

IOWA PAST TO PRESENT TEACHERS GUIDE
Revised 3rd Edition

Chapter 16: World War and Hard Times After

CONTENT OBJECTIVES

Following the completion of the readings and activities for this chapter, students will have acquired the following understandings:

- a. In the early years of WW I, Americans attempted to be neutral and avoid entering the war.
- b. On April 6, 1917, America entered WWI by declaring war on Germany.
- c. Iowans participated in the war by sending soldiers, purchasing war bonds, and producing large amounts of agricultural products. Women played important new roles.
- d. On the Iowa home front, anti-German sentiment was rampant. Many people thought it was patriotic to remove any suggestion of German culture.

VOCABULARY TO KNOW

Armistice	military draft
Blockade	neutral
depression, The Great Depression	rationing
fundamental	submarine
interest	

PEOPLE TO IDENTIFY

Franklin Roosevelt	Merle Hay
Henry A. Wallace	Woodrow Wilson
Herbert Hoover	

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Have students consult the local historical society for artifacts from the World War I era.
2. Invite a person to class who remembers living during the Great Depression. Have students prepare to interview this person comparing life today with life in the 1930s and 40s.
3. Have students make maps showing the countries involved in World War I.

Activity 16-1: EFFECTS OF THE WAR

Skills. Skimming written material for specific information "

Materials. Student copies of handout 16-1

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson by reviewing the text material related to the contributions Iowans made to the war effort. Discuss several ways Iowans helped with the war effort.

2. Distribute copies of handout 16-1. Encourage students to identify the effects or outcomes of these war efforts. For example, many Iowans were drafted into military service, and as a result, many were killed in Europe.

3. When students have completed handout 16-1, discuss their responses, emphasizing the short- and long-term effects of the war on society, politics, and the economy.

EFFECTS OF THE WAR

Directions. Identify three ways Iowans contributed to World War I. List the effect each contribution had in the column on the right.

	Contribution to the War	Effect
1.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
2.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
3.	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____
	_____	_____

Activity 16-2: FARM DIARY OF ELMER POWERS

Skills. Reading and interpreting primary source materials

Materials. Powers's farm diary (in text)

Procedure

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing with students the textbook material related to the agricultural depression following World War I.

2. Find the pages of Powers's diary. Note that Elmer Powers was farming during the 1930s when the Great Depression was at its lowest point.

3. After reading and discussing the selection, conclude the lesson by discussing the following questions:

- a. In what ways was life on the farm different from that of people in cities during the Depression? See May 20, 1931, and June 2, 1931.
- b. What was Mr. Powers's attitude toward hard times? See Oct. 23, 1935; Jan. 6 and 14, 1936; act. 1, 1936; Dec. 31, 1936.
- c. Farmers had a hard time during the Depression. Find an entry in each year that describes the problems farmers faced.

Activity 16-3: THE COST OF LIVING, 1934-1936

Skills. Comparing and contrasting current data with that of an earlier period

Materials. Cost of living table (in text)

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson by locating the cost of living table in text. Ask students to compare the cost of items in 1934 with those today. Predictably, many students will notice the low prices for items without noticing the low salaries.

2. Discuss the following questions:

- a. If a depression happened in the next year, which of these items would show a decline in sales? Why?

bread	televisions	meat
shoes	campers	woolen mittens
boats	candy	pop

- b. What effect would a decline in sales have on employment?
- c. Think about someone you know who has a job. Would a decline in sales affect that person's job?
- d. Think about the salaries and costs of living today. Compare them with Depression figures. Has everything gone up in the same proportion?

PRIMARY MATERIAL: Farm Diary of Elmer Powers (Unabridged)

1931

May 20 -Wednesday. These farm folks in this county are doing quite well in adjusting themselves to the existing times. Driving along the highway, I picked up a young man who said that he was from the east. He described conditions there, as he sees them, and talked about the bitterness of many of those people. He asked about people here and I told him that folks here always have something to eat and also always have our minds and hands busy. Two things that help much to keep people contented.

June 2- Tuesday. Worked in corn stalk ground, spring plowed. Plenty of trouble with stalks and lots of hard work to do good cultivating. But not a bad job at that. There wasn't any foreman who had to be pleased or to find fault with my work. I know I can still work here tomorrow. The place won't be shut down.

1932

June 13- Monday. Drove to town with the truck, marketing hogs. We were paid \$2.25 per cwt., much the lowest price we ever received for hogs. Five years ago today they were \$6.50.

July 21 -Thursday. Our daily paper has stopped and we are not renewing it now. As a matter of economy I am resharpening old razor blades and when I shave I use any kind of soap instead of shaving cream. The oats market is a cent lower today.

September 19- Monday. Everyone is trading now. I did a little today myself, trading sorghum for grapes. As a matter of economy I shaved today with a dime store blade. But it is the farm women who think out and do things to save money.

October 14- Friday. Conditions in some places are very bad. Some farmers do not seem to have any intentions of husking their corn. Many folks intend to use some corn for fuel. One court house is being heated with corn.

December 25 -Sunday. Our family enjoyed a Christmas Dinner with the old folks at their home in the village. No gifts were exchanged by the grown folks. However, the smaller children were well remembered.

1933

Throughout the year of 1933 conditions did not improve. Toward the end of the year Mr . Powers wrote that he "could see great need for instant action in aiding agriculture."

1934

January 11 -Thursday. "No we don't get the paper anymore," is a statement I hear quite frequently. Earl May and his station seem to be the most dependable source of information.

May 23- Wednesday. I spent the forenoon rebuilding an old cultivator. Buying a new one is out of the question. With these crop prospects anyway.

June 4- Monday. We were behind a month on our phone rent and the linemen disconnected it today. Perhaps many farm folks will do without many things soon.

June 30 -Saturday. This afternoon I attended a dispersal sale of a Holstein herd. A neighbor is working thru the system of "going bankrupt" and the sale is one of the results.

November 12 -Monday. At came to husk this morning and we finished the job at noon. Of all the crops I have gathered, this is the poorest one. Our cribs are almost empty and almost all of the feeding season is before us. Now I, like many others must sell or almost give away hogs because I cannot feed them or buy feed for them.

November 24 -Saturday. Of the very many Thanksgivings I can remember, this one is an outstanding one in the few things that we think we have to be thankful for .

1935

February 16- Saturday. Tonight we went back to our old custom of driving in to the county seat for the evening. We had not been to town on Saturday night for some time. I went to the implement store and found prices of many articles too high. At least I cannot buy them and pay for them.

April 19 -Monday. We stopped at the cold storage plant and learned about the new plan of storing our fresh killed meat in our own rented locker. Where it is kept at zero or the proper temperature for storage. We plan to use this service. It will cost a dollar a month, or nine dollars per year .

July 9 -Thursday. The earth is dry and hard and many large cracks are appearing in the stubble field. Any tools that I carry on the binder may be dropped down in these cracks. I tied a string on the handle of a 12 in. crescent wrench and lowered it down a crack. I will not mention the distance. Some things are better left unsaid. ...

October 23 -Wednesday. Today two farm ladies were discussing the problem of how best to remove the printed letters from seed sacks that they wished to use in some of their sewing work. On many farms feed sacks are made up into various useful things by the very resourceful farm women.

December 4 -Wednesday. I went to town this morning to see the bankers. I will have to sell grain and livestock to pay the mortgage holder, so that I can get the Federal Loan.

1936

January 6 -Monday. We had another winter day again and here at the place we sold the baler. In some ways I regret to see it go. The money I received for it will be very useful just now in closing up the loan affairs.

January 14 -Tuesday. I think I finished the loan business today. I got the Federal Land Bank money and it was sent to payoff the old mortgage. All of the people connected with this problem have been very nice. Tomorrow I think I can begin to plan for a new future.

January 22 -Wednesday. School attendance was as low as the thermometer. Many schools were closed. No mail anywhere today. The bitter cold was very bad for all livestock. Our stock suffered some and they consumed large amounts of feed.

April 24 -Friday. We began spring plowing today. We will use both the tractor and the horse plows. A good rain is much needed by all growing things.

June 27 -Saturday. The heat in our corn fields today was very intense. The pastures are rapidly turning a deep burned brown in color .

July 5 -Sunday. Late this afternoon I borrowed enough iron pipe to reach from the windmill pump to our garden and will pump water on the garden all night. We do not expect to be able to water all of the garden, but may save some of it. The vegetables that will be most useful for canning purposes.

July 19 -Sunday. The greatest corn crop disaster that our country has ever experienced is upon us. It may take some little time for all people to realize this, but all will know as time goes on.

September 15 -Tuesday. Today was a rainy day, all day. It is the first rainy day for months. It was interesting to watch the livestock and the poultry. The younger ones did not seem to know just what the rain was.

October 1 -Thursday. Since our pastures are becoming green again I have been thinking that we should have more young cattle in them. I drove to see the banker and he favored the idea. He suggested that I go out and buy whatever I wanted and come in and we would fix up a loan to cover the purchases.

October 2 -Friday. I drove over to a neighbors this morning and bot a white face calf from him, paying ten dollars for it. I went to another community sale and bot five more calves. I paid \$49.50 for these.

December 31 -Thursday. I have written 1936 for the last time and tomorrow a New Year begins. I am facing it knowing there are hardships in the future for farm folks and I hope there will not be too many for us all.

FROM: *Years of Struggle: The Farm Diary of Elmer G. Powers, 1931-1936*, H. Roger Grant and L. Edward Purcell, eds. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa. 1976 .