

What About Us?



America LOOKS to its LEADERS for Help

Herbert (Bert) Hoover's father died when he was six; three years later his mom was dead too. Even though an orphan, forty-four years later he became President of the United States.

Hoover was popular because everyday Americans knew his story --they were proud of the work he did during the Great War, helping get food to starving Europeans.

This admiration did not last. When the stock market crashed in 1929, Americans thought he would help. People needed food and clothes. But, President Hoover didn't seem to hear their calls for help.



Hungry Americans Look to Their Government

WHAT ABOUT US?

1. People became very angry at President Hoover. After all, he had been an orphan. He should understand what it was to feel hopeless. He had even helped those in other nations who were hungry during the war. Where was his help now? In “ANNIE” there is a song called “We’d Like to Thank You Herbert Hoover.” This song is an example of “irony.” Watch the **VIDEO** and read the **LYRICS**. Explain the irony of the song.

Today we have government programs to help those in need. In the 1920s there were very few resources for the old, sick hungry, or those without jobs. It was up to families, churches, or local charities to help.

Things got so bad the people looked to their government leaders for help. Those leaders, including the President, thought if people just worked harder they would make it. But there were no jobs.

President Hoover believed the government should help the failing banks instead of the people. He believed they should help big businesses like the railroad. The nation’s banks certainly needed help. Many had invested their depositor’s money in the stock market. When it crashed, banks lost millions of dollars. Banks had also loaned money to farmers suffering from hard economic times. The farmers were unable to pay back those loans. That meant people who had money in accounts at these banks now had nothing.

Hoover’s decisions to help banks and businesses left many people asking, “What about us?”



Bonus Army

“DON’T PUSH ME. I FOUGHT FOR THIS FLAG!”

1. View this historical **VIDEO** (**warning, it does have one bad word, which each of you understand is not appropriate to say).
2. What do you think caused the man in the video to use a curse word? Do you think using a curse word makes a message more powerful or less powerful, or do you think it does nothing at all to either strengthen or weaken what someone is trying to say?
3. Today there is still talk about the way veterans are treated after they serve in wars. The Vietnam War, especially, was a terrible time for vets. That war was not one many Americans believed in --they even blamed the vets. **YOUR CHALLENGE:** In ONE sentence express what you think it means to “honor” our vets.



How would you feel if you had left your family and fought in World War I and then discover the bonus you had been promised wasn't there --money your family desperately needed?

That's what happened. Many veterans and their families camped out near the capitol, demanding the government pay the bonuses they had been promised. They were hungry. These vets and their families were known as “bonus marchers.” Over 20,000 camped out on the Capitol Mall and on vacant lots. They wanted to meet with Hoover.

Finally, Hoover sent in troops who used swords, tanks and tear gas to drive them out. By late August, the bonus marchers went back to their homes. They had not gotten their bonuses. They were angry and President Hoover's image was frowned up.

Change in Leaders

FIRESIDE CHATS AND A NEW DEAL

1. Watch this **VIDEO** about the beginning of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency. (Stop video at 3:25). What do you think it was about Roosevelt that gave America hope? Why do you think it was decided NOT to let Americans know that Roosevelt was crippled?

Things were bad. Americans quickly blamed President Hoover. This once popular president had become the object of jokes --he was very unpopular.

At election time, people were hoping for someone to run against Hoover and win. Franklin Delano Roosevelt began sharing his plans for healing America. He talked about offering America a "new deal." On November 8, 1932, voters chose Roosevelt as the new president.

From the minute Roosevelt took the oath for president, he began working to calm the fears so many had for their future. He used the radio to get his message across. His radio speeches were called Fireside Chats.

Although the New Deal was the beginning of better times, it was truly only a beginning. The end of the hard times was years in the future.

