

**IOWA PAST TO PRESENT TEACHERS GUIDE**  
**Revised 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition**

**Chapter 17: Depression, Changing Times, and World War II**

**CONTENT OBJECTIVES**

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

- a. Following WW I, farm prices steadily fell, causing economic depression and hardship for many Iowans.
- b. Because of high unemployment during the 1930s, the federal government responded with work programs that not only provided jobs but also developed Iowa's roads, parks, and public buildings.
- c. Despite the economic hardships, many technological advancements occurred during the Depression, making motion pictures, radio, and automobiles accessible to more people.
- d. Both men and women took on new roles after WW II.
- e. Iowans felt the impact of events around the world as the state emerged from the Depression, entered the WW II era, and moved into the atomic age.

**VOCABULARY TO KNOW**

atomic bomb	Nagasaki
bootleggers	Pearl Harbor
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)	Prohibition
Far East	Soviet Union
Hiroshima	"talkies"
Ku Klux Klan	Works Progress Administration (WPA)

**PEOPLE TO IDENTIFY**

Billy Robinson	Orville and Wilbur Wright
Colonel B. J. Palmer	

## FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Invite a panel of Iowa veterans to class and have them describe their experiences to the students. Class members should prepare questions for the panel discussion and, if possible, submit them to panel members prior to the visit.
2. Have selected students investigate the history of the battleship *Iowa*, which has recently been recommissioned by the United States Navy. Students should report the results of their research to the entire class.
3. Assign students to make brief reports on how technological changes that took place in the 1930s influenced the American way of life. Students should also include businesses that have grown because of these changes.
4. Have students prepare a large chart that includes statistics about America 1950. The chart might contain population density, urban-rural ratios, cost of select (items, number of states, and other appropriate information.
5. The teacher should investigate any local construction projects that took place under the auspices of the WPA or the CCC. In Iowa, WPA workers built roads, dams, parks, and public buildings, and the CCC planted forests and built artificial lakes. See if students can make any generalizations about the types of work completed and/or architectural designs, etc. The teacher should look for sidewalks, bridges, parks, tennis courts, gymnasiums, stadiums, schools, fairgrounds, town halls, stone gates at park entrances, and murals. These are often marked with plaques.

## **Activity 17-1: THE BEUSCHER FAMILY OF DUBUQUE**

**Skills.** Reading and interpreting primary source materials

**Materials.** Student copies of handout 17-1, the Beuscher family interview (in text)

### **Procedure**

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing the material from the text related to the Depression and its effect on Iowans.
2. Find the Beuscher interview in the text and read the introduction together. Provide time for students to read the selection and answer the questions.
3. When students have completed the reading and have answered the questions, discuss the Depression experience from the point of view of the Beuscher family.
4. Use this discussion to encourage students to go into the community and interview a person who remembers the Depression in Iowa. Have students share their findings with the class.

**THE BEUSCHER FAMILY OF DUBUQUE**

Mr. Beuscher has only one suggested solution for the problem of unemployment: persons of "wealth" should be persuaded to invest their money in industries that might increase or create new employment. He believes also that there should be a better "distribution" of the money paid for commodities. But Mr. Beuscher does not hold "radical" ideas. At one time there was a significant group of Socialists in Dubuque.

1. What jobs did Mr. Beuscher have? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. How did both Mr. and Mrs. Beuscher help to provide for the family? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. How did the Beuscher family feel about receiving aid from the government? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **PRIMARY MATERIAL: The Beuscher Family Interview (unabridged)**

This is a summary of an interview which was completed December 13, 1937 as a WPA project.

Mr. Beuscher, 62 years old, had been working for 29 years for the Dubuque railroad shops when they closed in 1931. He was recalled to work at the shops after he had been unemployed for 4 years. Tall, gangling, weather-beaten, he stoops forward when he talks so that he may follow the conversation with greater ease, for he is more than a little deaf.

Mrs. Beuscher is 2 years younger than her husband. She is the mother of 11 children, but has found time to make dresses and coats and suits, not only for her own family, but also for customers outside the home.

As they "look back on it," Mr. and Mrs. Beuscher scarcely know how they did manage to get along during the time that he had no regular work. The irregular income from Mrs. Beuscher's sewing continued, though she was forced to lower prices until earnings averaged no more than \$3 or \$4 a week. For a year after Mr. Beuscher lost his job [in 1931], the family's only cash income was the four hundred seventy-odd dollars obtained from the insurance policies and Mrs. Beuscher's irregular earnings, as contrasted with the predepression regular income of about \$130 a month, Mr. Beuscher's full-time earnings.

Mr. and Mrs. Beuscher agreed that application for relief was a virtual necessity. Mr. Beuscher remembers going down to the courthouse for the first time as the hardest thing he ever had to do in his life; his hand was "on the door-knob five times" before he turned it. The investigation, which the Beuschers recognized as necessary and inevitable, was so prolonged that Mrs. Beuscher "really didn't think" that the family would ever get relief. But finally, after about 2 months, a grocery order of \$4.50 was granted. Mrs. Beuscher had long before learned to "manage" excellently on little, and though the order was meager, the family "got along" and "always had enough to eat." Mrs. Beuscher believes that investigators "did the best they could;" she resents only their insistence on the disconnection of the telephone, on which she depended for keeping in touch with her customers.

Soon Mr. Beuscher was assigned as a laborer to county relief work, for which he was paid, always in grocery orders, \$7.20 a week; this increased amount gave the family a little more leeway. Yet they were still without much cash. The family's garden, for which the city furnished some of the seeds and the plot of ground on the city island, added fresh vegetables to the list of staples which alone could be purchased on the grocery orders; there were even some vegetables to be sold from house to house, and Mrs. Beuscher canned a little almost every day, just as the vegetables were ready for use. One summer she put up 500 quarts of vegetables.

Although the Beuschers never felt comfortable about receiving relief, it came to be more or less an accepted thing. "You know, you went down to City Hall, and had to wait in line, and you saw all your friends; it was funny in a way,

though it was pitiful, too. ... People went down to the relief office, and talked about going, just the way they might have gone anywhere else."

The family received food orders for only a few months, as Mr. Beuscher was soon assigned to the CWA Eagle Point Park project as a laborer, earning 40¢ an hour. Later he worked on the lock and dam project at 50¢ an hour. Mr. Beuscher cannot understand why there was so great a difference between the wage rates of laborers on work projects and those of skilled carpenters. Although he was glad to be assigned to projects, there was little essential difference in his feelings about direct relief and about "work relief"; he worked hard for his pay, but still felt that he was being "given something." He has heard many times that persons on relief do not want work and will not accept jobs in private industry, but he knows from project employees whose reactions were similar to his that such is not the case, except perhaps in a very few instances.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Beuscher "don't say the depression is over yet," times have been better for them since the late fall of 1935, when Mr. Beuscher was called back to his old work at the shops at the old rate of pay. Mr. Beuscher considers this "regular work," and, as such, far superior to relief work, especially as he now "feels more independent." Still, it is not as it was in the old days when 1,500 men were employed rebuilding damaged and out-worn cars. Of the 130 men taken back at the shop, only 25 remain at work, which now consists of wrecking instead of reclamation, and no one of the 25 men knows how long his work will last.

Mr. Beuscher has only one suggested solution for the problem of unemployment: persons of "wealth" should be persuaded to invest their money in industries that might increase or create new employment. He believes also that there should be a better "distribution" of the money paid for commodities. But Mr. Beuscher does not hold "radical" ideas. At one time there was quite a group of Socialists in Dubuque; now the movement has "died out."

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FROM: *The Personal Side*. 1939. Reprinted 1971. Jessie A. Bloodworth and Elizabeth J. Greenwood, eds. New York: Arno Press.

## **Activity 17-2: WET VS. DRY**

**Skills.** Formulating opinions and discussing controversial issues

**Materials.** Student copies of handout 17-2

### **Procedure**

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing the text material related to Prohibition. Discuss the concept of constitutional amendment.
2. Distribute copies of handout 17-2. Read the directions together and provide time for students to answer the questions.
3. Conclude the lesson by discussing this issue from today's perspective.

**WET V5. DRY**

**Directions.** Read the two constitutional amendments below and answer the question: which follow, using your textbook and other resource material.

**18TH AMENDMENT: *Prohibition of Intoxicating Liquors***

SECTION 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

SECTION 2. The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

SECTION 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years of the date of the submission hereof to the States by Congress.

[Proposed Dec. 18, 1917; ratified Jan. 16, 1919.]

**21ST AMENDMENT: *Repeal of 18th Amendment***

SECTION 1. The Eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

SECTION 2. The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

SECTION 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

[Proposed Feb. 20, 1933; ratified Dec. 5, 1933.]

1. How long did it take before the Eighteenth Amendment was repealed? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. Why did Prohibition fail? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. List and explain at least three laws that you feel are unpopular today.

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4. What types of laws control the sale and use of alcohol today? What group of people is responsible for passing these laws? Enforcing them?

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### **Activity 17-3: FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS**

**Skills.** Producing facsimiles of primary source documents

**Materials.** Art materials for making posters

#### **Procedure**

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing the text material related to the early use of the airplane in Iowa.

2. Provide students with the following information:  
In 1919 a New York hotel owner named Raymond Orteig offered a \$25,000 prize for the first person to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. Charles Lindbergh made the flight on May 20 and 21, 1927, and won the prize money.

3. Have students design and construct posters advertising this award to aviators. Students will need the following information:

Reward: \$25,000

For: First nonstop flight from New York to Paris (3600 miles)

Offered by: Raymond Orteig of New York

When: 1919

Why: Adventure, and promotion of advances in aviation

4. Conclude the lesson by discussing present-day counterparts of the early aviation experiments.