete details; uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary in well-chosen evidence from the text (here, the Second Inaugural)

The texts provided for this analysis all discuss the Great Depression and its effects on the people who lived through it. On the whole, the theme translated from

States
focus

the texts is that the people who survived the Great Depression developed, as a direct result of the Depression, a curiously strong sense of optimism. President

Franklin D. Roosevelt, in his Second Inaugural Address, attributes this sense of optimism to democracy, and its "...innate capacity to protect its

Integrates
quotations
effectively
into
analysis

people against disasters once considered inevitable, to solve problems

once considered unsolvable." Roosevelt is, of course, making a blunt

reference to his popular and effective programs under the New Deal. It is

true that the New Deal had come at just the right moment, and that millions of people were helped through the New Deal, particularly the WPA, or Works Progress Administration, which was, as put in the fourth source from PBS, a "major work relief program...[employing] more than 8.5 million people to build

bridges, roads, public buildings, parks and airports." 8.5 million people is a lot of people to employ, and based upon these facts alone it would seem that the New Deal was indeed reason to hope.

Yet the other sources, and indeed even later on in Roosevelt's speech,
indicate that such hope was perhaps misplaced, at least in the extent that the

hope was placed upon Roosevelt. In "Digging
second source written by Robert J. Hastings,

Uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary and techniques to manage the complexity of the topic

In", the

Establishes and maintains a formal style and objective tone while attending to the norms and conventions of the discipline in which the writer is working

Develops the topic thoroughly by selecting the most significant, relevant, accurate facts and concrete details from the text

Organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information: Beginning with a discussion of Roosevelt's optimism in his Second Inaugural, the writer **creates a unified whole** in which **each new element builds on that which precedes it**

Analyzes Roosevelt's speech in terms of author's craft (anaphora); connects the use of this rhetorical device to the essay's topic of perseverance and hope, to **manage the complexity of the topic**

Uses appropriate, varied transitions and syntax to clarify relationships among complex ideas and concepts and create cohesion. This section of the essay **builds from the section which precedes it and connects to the next** ("Digging In") to **create a unified whole**

the narrator reflects on her father's efforts to get money: "it was a day's work here and a day's work there...a few days on the WPA..." Thus, it seems that although the WPA may have employed 8.5 million people, it was not by any means a source of income, if people were only able to work for a few days at a time. However, the focus of "Digging In" is not to evaluate federal programs, but to evaluate the effectiveness of one's own efforts to help oneself. More than anything, the lengths to which the narrator's family went in order to save money exemplifies, once again, an incredible amount of perseverance. From the selling of the car, to the renouncement of milk and ice, the family maintains their perseverance and their hope. Towards the end of the passage, the narrator's mother speaks of this imperative hope: "I've learned that whatever happens, your Daddy always has a little dab of money put back somewhere..." Whether or not this was true, it certainly seems to be a sentiment that enabled the family to maintain their sanity

In Roosevelt's speech, there is a section in which he employs anaphora to give emphasis to the negative effects of the Depression by repeating, for several lines, "I see..." followed by a sad image, thought, or idea. He finishes the anaphora with "I see one-third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished." While this rhetorical emphasis is used mainly to lead into his positive images to follow, in order to be more convincing towards his audience, the negative scenes which he describes were not only rhetorical, but quite real. People were homeless and clotheless and foodless during the Great Depression, millions of them. That is why it is so incredible that the primary effect of such a tragedy was to create a generation of hopeful people. Such hope is characterized in the first source, a poem by Karen Hesse entitled "Debts". In

**Uses the most
significant and relevant
evidence to develop
topic**

this poem, the narrator describes that "Daddy is thinking/ of taking a loan from Mr. Roosevelt and his men..." This connection to the New Deal emphasizes that the government, through President Roosevelt, helped instigate the massive flood of hope in the American people. The dad in the poem wants to buy wheat even though such an idea is completely impractical; the dad is a naively hopeful character.

As the "Ma" says in the last phrase of the poem, "well, it rains enough...to keep a person hoping./But even if it didn't/your daddy would have to believe." This quote

defines succinctly the mind-set amongst Americans living in the Depression that hope will lead to greatness. Perhaps this was because Americans could do nothing else but hope, and work, and trust in the leaders of their country. It is human nature, after all, to do everything one can to keep oneself going. Thus, the Depression imprinted a sense of hope on the people that lived through it. It is a sense of hope that has not been witnessed to the same extent in our time, yet hope continues to persevere in humans.

Provides a concluding section that follows from and supports the information presented and reflects on the significance of topic

In this on-demand assignment, students were asked to explain the effects of the Great Depression on people who lived through it. This writer provides context about the deep difficulty of living during the Depression in the introduction. She analyzes the metaphor of Steinbeck's turtle to help manage the complexity of the topic. In the second paragraph, she offers her main point/focus: the Great Depression created a *"curiously strong sense of optimism"* in people.

The writer organizes complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly to support the main point using textual evidence, doing so in such a way that each section builds on the one that precedes it. While she draws on texts extensively, they are not the organizing principle; rather, the concepts of hope, optimism, and perseverance are. The writer uses appropriate, varied, and strong transitions to connect concepts and create coherence. (For example, *"However, the focus of 'Digging In' is not to evaluate federal programs, but to evaluate the effectiveness of one's own efforts to help oneself."*) Within each chunk of the essay, the writer uses precise language and domain-specific vocabulary and techniques to name and explain the effects, which she has identified from the texts she has read. The writer analyzes evidence thoughtfully throughout so that the reader grasps the complexity of the topic.