

WORDS OF AGES: DEMOCRACY AND ADVERSITY 1919-1945

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES



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DEMOCRACY AND ADVERSITY

UNIT 4 INTRODUCTION



In the 25 years following the end of World War I, the United States endured dramatic changes of fortune on its roller-coaster ride from riches and material excess to severe economic depression and back to world economic and military dominance. During these tumultuous years, paradigms shifted and literary forms changed dramatically. At first, the 1920s were marked by great wealth. Large companies grew bigger. Mass marketing and consumer loans enabled middle-class citizens to own automobiles and modern household conveniences. Art of all types flourished, as wealthy consumers and patrons grew in number. Between the world wars, many authors sought new themes and modes of expression. For example, African Americans developed their own literary forms and messages, inspired by black music and experiences.

With the stock market crash of 1929, however, boom times came to an abrupt halt. Within a few years, millions of Americans had lost their jobs and homes in the Great Depression. Desperate for new economic leadership, voters elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932. His promise to make a “New Deal”



with the American people led to the creation of federal agencies and programs to give people jobs, economic assistance, and hope. Writers, dramatists, visual artists, and photographers all benefited from government programs to support the arts and enrich American culture. At the same time, intellectuals rallied for economic equality. An outgrowth of this trend was “reportage,” a literary form that created emotional appeals to win audiences

1923

Ku Klux Klan membership reaches its peak.

1925

F. Scott Fitzgerald publishes *The Great Gatsby*.

1927

The first motion picture with sound, *The Jazz Singer*, is released.

1929

The New York stock market crashes, and the Great Depression begins.

1930

President Herbert Hoover signs the Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act.

1931

Japan seizes Manchuria.

over to an author's political views. Despite activist writings and dozens of new social programs, the economy remained depressed throughout the 1930s.

However, the emergence of foreign enemies changed the economic picture once again. As Nazi Germany and imperialist Japan rose to power in the 1930s and early 1940s, the United States was ultimately drawn into the Second World War. Military contractors geared up for wartime production, kick-starting the economy and giving U.S. workers and soldiers a renewed sense of national pride and purpose. Arts and literature, too, found new passion and energy, much of it borne of American ideals and war-related issues, such as freedom, human rights, heroism, racism, and equality. The literature of World War II is varied and rich, but the war's extraordinary events lend themselves particularly well to nonfiction, including colorful journalism and moving autobiography. In short, the upheavals following World War I gave rise to enormous social and economic changes. Whether molding those changes or reacting to them, American authors forged unyielding events into enduring cultural artifacts.

1932

American voters elect
President Franklin
Delano Roosevelt.

1933

Adolf Hitler comes to
power in Germany.

1935

President Roosevelt signs
legislation for his Second
New Deal.

1939

John Steinbeck publishes
The Grapes of Wrath.

1941

Japan attacks Pearl
Harbor, and the United
States enters World War II.

1942

The U.S. government
orders Japanese Americans
living on the West Coast
to move to "relocation
centers."

1943

Race riots break out in
Detroit, Harlem, and
dozens of other U.S. cities.

1944

Allies land in
Normandy, France.

1945

Germany surrenders.
The United States drops
two atomic bombs on
Japanese cities, and
Japan surrenders.



THE JAZZ AGE

UNIT 4: THEME 1 INTRODUCTION



The 1920s were a golden era. The postwar economy grew and optimism reigned. F. Scott Fitzgerald—a great novelist of the period—captured the mood in his 1937 essay, “Early Success.” He wrote, “The uncertainties of 1919 were over—there seemed little doubt about what was going to happen—America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history. ... The whole golden boom was in the air—its splendid generousities, its outrageous corruptions and the torturous death struggle of the old America in prohibition.”

Prohibition was the common term for a constitutional amendment that outlawed the manufacture, sale, and transportation of alcoholic beverages. Enacted nationwide in 1920, the policy was generally unsuccessful. Few abstained from drinking—even the politicians who supported its passage—and the laws were not enforced. Prohibition produced corruption and a huge business for organized crime.

The “splendid generousities” Fitzgerald mentioned came from the great wealth generated after World War I. In 1920, for the first time in U.S. history, more people lived in urban than in rural areas. In cities, people took factory jobs or office work that earned them higher wages than they earned on the farm. They then spent their new wealth on houses, cars, and other material goods. A consumer culture emerged. Consequently, the owners of some big businesses, such as Henry Ford, became millionaires. Few anticipated the impending stock market crash of 1929.

Despite the general optimism of American society, young people were disillusioned by the brutality of World War I and vowed to be different from previous generations. A youth culture flowered for the first time in American history. New customs in dating, fashion, drinking, music, and dancing arose. Young women felt more powerful after gaining the right to vote; they displayed their new sophistication in “flapper” dress and “bobbed” hairstyles.

The decade’s wealth empowered African Americans as well. World War I had encouraged a huge migration of African Americans to northern cities for factory work. The heavy concentration of African Americans in New York—and their relative wealth compared with those in the South—led to a great explosion in black art and culture. New York’s Harlem hosted one of the greatest artistic movements in American history, the Harlem Renaissance. African-American theater, dance, visual art, literature, and music matured there. Black musical forms such as jazz and blues filled clubs across the country and lent the decade its nickname: “The Jazz Age.”

Featured Authors

F. Scott Fitzgerald
Dorothy Parker
Upton Sinclair
Toni Morrison
Langston Hughes
Zora Neale Hurston



Perhaps no other writer is more closely identified with the “Roaring ‘20s” than F. Scott Fitzgerald. He not only wrote insightfully about the decade, but he participated wholeheartedly in its parties, drinking, and other lavish excesses. Fitzgerald was born in Minnesota and attended Princeton University before joining the army. At the age of 24, he published his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*—a story about college students. As a young author focusing on youthful themes, Fitzgerald became a spokesperson for the new postwar generation. *This Side of Paradise* quickly became a bestseller. That same year—1920—he married a wealthy southern belle, Zelda Sayre. Fitzgerald soon became disappointed by the emptiness of his materialistic existence, and—even though he reveled in the extravagance of the decade—the theme of disillusionment recurs in his work.

*“Laughter is
easier minute
by minute”*

However, in general, wealth and optimism reigned in the 1920s. After World War I, Americans wanted to buy goods that they had been unable or unwilling to buy during the war. They bought big-ticket items, such as houses and cars. Business boomed, and unemployment dropped. American prosperity resulted in U.S. citizens holding about 40 percent of the world’s total wealth in the 1920s.

Many Americans skated along in these “good times” and were disinterested in politics. Consequently, few politicians proposed major policy changes. Nevertheless, the temperance movement had succeeded in outlawing the manufacture, sale, and transport of alcoholic beverages nationwide by 1920. However, it was a hollow law—most people, especially those in cities, continued to frequent “speakeasies,” or saloons. Few of these establishments were shut down, even though officials were well aware of their locations. Prohibition created new business for gangsters, who made millions of dollars providing illegal alcohol to meet the continued demand. In some cities, rich crime bosses paid off government officials to ignore the alcohol trade.

Fitzgerald’s novel, *The Great Gatsby*, illustrates the wealth and immorality of the era. Published in 1925, it is commonly regarded as his masterpiece. The main character, Jay Gatsby, is a rich but mysterious resident of Long Island. Gatsby’s neighbor, Nick Carraway, narrates the story of Gatsby’s attempt to renew his love for Daisy, now married to another rich man.

In the following selection, Carraway attends a lavish party at Gatsby’s house. Although the partygoers accept Gatsby’s hospitality and expensive entertainment, they speculate openly about their host’s mysterious past. Their suspicions suggest the immorality and hollow materialism that Fitzgerald criticizes. Although the author never explains exactly how Gatsby got his money, several scenes suggest that he might have had criminal connections. However, the book’s tragic ending—Gatsby’s loss of Daisy and his life—concludes that the rich are their own “mob”—reckless, unprincipled, and insular.

The Great Gatsby Chapter III

There was music from my neighbor’s house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests

diving from the tower of his raft, or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing aquaplanes over cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before....

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvre, spice baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitiful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing up-stairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colors, and hair shorn in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing, and floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside, until the air is alive with chatter and laughter, and casual innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot, and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The lights grow brighter as the earth lurches away from the sun, and now the orchestra is playing yellow cocktail music, and the opera of voices pitches a key higher. Laughter is easier minute by minute, spilled with prodigality tipped out at a cheerful word....

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited—they went there. They got into automobiles which bore them out to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. Once there they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby, and after that they conducted themselves according to the rules of behavior associated with amusement parks. Sometimes they came and went without having met Gatsby at all, came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission....

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked his whereabouts stared at me in such an amazed way, and denied so vehemently any knowledge of his movements, that I slunk off in the direction of the cocktail table—the only place in the garden where a single man could linger without looking purposeless and alone.

I was on my way to get roaring drunk from sheer embarrassment when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the head of the marble steps, leaning a little backward and looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

Welcome or not, I found it necessary to attach myself to someone before I should begin to address cordial remarks to the passers-by.

"Hello!" I roared, advancing toward her....

With Jordan's slender golden arm resting in mine, we descended the steps and sauntered about the garden. A tray of cocktails floated at us through the twilight, and we sat down at a table with the two girls in yellow and three men, each one introduced to us as Mr. Mumble.

"Do you come to these parties often?" inquired Jordan of the girl beside her....

"I like to come," Lucille said. "I never care what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown on a chair, and he asked me my name and address—inside of a week I got a package from Croirier's with a new evening gown in it..."

"There's something funny about a fellow that'll do a thing like that," said the other girl eagerly. "He doesn't want any trouble with anybody!"

“Who doesn’t?” I inquired.

“Gatsby. Somebody told me-----”

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.

“Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.”

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr. Mumbles bent forward and listened eagerly.

“I don’t think it’s so much that,” argued Lucille skeptically; “it’s more that he was a German spy during the war.”

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

“I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany,” he assured us positively.

“Oh, no,” said the first girl, “it couldn’t be that, because he was in the American army during the war.” As our credulity switched back to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. “You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody’s looking at him. I bet he killed a man.”

She narrowed her eyes and shivered. Lucille shivered. We all turned and looked around for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world.

The Growth of Film

The entertainment industry thrived in the prosperity of the Jazz Age. Although the first motion pictures were produced around 1900, film grew into popular entertainment—and an artistic medium—in the 1920s. Aiming for broad audiences, most movies portrayed hackneyed, shallow plot themes such as crime, romance, adventure, and high society. However, as directors and actors plumbed the new technology, some created enduring works and roles. Silent films dominated the decade until “talkies”—movies with soundtracks—appeared in 1927. That year, in step with the jazz era, the first on-screen voice that audiences heard was Al Jolson’s in *The Jazz Singer*.

Today many regard Charlie Chaplin as the greatest movie star of the 1920s. His comic yet sensitive portrayal of a tramp with ill-fitting clothes, a bowler hat, mustache, and cane endeared him to generations. In 1921, after seeing Chaplin’s film *The Kid*, author Hart Crane tried to put into words Chaplin’s “pantomime, so beautiful, and so full of eloquence.” Conveying the complex comic-sadness of the tramp character, Crane wrote in the poem “Chaplinesque” that “we have seen / The moon in lonely alleys make / A grail of laughter of an empty ash can.”





Dorothy Parker was a witty journalist who personified the vivacity and liberalism of youth culture in the 1920s. Her brash cynicism and independence became a prototype for young women of the postwar generation who sought to forge new roles.

Throughout her career, Parker enjoyed success as a poet, playwright, critic, and screenwriter. However, she achieved her greatest critical acclaim as an author of short stories. While working as a theater critic for *Vanity Fair* magazine, Parker helped form a literary circle, known as the Algonquin Round Table. She joined other journalists, playwrights, and performers in New York's Algonquin Hotel for lunches enlivened by clever conversation. There she sharpened her biting humor. One of Parker's often-quoted book reviews stated,

"This is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly. It should be thrown aside with great force." Her caustic remarks lost her many friends and, reportedly, a few jobs.

*"And rip the
hearts of men
in half"*

Parker was not the only woman speaking out in the 1920s. After women gained the right to vote nationwide in 1920, they experienced a kind of "liberation." Young women, in particular, adopted habits and fads that their elders believed disgraceful—smoking, drinking, bobbing their hair, shortening their hemlines, wearing lipstick, and dancing the Charleston. Compared with earlier generations, women had unprecedented privacy with men, who took them out on "dates" in cars. Previously, men had "called on," or visited, women at home. However, women's traditional roles in families and in the workplace changed little during the 1920s. In the political realm, they rarely voted in unified blocks to demonstrate political power.

In 1926, Parker published her collection of poetry, *Enough Rope*, which became a bestseller. It included the following poem, "Song of Perfect Propriety." With heavy irony, Parker claims to be a "little" woman "writing little verse"—an act of "perfect propriety." However, her wishes and images are hardly that of a "respectable" young lady. Indeed, they reflect a deep frustration with sexual inequality and dainty women's roles of the period.

Song of Perfect Propriety

*Oh, I should like to ride the seas,
A roaring buccaneer;
A cutlass banging at my knees,
A dirk behind my ear.
And when my captives' chains would clank
I'd howl with glee and drink,
And then fling out the quivering plank
And watch the beggars sink.*

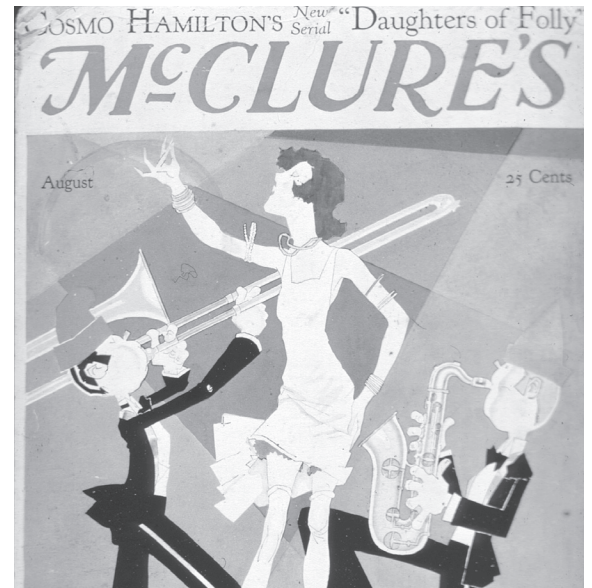
*I'd like to straddle gory decks,
And dig in laden sands,
And know the feel of throbbing necks
Between my knotted hands.*

*Oh, I should like to strut and curse
Among my blackguard crew...
But I am writing little verse,
As little ladies do.*

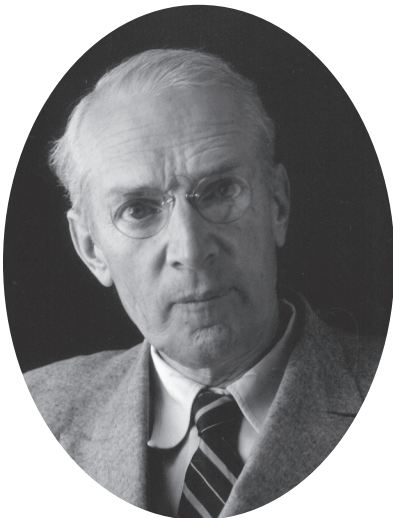
*Oh, I should like to dance and laugh
And pose and preen and sway
And rip the hearts of men in half,
And toss the bits away
I'd like to view the reeling years
Through unastonished eyes,
And dip my finger-tips in tears,
And give my smiles for sighs.*

*I'd stroll beyond the ancient bounds,
And tap at fastened gates,
And hear the prettiest of sounds—
The clink of shattered fates.
My slaves I'd like to bind with thongs
That cut and burn and chill...
But I am writing little songs,
As little ladies will.*

Artists, designers, and photographers—as much as social forces—helped mold the “flapper” icon that dominated the 1920s. John Held Jr. illustrated this magazine cover with his classic interpretation of a flapper.



UPTON SINCLAIR (1878–1968)



Upton Sinclair became a full-time writer at the age of 22 and spent much of his long career writing novels with strong political agendas. Sinclair became a member of the Socialist Party of America in 1904, and he penned several progressive—or “muckraking”—books that exposed corruption, the exploitation of workers, and other scandals. One of his later works criticized Henry Ford, an auto industry pioneer and the icon of “Roaring ‘20s” individualism, wealth, and materialism.

Ford did not invent the automobile. However, his clever development of mass production and marketing enabled him to become one of the richest men in America. Because he divided labor on a moving assembly line, Ford produced cars ever faster and made them available to more and more consumers. The cost of a Ford auto steadily declined from \$850 in 1908 to less than \$300 in 1926. This trend, combined with the rising wealth of everyday citizens,

marked the rise of the American car culture in the 1920s. By 1929, half of American households owned at least one automobile, sometimes called a flivver or Tin Lizzy. The boom in the auto industry led the economic surge of the decade.

*“American
ingenuity had
solved . . .
poverty”*

The following excerpt from Sinclair’s historical fiction novel, *The Flivver King*, is set after the election of President Calvin Coolidge in 1924. President Coolidge had a “hands-off” or *laissez-faire* approach to the U.S. economy, making him a

friend of big business. Meanwhile, organized crime rings were also becoming rich from the inability, or unwillingness, of law enforcement officials to uphold prohibition. Few important gangster “bosses” were arrested, and some, such as Chicago’s Al “Scarface” Capone, were practically celebrities.

The Flivver King, published in 1937, juxtaposes Ford’s rise to wealth and fame with one of his factory workers, Abner Shutt. In this selection, Shutt and his family symbolize average Americans—and their rising standard of living—in the mid-1920s. The oldest son, Johnny, is earning promotions and higher wages for his skilled labor. Hank, the second son, is a gangster involved in alcohol trafficking. All seem to be cruising along in the “good times” of the 1920s. During the 1930s, however, the Shutts lose their jobs and symbolize the weakness of the “everyman” in the face of economic depression.

The Flivver King

Happy times were here again. American industry, adopting Henry Ford's policy of mass production and low prices, was making it possible for everybody to have his share of everything. The newspapers, the statesmen, the economists, all agreed that American ingenuity had solved the age-old problem of poverty. There could never be another depression. It was “the New Capitalism.”

The Ford Model T, first manufactured in 1908, changed the fabric of American life. By the 1920s, Henry Ford’s assembly lines were pumping out thousands of affordably priced Tin Lizzies every day. Shown here is a Model A, manufactured in the late 1920s.

Henry had a seemingly inexhaustible market for his cars. He was employing more than two hundred thousand men, paying in wages a quarter of a billion dollars a year. He had developed fifty-three different industries, beginning alphabetically with aeroplanes and ending with wood-distillation. He bought a broken-down railroad and made it pay; he bought coal-mines and trebled their production. He perfected new processes—the very smoke which had once poured from his chimneys was now made into automobile parts.

The Shutt family was a part of this vast empire, and they were on the way up. Five days in the week, rain or shine, winter or summer. Abner’s flivver came chugging to the Highland Park [Ford] plant; he had a better one now, for the price was down to \$300, and any working-man with a job could get one on monthly payments. Johnny had a brand new one of him [sic] own, which made the Shutts a “two-car family”—a great distinction, according to the motor-car ads.



Johnny, ever serious and hard-working, had finished at school and gone to work as a welder, a skilled job which paid him eight seventy-five a day. In less than a year he had become a subforeman, and was raised to nine fifty. That was what training did for you.

Strange and unexpected as it might seem, the second son was also “getting his.” Hank did not

have any title, and did not boast about his job, except to a few inmates. But he had the “dough,” as he called it, also the “mazuma,” and the “jack,” and the “kale.” He wore silk shirts and ties to match, razor-edged trousers, shiny new shoes, and an air of ease and confidence. He would come home and slip his mother a bill, and tell her to get something to make life easier for her; he would give his old grandpop a dollar or two to keep him in tobacco. He was a good-hearted fellow.

Hank would say he was working for the best people in Detroit; those whose names were in the blue-books and their pictures in the society columns. Right after the war the American people had plumped for prohibition; but these best people were taking the liberty of disregarding an inconvenient law. Right across a narrow river from Detroit lay a free country well stocked with Canadian whiskeys and West Indian rums and French wines; the business of ferrying these products across the river at night was a lucrative one, and the job of moving them into the interior and hiding them before dawn, called for quick-witted young fellows who knew how to handle a truck, also an automatic or sawed-off shotgun in an emergency.

TONI MORRISON (1931–)



Toni Morrison is among the most famous of contemporary American authors. Although she has been an editor, playwright, and critic, she is best known for her seven novels about the black experience. Morrison’s literary achievements have been recognized with many awards, including a Pulitzer Prize, which she won in 1988 for *Beloved*. In 1993, she became the first African American to be honored with a Nobel Prize in literature.

Morrison’s life began in Lorain, Ohio, where she was born to parents who had migrated from the South—her father from Georgia and her mother from Alabama. Her parents were part of a much larger movement of African Americans that is sometimes called the “Great Migration.” During Reconstruction, many former slaves slowly began to migrate to northern urban centers. That trend increased significantly between 1890 and 1910, when about 200,000 African Americans moved northward. Then, during World War I, factory representatives actively recruited southern African Americans to work in northern cities,

and the tide of migrants became a flood. Historians estimate that 500,000 African Americans moved north between 1914 and 1919.

Although African Americans who moved to northern cities were not treated equally with whites, as a whole, their lives improved dramatically over what they had known in the South. The booming economy enabled African Americans to prosper. They earned living wages, sent their children to decent schools, and voted. In larger cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago, African Americans built their own civic groups, cultural centers, and publications. As black migration continued in the 1920s, the number of African Americans in New York City more than doubled. In the 1920s, Harlem—a ghetto in New York City— became the largest black community in the nation.

As a result of these migration trends, Harlem became the center of a great movement in black culture called the “Harlem Renaissance.” All forms of art thrived. Jazz, which had begun with black musicians in New Orleans in the late 1800s, spread across the country with the migration of African-American musicians. Jazz became so popular that it became synonymous with the decade—the Jazz Age. Consequently, African Americans strongly influenced cultural life in the United States.

Morrison, who studied literature under the tutelage of a Harlem Renaissance writer, set her 1992 novel *Jazz* in Harlem during the 1920s. The novel’s structure mimics features of the jazz musical form. Morrison’s rambling, improvisational tone treats language as a “malleable toy”—the same way that jazz musicians improvise melodies and tempo. Similar to jazz musicians’ trading of improvisational “solos,” Morrison’s characters take turns narrating the events. In the

*“the City...
danced with
them”*

following excerpt from *Jazz*, the author refers back to events in 1906, when the main characters, Joe and Violet Trace, first moved from Virginia to New York City. Morrison suggests that their optimism and excitement were probably shared by millions of African-American migrants, including those who continued to move northward throughout the 1920s.

Jazz

Violet and Joe left Tyrell, a railway stop through Vesper County [Virginia], in 1906, and boarded the colored section of the Southern Sky. When the train trembled approaching the water surrounding the City; they thought it was like them: nervous at having gotten there at last, but terrified of what was on the other side. Eager, a little scared, they did not even nap during the fourteen hours of a ride smoother than a rocking cradle. The quick darkness in the carriage cars when they shot through a tunnel made them wonder if maybe there was a wall ahead to crash into or a cliff hanging over nothing. The train shivered with them at the thought but went on and sure enough there was ground up ahead and the trembling became the dancing under their feet. Joe stood up, his fingers clutching the baggage rack above his head. He felt the dancing better that way, and told Violet to do the same.

They were hanging there, a young country couple, laughing and tap ping back at the tracks, when the attendant came through, pleasant but unsmiling now that he didn't have to smile in this car full of colored people.

"Breakfast in the dining car. Breakfast in the dining car. Good morning. Full breakfast in the dining car." He held a carriage blanket over his arm and from underneath it drew a pint bottle of milk, which he placed in the hands of a young woman with a baby asleep across her knees. "Full breakfast."

He never got his way, this attendant. He wanted the whole coach to file into the dining car, now that they could. Immediately now that they were out of Delaware and a long way from Maryland there would be no green-as-poison curtain separating the colored people eating from the rest of the diners. The cooks would not feel obliged to pile extra helpings on the plates headed for the curtain; three lemon slices in the iced tea, two pieces of coconut cake arranged to look like one—to take the sting out of the curtain; homey it up with a little extra on the plate. Now, skirting the City, there were no green curtains; the whole car could be full of colored people and everybody on a first-come first-serve basis. If only they would...

Joe and Violet wouldn't think of it—paying money for a meal they had not missed and that required them to sit still at, or worse, separated by a table. Not now. Not entering the lip of the City dancing all the way. Her hip bones rubbed his thigh as they stood in the aisle unable to stop smiling. They weren't even there yet and already the City was speaking to them. They were dancing. And like a million others, chests pounding, tracks controlling their feet, they stared out the windows for the first sight of the City that danced with them, proving already how much it loved them. Like a million more they could hardly wait to get there and love it back.

The Harlem Renaissance lured many African-American painters to New York City, including Jacob Lawrence, who arrived in 1930. Shown here is a work from his series, *The Migration of the Negro*. This panel, which depicts race riots in East St. Louis, was painted in the 1940s.



In the 1920s, Harlem's Cotton Club hosted some of the country's best jazz musicians, many of them black. However, well-heeled whites made up most of the audience.

Some were slow about it and traveled from Georgia to Illinois, to the City back to Georgia, out to San Diego and finally shaking their heads, surrendered themselves to the City. Others knew right away that it was for them, this City and no other. They came on a whim because there it was and why not? They came after much planning, many letters written to and from, to make sure and know how and how much and where. They came for a visit and forgot to go back to tall cotton or short. Discharged with or without honor, fired with or without severance, dispossessed with or without notice, they hung around for a while and then could not imagine themselves anywhere else. Others came because a relative or hometown buddy said, Man, you best see this place before you die; or, We got room now, so pack your suitcase and don't bring no high-top shoes.



However they came, when or why, the minute the leather of their soles hit the pavement—there was no turning around. Even if the room they rented was smaller than the heifer's stall and darker than a morning privy they stayed to look at their number, hear themselves in an audience, feel themselves moving down the street among hundreds of others who moved the way they did, and who, when they spoke, regardless of the accent, treated language like the same intricate malleable toy designed for their play...

The wave of black people running from want and violence crested in the 1870s; the '80s, the '90s but was a steady stream in 1906 when Joe and Violet joined it. Like the others, they were country people, but how soon country people

forget. When they fall in love with a city it is forever, and it is like forever. As though there never was a time when they didn't love it. The minute they arrive at the train station or get off the ferry and glimpse the wise streets and the wasteful lamps lighting them, they know they are born for it. There, in a city, they are not so much new as themselves: their stronger, riskier selves. And in the beginning when they first arrive, and twenty years later when they and the City have grown up, they love that part of themselves so much they forget what loving other people was like—if they ever knew, that is. I don't mean they hate them, no, just that what they start to love is the way a person is in the City; the way a schoolgirl never pauses at a stoplight but looks up and down the street before stepping off the curb; how men accommodate themselves to tall buildings and wee porches; what a woman looks like moving in a crowd; or how shocking her profile is against the backdrop of the East River. The restfulness in kitchen chores when she knows the lamp oil or the staple is just around the corner and not seven miles away; the amazement of throwing open the window and being hypnotized for hours by people on the street below...

That kind of fascination, permanent and out of control, seizes children, young girls, men of every description, mothers, brides, and barfly women, and if they have their way and get to the City they feel more like themselves, more like the people they always believed they were. Nothing can pry them away from that; the City is what they want it to be: thriftless, warm, scary and full of amiable strangers. No wonder they forget pebbly creeks and when they do not forget the sky completely think of it as a tiny piece of information about the time of day or night.



Langston Hughes is probably the best-known author of the Harlem Renaissance. He was born in Joplin, Missouri, but lived in Kansas, Illinois, Ohio, and Mexico before settling in Harlem in 1921. An incredibly versatile writer, he created work in every genre, including short stories, novels, plays, musicals, autobiography, history, and essays. However, Hughes is most famous for his voluminous poetry. In fact, some critics believe that he is the single most influential black poet in American literature. His poems stress racial pride and use the rhythms of African-American music, such as spirituals, jazz, and blues.

The music termed “the blues” began with black work songs and spirituals in the South. In the early 20th century, black musicians began drawing on this heritage, publishing and performing songs with melancholy lyrics and unusual “blues” notes (flatted thirds and sevenths). As in work songs, repetition and calling were also important blues features.

W.C. Handy, a musician and band leader, is credited with being the “Father of the Blues” because he carefully noted local black folk songs and transcribed them. His composition, “The Memphis Blues,” published in 1912, is widely accepted as the first song to have the word “blues” in it. Later, black author Ralph Ellison characterized the blues as “an impulse to keep the painful detail and episodes of a brutal existence alive in one’s aching consciousness.” As more musicians composed and performed the blues, its popularity spread throughout the country. By the 1920s, blues music had reached its “classic” period.

Hughes believed that music was the major art form within the black community. This appreciation led to his writing the first poem to make use of the blues form. “The Weary Blues” appeared in a New York newspaper in 1923 and launched Hughes’ literary career. Two years later, his first collection of poetry, also called *The Weary Blues*, was published. The poem’s speaker is walking down Lenox Avenue, a street in Harlem, when he hears a blues musician sing and play the piano. The poem mimics the structure of a blues song—using calls such as “O Blues!” and “Sweet Blues!” and refrains of “He did a lazy sway” and “I got the Weary Blues / And I can’t be satisfied.”

*“He played
that sad raggy
tune like
a...fool.”*

The Weary Blues

*Droning a drowsy syncopated tune,
Rocking back and forth to a mellow croon,
I heard a Negro play
Down on Lenox Avenue the other night
By the pale dull pallor of an old gas light
He did a lazy sway...
He did a lazy sway...
To the tune o’ those Weary Blues.
With his ebony hands on each ivory key
He made that poor piano moan with melody.
O Blues!
Swaying to and fro on his rickety stool
He played that sad raggy tune like a musical fool.
Sweet Blues!*

Coming from a black man's soul.
O Blues!
In a deep song voice with a melancholy tone
I heard that Negro sing, that old piano moan—
"Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."
Thump, thump, thump, went his foot on the floor.
He played a few chords then he sang some more—
"I got the Weary Blues
And I can't be satisfied.
Got the Weary Blues
And can't be satisfied—
I ain't happy no mo'
And I wish that I had died."
And far into the night he crooned that tune.
The stars went out and so did the moon.
The singer stopped playing and went to bed
While the Weary Blues echoed through his head.
He slept like a rock or a man that's dead.

Trumpeter and vocalist Louis Armstrong is considered a father of jazz and blues. In the 1920s, he recorded with many classic blues singers such as Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith.



ZORA NEALE HURSTON (1891–1960)



The most successful female writer to grow out of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston settled in New York City in 1925. After she earned her degree from Barnard College, Hurston went on to document African-American folklore and to write short stories, novels, and her autobiography. Some critics believe that her insightful depictions of black life helped promote racial understanding.

The 1920s were trying times for race relations. The concentration of African Americans in northern urban ghettos intensified segregation and discrimination. In the early 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) recruited thousands of new members. KKK members routinely intimidated, abused, and lynched African Americans. In response, some African Americans fought back. In the early 1920s, Marcus Garvey won thousands of followers by advocating the return

of black Americans to Africa. Black women had an even more arduous struggle against sexism and poverty as well.

*"De nigger
 woman is de
 mule uh de
 world"*

Hurston published her classic novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God* in 1937. The story chronicles the complex life of Janie Crawford, an African-American woman. Hurston's masterful use of dialect lends authenticity to Janie and her

struggles. In the following scene, 16-year-old Janie and her grandmother confront the realities of being a poor black orphan on the verge of womanhood.

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Chapter 2

Oh to be a pear tree—any tree in bloom! With kissing bees singing of the beginning of the world! She [Janie] was sixteen. She had glossy leaves and bursting buds and she wanted to struggle with life but it seemed to elude her. Where were the singing bees for her? Nothing on the place nor in her grandma's house answered her. She searched as much of the world as she could from the top of the front steps and then went on down to the front gate and leaned over to gaze up and down the road. Looking, waiting, breathing short with impatience. Waiting for the world to be made.

Through pollinated air she saw a glorious being coming up the road. In her former blindness she had known him as shiftless Johnny Taylor, tall and lean. That was before the golden dust of pollen had beglamored his rags and her eyes. In the last stages of Nanny's sleep, she dreamed of voices. Voices far-off but persistent, and gradually coming nearer. Janie's voice. Janie talking in whispery snatches with a male voice she couldn't quite place. That brought her wide awake. She bolted upright and peered out of the window and saw Johnny Taylor lacerating her Janie with a kiss.

"Janie!"

The old woman's voice was so lacking in command and reproof, so full of crumbling dissolution,—that Janie herself believed that Nanny had not seen her. So she extended herself outside of her dream and went inside of the house. That was the end of her childhood.

Nanny's head and face looked like the standing roots of some old tree that had been tom away by the storm. Foundation of ancient power that no longer mattered. The cooling palma christi leaves that Jamie had bound about her grandma's head with a white rag had wilted down and become part and parcel of the woman. Her eyes didn't bore and pierce. They diffused and melted Janie, the room and the world into one comprehension.

"Janie, youse uh 'oman, now, so—"

"Naw, Nanny, naw Ah ain't no real 'oman yet."

The thought was too new and heavy for Janie. She fought it away.

Nanny closed her eyes and nodded a slow, weary affirmation many times before she gave it voice.

"Yeah, Janie, youse got yo' womanhood on yuh. So Ah mout ez well tell yuh whut Ah been savin' up for uh spell. Ah wants to see you married right away."

"Me, married? Naw, Nanny, no ma'am! Whut Ah know 'bout uh husband?"

"Whut Ah seen just now is plenty for me, honey, Ah don't want no trashy nigger, no breath-and-britches, lak Johnny Taylor usin' yo' body to wipe his foots on."

Nanny's words made Janie's kiss across the gatepost seem like a manure pile after a rain.

"Look at me, Janie. Don't set dere wid yo' head hung down. Look at yo' ole grandma!" Her voice began snagging on the prongs of her feelings. "Ah don't want to be talkin' to you lak dis. Fact is Ah done been on mah knees to mah Maker many's de time askin' please—for Him not to make de burden too heavy for me to bear."

"Nanny Ah just—ah didn't mean nothin' bad."

"Dat's what makes me skeered. You don't mean no harm. You don't even know where harm is at. Ah'm ole now. Ah can't be always guidin' yo' feet from harm and danger. Ah wants to see you married right away."

"Who Ah'm goin' tuh marry off-hand lak dat? Ah don't know nobody."

"De Lawd will provide. He know Ah done bore de burden in de heat uh de day. Somebody done spoke to me 'bout you long time ago. Ah ain't said nothin' 'cause dat wasn't de way Ah placed you. Ah wanted huh to school out and pick from a higher bush and a sweeter berry. But dat ain't yo' idea, Ah see."

"Nanny, who—who dat been askin' you for me?"

"Brother Logan Kitlicks. He's a good man, too."

"Naw, Nanny, no ma'am! Is dat whut he been hanging' round here for? He look like some old skullhead in de grave yard."

The older woman sat bolt upright and put her feet to the floor, and thrust back the leaves from her face.

"So you don't want to marry off decent like, do yuh? You just wants to hug and kiss and feel around with first one man and then another, huh? You wants to make me suck the same sorrow yo' mama did, eh? Mah ol head ain't gray enough. Mah back ain't bowed enough to suit yuh!"

The vision of Logan Killicks was desecrating the pear tree, but Janie didn't know how to tell Nanny that. She merely hunched over and pouted at the floor.

"Janie."

"Yes, ma'am."

"You answer me when Ah speak. Don't you set dere poutin' wid me after all Ah done went through for you!"

She slapped the girl's face violently and forced her head back so that their eyes met in struggle. With her hand uplifted for the second blow she saw the huge tear that welled up from Janie's heart and stood in each eye. She saw the terrible agony and the lips tightened down to hold back the cry and desisted. Instead she brushed back the heavy hair from Janie's face and stood there suffering and loving and weeping internally for both of them.

"Come to yo' Grandma, honey. Set in her lap lak yo' use tuh. Yo' Nanny wouldn't harm a hair uh yo' head. She don't want nobody else to do it neither if she kin help it. Honey de white man is de ruler of everything as fur as Ah been able tuh find out. Maybe it's some place way off in de ocean where de black man is in power, but we don't know nothin' but what we see. So de white man throw down de load and tell de nigger man tuh pick it up. He pick it up because he have to, but he don't tote it. He hand it to his womenfolks. De nigger woman is de mule uh de world as fur as Ah can see. Ah been praying fuh it tuh be different wid you. Lawd, Lawd, Lawd!"

For a long time she sat rocking with the girl held tightly to her sunken breast. Janie's long legs dangled over one arm of the chair and the long braids of her hair swung low on the other side. Nanny half sung, half sobbed a running chant-prayer over the head of the weeping girl.

"Lawd have mercy! It was a long time on de way but Ah reckon it had to come. Oh Jesus! Do, Jesus! Ah done de best Ah could."

Boom times for business fueled great building projects throughout the 1920s. Symbols of national pride, skyscrapers rose in large cities, especially Manhattan. William Van Alen designed the Chrysler Building (shown here), which was completed in 1928. Art and design critics regard it as one of the most graceful architectural achievements of the period.





“Good Times” for All

After reading the excerpt from Upton Sinclair’s *The Flivver King*, answer the following question.

- 1. What evidence is there that there was a rise of the standard of living in the 1920s? What evidence is there that the government looked the other way? Which side do you agree with?**



THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

UNIT 4: THEME 2 INTRODUCTION



The stock market crash of October 29, 1929, marked the beginning, though not the cause, of the Great Depression. The crash merely drew attention to economic imbalances that had grown since the end of World War I. Tax laws favoring the rich enabled wealthy speculators to force up the prices of stocks and real estate. At the same time, workers and farmers earned a smaller and smaller share of the nation's wealth. In addition, credit flowed too freely. Consumers bought goods on credit and later found themselves without much income during the downturn. Many were unable to pay for their old purchases or make new ones to fuel economic growth. The first president during the Great Depression, Herbert Hoover, was unsuccessful in turning the tide. Rather, he signed the 1930 Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act, raising duties on imported goods, which historians think added to the economic decline.

By 1932, an election year, millions of Americans were unemployed. Having been evicted from their homes, an unprecedented number lived in squalid shantytowns and faced starvation. The mounting severity of the crisis demanded new thinking and new leadership. After 12 years of Republican presidents, U.S. voters elected Democrat Franklin Delano Roosevelt on his platform to make a "New Deal" with the American people. He had no firm answers, but rather stressed bold experimentation until a solution was found. President Roosevelt and Congress passed a host of new laws designed to create jobs, help displaced farmers, and alleviate suffering. Although the New Deal did provide some relief, the nation struggled through hard times during the entire decade of the 1930s.

Among intellectual circles, radical ideas had also taken hold. As the income gap between rich and poor increased, academics and writers began to question the capitalist economic system. Witnessing greed and excess, the collapse of the stock market, and finally the shattered lives of the unemployed, intellectuals rallied for change. Much of this criticism took the form of socialist or Marxist ideologies, which advocate economic security for all members of society.

Consequently, much of the literature, music, and visual art of the 1930s reveals leftist sentiments. Authors such as John Steinbeck highlighted the struggles of downtrodden characters against forces more powerful than themselves. Meanwhile, hundreds of authors, including Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison, worked for the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal relief program. They interviewed ordinary individuals and documented their stories, thus creating a social history project of immense scope and power. Photographers, visual artists, and dramatists also gained jobs through the federal government. Thanks to their efforts, the Great Depression has been vividly recorded for future generations.

Featured Authors

John Dos Passos
Clifford Odets
Meridel LeSueur
John Steinbeck
Ralph Ellison
Genevieve Taggard

JOHN DOS PASSOS (1896-1970)



After graduating from Harvard University in 1916, John Dos Passos served as an ambulance driver in France and Italy during World War I. Disillusioned by his experiences in the Great War, Dos Passos joined the Communist Party for a time. Although he later became more conservative, Dos Passos is best known for his early novels of the 1920s and 1930s. In those books, he developed new literary techniques to reveal problems and promote change.

Dos Passos' most famous work is *U.S.A.*—three ambitious novels that portray life in the country between 1900 and 1930. Characterized as a “national epic,” *U.S.A.* criticizes what Dos Passos viewed as the materialism and shallowness of American society in a new literary form. Borrowing techniques from the film industry, he interrupts his stories with what he calls “newsreels,” featuring newspaper headlines,

songs, and famous quotations to reveal hypocrisy and highlight various political events of the period.

The last novel of the trilogy, *The Big Money*, was published in 1936. The final newsreel in that book, excerpted below, focuses on the economic decline of the late 1920s. It includes three main themes: negative economic trends, positive assurances of politicians, and tension between the classes depicted in labor struggles.

The topics in this selection identify one of the main causes of the Great Depression—the unequal distribution of wealth. In the 1920s, industries consolidated. By 1929, 200 corporations controlled nearly half of the country's corporate assets. The wealthiest Americans became even more rich. As a result, there was too little money in the hands of working people, who, as the majority of consumers, fueled economic growth.

The first line of the excerpt refers to the stock market crash of October 29, 1929, or Black Tuesday, the event that marked the onset of the Great Depression. That month, the value of stocks on the New York Stock Exchange fell by 37 percent. With this disastrous economic news, Dos Passos juxtaposes political rhetoric such as “MARKET SURE TO RECOVER” and “REAL VALUES UNHARMED.” The final quotation, which begins “the President declared,” was likely spoken by former President Coolidge in 1929. Its inclusion probably demonstrates Dos Passos' view that the upper classes and politicians were out of touch with the economic troubles underlying the period.

In contrast to those statements, the newsreel employs a folk song (in italics) about the plight of lower class workers. Supporting the song are excerpts about various labor strikes—news that contradicts the pacifying assurances of American politicians.

“*President
sees
prosperity
near*”

On Black Tuesday—October 29, 1929—crowds gathered outside banks and stock market offices on Wall Street in New York City. Share prices had plummeted 25 percent from the previous day, sparking a panic.



The Big Money

Newsreel LXVIII

WALL STREET STUNNED...

MARKET SURE TO RECOVER FROM SLUMP

DECLINE IN CONTRACTS

POLICE TURN MACHINE GUNS ON COLORADO
MINE STRIKERS KILL 5 WOUND 40

sympathizers appeared on the scene just as thousands of office workers were pouring out of the buildings at the lunch hour. As they raised their placard high and started an indefinite march from one side to the other, they were jeered and hooted not only by the office workers but also by workmen on a building under construction....

*We leave our home in the morning
We kiss our children goodbye...*

U.S. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE URGES CONFIDENCE

REAL VALUES UNHARMED

*While we slave for the bosses
Our children scream an' cry
But when we draw our money
Our grocery bills to pay*

PRESIDENT SEES PROSPERITY NEAR

*Not a cent to spend for clothing
Not a cent to lay away*

STEAMROLLER IN ACTION AGAINST MILITANTS

MINERS BATTLE SCABS

But we cannot buy for our children
Our wages are too low
Now listen to me you workers
Both you women and men
Let us win for them the victory
I'm sure it ain't no sin

CARILLON PEALS IN SINGING TOWER

the President declared it was impossible to view the increased advantages for the many without smiling at those who a short time ago expressed so much fear lest our country might come under the control of a few individuals of great wealth.



Clifford Odets grew up in the Bronx, New York, with parents who had immigrated from eastern Europe. After ten years of trying to make a living by acting, he turned to playwriting, the endeavor that brought him success. Odets' first production, *Waiting for Lefty*, was staged in 1935 to great critical and popular acclaim. Though he continued to write stageplays and screenplays into the 1950s, his later works were not as popularly received as *Waiting for Lefty*. Consequently, Odets remains closely associated with the Depression era.

While Odets was a struggling actor in the 1920s, much of the nation's economic growth was spurred by consumer spending on cars, home appliances, furniture, and other products. Most people bought these items with installment loans rather than paying for them outright. Eventually, consumers' buying power ran out

of steam, and they were overburdened with debt, unable to make new purchases. With consumer demand low, businesses faltered and had to reduce salaries or lay off workers entirely. Those same workers did not have enough money to make their monthly payments. Many people came home to find their purchases had been hauled away—repossessed by the bank.

As the Great Depression continued, workers in many assembly line industries began to organize to improve salaries and working conditions. Between 1933 and 1941, union membership grew from three million to more than eight million, thanks in part to labor-friendly government legislation. During that decade, the sit-down strike became common. Instead of walking out of factories, union members went to the plant but did not work. Instead they sat down. This tactic prevented companies from hiring strike breakers to take the place of strikers.

Waiting for Lefty is a one-act play that includes several scenes framed within a labor union meeting. In the end, the characters attending the meeting call for a strike. The following scene between Joe, a taxi driver, and his wife Edna dramatizes the effect that the ailing economy had on families. The character called Fatt and the seated men, referred to at the beginning and end of the scene, are the disgruntled workers.

*“Get brass
toes. . .and
know where
to kick!”*

Waiting for Lefty

I. Joe and Edna

The lights fade out and a white spot picks out the playing space within the space of seated men. The seated men are very dimly visible in the outer dark, but more prominent is FATT smoking his cigar and often blowing the smoke in the lighted circle. A tired but attractive woman of thirty comes into the room, drying her hands on an apron. She stands there sullenly as JOE comes in from the other side, home from work. For a moment they stand and look at each other in silence.

JOE: Where's all the furniture, honey?

EDNA: They took it away. No installments paid.

JOE: When?

EDNA: Three o'clock.

JOE: They can't do that.

EDNA: Can't? They did it.

JOE: Why, the palookas, we paid three-quarters.

EDNA: The man said read the contract.

JOE: We must have signed a phoney....

EDNA: It's a regular contract and you signed it.

JOE: Don't be so sour, Edna... (Tries to embrace her.)

EDNA: Do it in the movies, Joe—they pay Clark Gable big money for it.

JOE: This is a helluva house to come home to. Take my word!

EDNA: Take MY word! Whose fault is it?

JOE: Must you start that stuff again?

EDNA: Maybe you'd like to talk about books?

JOE: I'd like to slap you in the mouth!

EDNA: No you won't.

JOE: (sheepishly): Jeez, Edna, you get me sore some time....

EDNA: But just look at me—I'm laughing all over!

JOE: Don't insult me. Can I help it if times are bad?

What the hell do you want me to do, jump off a bridge or something?

EDNA: Don't yell. I just put the kids to bed so they won't know they missed a meal. If I don't have Emmy's shoes soled tomorrow, she can't go to school. In the meantime let her sleep.

JOE: Honey, I rode the wheels off the chariot today.

I cruised around five hours without a call. It's conditions.

EDNA: Tell it to the A&P!

JOE: I booked two-twenty on the clock. A lady with a dog was lit...she gave me a quarter tip by mistake. If you'd only listen to me—we're rolling in wealth.

EDNA: Yeah? How much?

JOE: I had "coffee and—" in a beanery. (Hands her silver coins.) A buck four.

EDNA: The second month's rent is due tomorrow.

JOE: Don't look at me that way, Edna.

EDNA: I'm looking through you, not at you.... Everything was gonna be so ducky! A cottage by the waterfall, roses in Picardy. You're a four-star-bust! If you think I'm standing for it much longer, you're crazy as a bedbug.

JOE: I'd get another job if I could. There's no work—you know it.

EDNA: I only know we're at the bottom of the ocean.

JOE: What can I do?

EDNA: Who's the man in the family, you or me?

JOE: That's no answer. Get down to brass tacks. Christ, gimme a break, too! A coffee and java all day. I'm hungry, too. Babe. I'd work my fingers to the bone if—

EDNA: I'll open a can of salmon.

JOE: Not now. Tell me what to do!

EDNA: I'm not God!

JOE: Jeez, I wish I was a kid again and didn't have to think about the next minute.

EDNA: But you're not a kid and you do have to think about the next minute. You got two blondie kids sleeping in the next room. They need food and clothes. I'm not mentioning anything else—But we're stalled like a flivver in the snow. For five years I laid awake at night listening to my heart pound. For God's sake, do something, Joe, get wise. Maybe get your buddies together, maybe go on strike for better money. Poppa did it during the war and they won out. I'm turning into a sour old nag.

JOE: (defending himself): Strikes don't work!

EDNA: Who told you?

JOE: Besides that means not a nickel a week while we're out. Then when it's over they don't take you back.

EDNA: Suppose they don't. What's to lose?

JOE: Well, we're averaging six-seven dollars a week now.

In 1936, a new kind of labor strike took hold. By "sitting down" on the job, union members discouraged bosses from bringing in strike breakers to take their place. Shown here are workers striking in an auto plant in Michigan.



Edna: That just pays for the rent.

JOE: That is something, Edna.

EDNA: It isn't. They'll push you down to three and four a week before you know it. Then you'll say, "That's somethin'," too!

JOE: There's too many cabs on the street, that's the whole damn trouble.

EDNA: Let the company worry about that, you big fool! If their cabs didn't make a profit, they'd take them off the streets. Or maybe you think they're in business just to pay Joe Mitchell's rent!

JOE: You don't know a-b-c, Edna.

EDNA: I know this—your boss is making suckers outa you boys every minute. Yes, and suckers out of all the wives and the poor innocent kids who'll grow up with crooked spines and sick bones. Sure, I see it in the papers, how good orange juice is for kids. But damnit our kids get colds one on top of the other. They look like little ghosts. Betty never saw a grapefruit. I took her to the store last week and she pointed to a stack of grapefruits. "What's that!" she said. My God, Joe—the world is supposed to be for all of us—

[Joe and Edna continue to fight. Edna threatens to leave Joe for her old boyfriend Bud Haas, who has a better job than Joe. In anger, Joe threatens to physically hurt Edna.]

EDNA: You don't scare me that much! (Indicates a half inch on her finger.)

JOE: This is what I slaved for!

EDNA: Tell it to your boss.

JOE: He don't give a damn for you or me!

EDNA: That's what I say.

JOE: Don't change the subject!

EDNA: This is the subject, the exact subject! Your boss makes this subject. I never saw him in my life, but he's putting ideas in my head a mile a minute. He's giving your kids that fancy disease called the rickets. He's making a jelly-fish outa you and putting wrinkles in my face. This is the subject every inch of the way! He's throwing me into Bud Haas' lap. When in hell will you get wise—

JOE: I'm not so dumb as you think! But you are talking like a red.

EDNA: I don't know what that means. But when a man knocks you down you get up and kiss his fist! You gutless piece of baloney.

JOE: One man can't—

EDNA: (with great joy): I don't say one man! I say a hundred, a thousand, a whole million, I say. But start in your own union. Get those hack boys together! Sweep out those racketeers like a pile of dirt! Stand up like men and fight for the crying kids and wives. Goddamnit! I'm tired of slavery and sleepless nights.

JOE: (with her): Sure, sure!...

EDNA: Yes. Get brass toes on your shoes and know where to kick!

JOE: (suddenly jumping up and kissing his wife full on the mouth): Listen, Edna, I'm goin' down to 174th Street to look up Lefty Costello. Lefty was saying the other day... (He suddenly stops.) How about this Haas guy?

EDNA: Get out of here!

JOE: I'll be back! (Runs out. For a moment EDNA stands triumphant. There is a blackout and when the regular lights come up, JOE MITCHELL is concluding what he has been saying):

JOE: You guys know this stuff better than me. We gotta walk out!

(Abruptly he turns and goes back to his seat.)

Blackout



Born to politically active parents in Iowa, Meridel LeSueur made a long career of writing short stories, novels, and articles, many of them with feminist or socialist slants. She began writing fiction in the 1920s, while she acted in Hollywood silent films. In the 1930s, LeSueur became active in the labor movement and other liberal causes. Today she is regarded as an astute chronicler of women's problems and achievements.

By 1932, the Great Depression had brought terrible suffering to millions of Americans. The mood of the country—particularly in cities, where unemployment and hunger had hit hardest—was of absolute despair. Unable to pay rent or mortgage, thousands were evicted from their homes. Many homeless families built shacks along the outskirts of large cities. Less commonly known is that approximately three million of the 13 million unemployed

*“The street . . .
now
becomes a
mart”*

Americans were women. Often men left their families in search of work, and women needed to find jobs. Disillusioned with President Hoover's inability to improve the economy, voters in November 1932 elected President Roosevelt on his “The street...

now becomes a mart” platform to institute a “New Deal.” At the center of the New Deal was a belief that the federal government should go to greater lengths to protect the needy and promote the public good.

About that time, LeSueur began writing articles that documented the lives of poverty-stricken Americans in the Midwest. She and other liberal activists described what they saw as the worst effects of the capitalist system—financial inequality, exploitation of workers, and the plight of women and minorities. They relayed their stories in the form of “reportage,” a new literary genre. A type of biased journalism, reportage used a “three-dimensional” narration style, intended to help readers see, feel, and “experience” the event. Borrowing characteristics from short stories, reportage features strong characterization and heightened detail for persuasive effect. “Women on the Breadlines” is LeSueur's first work of reportage. It appeared in the communist journal, *The New Masses*, in 1932.

Women on the Breadlines

I am sitting in the city free employment bureau. It's the women's section. We have been sitting here now for four hours. We sit here every day, waiting for a job. There are no jobs. Most of us have had no breakfast. Some have had scant rations for over a year. Hunger makes a human being lapse into a state of lethargy especially city hunger. Is there any place else in the world where a human being is supposed to go hungry amidst plenty without an outcry, without protest, where only the boldest steal or kill for bread, and the timid crawl the streets, hunger like the beak of a terrible bird at the vitals?

We sit looking at the floor. No one dares think of the coming winter. There are only a few more days of summer. Everyone is anxious to get work to lay up something for that long siege of bitter cold. But there is no work. Sitting in the room we all know it. That is why we don't talk much. We look at the floor dreading to see that knowledge in each other's eyes. There is a kind of humiliation in it. We look away from each other...

So we sit hour after hour, day after day, waiting for a job to come in. There are many women for a single job. A thin sharp woman sits inside a wire cage looking at a book. For four hours we have watched her looking at that book. She has a hard little eye. In the small bare room there are half a dozen women sitting on the benches waiting...

This is a domestic employment bureau. Most of the women who come here are middle-aged, some have families, some have raised their families and are now alone, some have men who are out of work. Hard times and the man leaves to hunt for

work. He doesn't find it. He drifts on. The woman probably doesn't hear from him for a long time. She expects it. She isn't surprised. She struggles alone to feed the many mouths. Sometimes she gets help from the charities.... If she's proud then she starves silently, leaving her children to find work, coming home after a day's searching to wrestle with her house, her children.

Some such story is written on the faces of all these women....

A girl we have seen every day all summer went crazy yesterday at the YW. She went into hysterics, stamping her feet and screaming.

She hadn't had work for eight months. "You've got to give me something," she kept saying. The woman in charge flew into a rage that probably came from days and days of suffering on her part, because she is unable to give jobs, having none. She flew into a rage at the girl and there they were facing each other in a rage both helpless, helpless. This woman told me once that she could hardly bear the suffering she saw, hardly hear it, that she couldn't eat sometimes and had nightmares at night.

So they stood there, the two women, in a rage, the girl weeping and the woman shouting at her. In the eight months of unemployment she had gotten ragged, and the woman was shouting that she would not send her out like that. "Why don't you shine your shoes?" she kept scolding the girl, and the girl kept sobbing and sobbing because she was starving....

Sitting here waiting for a job, the women have been talking in low voices about the girl Ellen. They talk in low voices with not too much pity for her, unable to see through the mist of their own torment. "What happened to Ellen?" one of them asks. She knows the answer already. We all know it.

A young girl who went around with Ellen tells about seeing her last evening back of a cafe downtown, outside the kitchen door, kicking, showing her legs so that the cook came out and gave her some food and some men gathered in the alley and threw small coin on the ground for a look at her legs. And the girl says enviously that Ellen had a swell breakfast and treated her to one too, that cost two dollars....

"I guess she'll go on the street now," a thin woman says faintly, and no one takes the trouble to comment further. Like every commodity now the body is difficult to sell and the girls say you're lucky if you get fifty cents.

It's very difficult and humiliating to sell one's body. Perhaps it would make it clear if one were to imagine having to go out on the street to sell, say, one's overcoat. Suppose you have to sell your coat so you can have breakfast and a place to sleep, say, for fifty cents. You decide to sell your only coat. You take it off and put it on your arm. The street, that has before been just a street, now becomes a mart, some thing entirely different. You must approach someone now and admit you are destitute and are now selling your clothes, your most intimate possessions. Everyone will watch you talking to the stranger showing him your overcoat, what a good coat it is. People will stop and watch curiously. You will be quite naked on the street. It is even harder to try to sell one's self, more humiliating. It is even humiliating to try to sell one's labor. When there is no buyer.

Many homeless Americans during the Great Depression lived in shantytowns on the outskirts of cities. Such sites were often called "Hoovervilles" to criticize President Herbert Hoover's economic policies.



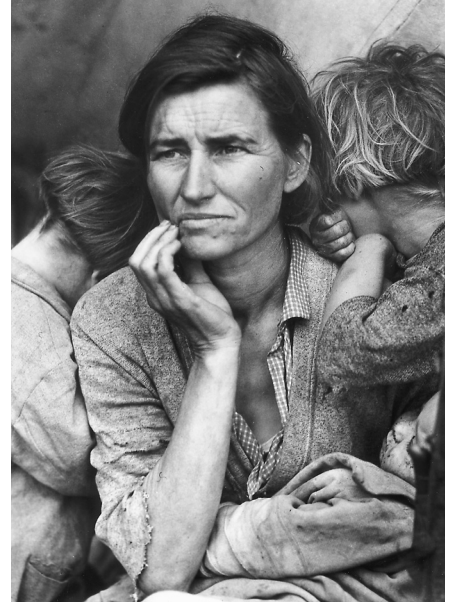
Dorothea Lange: Stories in a Frame

"I saw...the hungry and desperate mother"

As part of the Second New Deal, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) was charged with helping farmers and migrant workers during the Great Depression. The FSA Historical Section employed about a dozen photographers to help document the suffering of rural Americans. The photographers' efforts were intended to stir sympathy and support for relief programs.

In seven years, FSA photographers traveled hundreds of thousands of miles and amassed more than 250,000 negatives. They dealt with challenging circumstances on the road. Equipment failed in extreme weather conditions, and moisture sometimes spoiled film. However, FSA photographers produced some of the finest social documentary images to date. Some became artists in their own right.

Today, one of the best-known FSA photographers is Dorothea Lange, who worked for the project for five years until 1940. Many art historians admire her ability to capture a story in a single frame; others appreciate the surprising intimacy her portraits share. In her biography, *Photographs of a Lifetime*, Lange relates the story behind her most famous portrait, *Migrant Mother*, captured in March 1936.



It was raining, the camera bags were packed, and I had on the seat beside me in the car the results of my long trip, the box containing all those rolls and packs of exposed film ready to mail back to Washington.... Sixty-five miles an hour for seven hours would get me home to my family that night, and my eyes were glued to the wet and gleaming highway that stretched out ahead...

I was on my way and barely saw a crude sign with pointing arrow which flashed by at the side of the road, saying PEA PICKERS CAMP. But out of the corner of my eye, I did see it... Having well convinced myself for twenty miles that I could continue on, I did the opposite. Almost without realizing what I was doing, I made a U-turn on the empty highway.... I was following instinct, not reason; I drove into that wet soggy camp and parked my car like a homing pigeon.

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions.... She told me her age, that she was 32. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold tires from her car to buy food. There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her, and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it.



Pulitzer Prize winner and Nobel laureate John Steinbeck wrote several classic works of American literature. He typically spotlighted poor, oppressed characters in his novels and short stories, many of which were set in his native state of California. Raised in the fertile Salinas Valley, Steinbeck absorbed a love for the land that produced richly detailed descriptions of place and time. Between 1937 and 1939, he lived and worked with Oklahoma migrants looking for farm work. Based on that experience he wrote his masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath*. The novel details the migration of the Joad family, tenant farmers fleeing the Oklahoma Dust Bowl. A year after its 1939 publication, *The Grapes of Wrath* won Steinbeck the Pulitzer Prize. He continued to publish well into the 1960s, but Steinbeck remains best known for his early works from the Depression years.

*“If the
dust only
wouldn’t
fly”*

In the decade preceding the Great Depression, farmers in the Great Plains plowed up millions of acres of semi-arid grasslands to plant crops like corn, wheat, and cotton. From the early to mid-1930s, with little grass and few trees to secure the topsoil, drought and wind produced dust storms from Texas to North Dakota—a region that came to be called the “Dust Bowl.” The southern plains were hardest hit by the agricultural disaster. Thousands of farmers and sharecroppers left their land in search of better lives in California. Such migrants were collectively known as “Okies,” in reference to Oklahomans who left their homes.

With the institution of President Roosevelt’s Second New Deal in 1935, Congress created the Resettlement Administration to help poor farmers. By 1937, this program was replaced by the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA loaned about \$1 billion to help tenant farmers buy property. However, many former tenant farmers had become migrant workers and did not meet residency requirements for the entitlement. Some simply lacked information about the programs.

The following excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath* details a common way that farmers were forced to vacate their property by landlords or lenders. Steinbeck portrays the economic system as a “monster.”

The Grapes of Wrath Chapter Five

The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came. They came in closed cars, and they felt the dry earth with their fingers, and sometimes they drove big earth augers into the ground for soil tests. The tenants, from their sun-beaten dooryards, watched uneasily when the closed cars drove along the fields. And at last the owner men drove into the dooryards and sat in their cars to talk out of the windows. The tenant men stood beside the cars for a while, and then squatted on their hams and found sticks with which to mark the dust.

In the open doors the women stood looking out, and behind them the children—corn-headed children, with wide eyes, one bare foot on top of the other bare foot, and the toes working. The women and the children watched their men talking to the owner men. They were silent. Some of the owner men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one

could not be an owner unless one were cold. And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves. Some of them hated the mathematics that drove them, and some were afraid, and some worshiped the mathematics because it provided a refuge from thought and from feeling. If a bank or a finance company owned the land, the owner man said, The Bank—or the Company—needs—wants—insists—must have—as though the Bank—or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had enslaved them. These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time. Some of the owner men were a little proud to be slaves to such cold and powerful masters. The owner men sat in the cars and explained. You know the land is poor. You've scabbled at it long enough, God knows.

The squatting tenant men nodded and wondered and drew figures in the dust, and yes, they knew, God knows. If the dust only wouldn't fly. If the top would only stay on the soil, it might not be so bad.

The owner men went on leading to their point: You know the land's getting poorer. You know what cotton does to the land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it.

The squatters nodded—they knew, God knew. If they could only rotate the crops they might pump blood back into the land.

Well, it's too late. And the owner men explained the workings and the thinkings of the monster that was stronger than they were. A man can hold land if he can just eat and pay taxes; he can do that.

Yes, he can do that until his crops fail one day and he has to borrow money from the bank.

But—you see, a bank or a company can't do that, because those creatures don't breathe air, don't eat side-meat. They breathe profits; they eat the interest on money. If they don't get it, they die the way you die without air, without side-meat. It is a sad thing, but it is so. It is just so.

The squatting men raised their eyes to understand. Can't we just hang on? Maybe the next year will be a good year. God knows how much cotton next year. And with all the wars—God knows what price cotton will bring. Don't they make explosives out of cotton? And uniforms? Get enough wars and cotton'll hit the ceiling. Next year, maybe. They look up questioningly.

We can't depend on it. The bank—the monster has to have profits all the time. It can't wait. It'll die. No, taxes go on. When the monster stops growing it dies. It can't stay one size.

Soft fingers began to tap the sill of the car window, and hard fingers tightened on the restless drawing sticks. In the doorways of the sun-beaten tenant houses, women sighed and then shifted feet so that the one that had been down was now on top, and the toes working. Dogs came sniffing near the owner cars and wetted on all four tires one after another. And chickens lay in the sunny dust and fluffed their feathers to get the cleansing dust down to the skin. In the little sties the pigs grunted inquiringly over the muddy remnants of the slops.

The squatting men looked down again. What do you want us to do? We can't take less share of the crop—we're halfstarved now. The kids are hungry all the time. We got no clothes, torn an' ragged. If all the neighbors weren't the same, we'd be ashamed to go to meeting.

And at last the owner men came to the point. The tenant system won't work any more. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop. We have to do it. We don't like to do it. But the monster's sick. Something's happened to the monster.

John Steinbeck described the terrible dust storms that plagued the Midwest as follows: "Men and women huddled in their houses, and they tied handkerchiefs over their noses when they went out, and wore goggles to protect their eyes. . . ." Here, a family seeks shelter.



But you'll kill the land with cotton.

We know. We've got to take cotton quick before the land dies. Then we'll sell the land. Lots of families in the East would like to own a piece of land.

The tenant men looked up alarmed. But what'll happen to us? How'll we eat?

You'll have to get off the land. The plows'll go through the dooryard.

And now the squatting men stood up angrily. Grampa took up the land, and he had to kill the Indians and drive them away. And Pa was born here, and he killed weeds and snakes. Then a bad year came and he had to borrow a little money. An' we was born here. There in the door—our children born here. And Pa had to borrow money. The bank owned the land then, but we stayed and we got a little bit of what we raised.

We know that—all that. It's not us, it's the bank. A bank isn't like a man. Or an owner with fifty thousand acres, he isn't like a man either. That's the monster.

Sure, cried the tenant men, but it's our land. We measured it and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it's no good, it's still ours. That's what makes it ours—being born on it, work ing it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it.

We're sorry. It's not us. It's the monster. The bank isn't like a man.

Yes, but the bank is only made of men.

No, you're wrong there—quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. It's the monster. Men made it, but they can't control it.

The tenants cried, Grampa killed Indians, Pa killed snakes for the land. Maybe we can kill banks—they're worse than Indians and snakes. Maybe we got to fight to keep our land, like Pa and Grampa did.

And now the owner men grew angry. You'll have to go.

But it's ours, the tenant men cried. We.....

No. The bank, the monster owns it. You'll have to go.

We'll get our guns, like Grampa when the Indians came. What then?

Well—first the sheriff, and then the troops. You'll be stealing if you try to stay, you'll be murderers if you kill to stay. The monster isn't men, but it can make men do what it wants.

But if we go, where'll we go? How'll we go? We got no money.

We're sorry, said the owner men. The bank, the fifty-thousand-acre owner can't be responsible. You're on land that isn't yours. Once over the line maybe you can pick cotton in the fall. Maybe you can go on relief. Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why, you can reach out anywhere and pick an orange. Why there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there? And the owner men started their cars and rolled away.

Highway 66 was the primary route "Dust Bowl" refugees took to California. Lured by tales of pretty white houses in orange groves, thousands of migrants, like the ones shown here, sold their belongings, left their homes, and drove west in old—often unreliable—cars.



Woody Guthrie: Activist Songwriter

"California is a garden of Eden"

In the 1930s, music—like literature and art—was used to make a social statement. Woody Guthrie, a self-taught musician, was the first to use the folk ballad to spotlight the oppressed and call for change. Born in Oklahoma in 1912, he led a colorful life, which included hopping a train in his early teens and performing music for cash. In the 1930s, Guthrie, like many other victims of the Dust Bowl, was forced to leave his home in Texas and travel from state to state looking for opportunity. His experiences among migrant workers inspired him to compose many works and ultimately become heavily involved in the labor movement. By the end of his prolific life in 1967, he had written about a thousand songs. According to music critics, Guthrie's politically charged lyrics have influenced several contemporary musicians, including Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen.



The following song, "(If You Ain't Got the) Do Re Mi," was recorded in 1940 on Guthrie's album *Dust Bowl Ballads*. It describes the disappointment of migrants when they find life in California as hard as that on the Great Plains.

*Lots of folks back East, they say leavin' home every day,
Beatin' the hot old dusty way to the California line.
'Cross the desert sands they roll, getting out of that old dust bowl,
They think they're going to a sugar bowl, but here's what they find—
Now, the police at the port of entry say,
"You're number fourteen thousand for today."*

CHORUS:

*Oh, if you ain't got the do-re-mi, folks, if you ain't got the do-re-mi,
Why, you better go back to beautiful Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Georgia, Tennessee.
California is a garden of Eden, a paradise to live in or see;
But believe it or not, you won't find it so hot
If you ain't got the do-re-mi.*

*If you want to buy you a home or farm, that can't do nobody harm,
Or take your vacation by the mountains or sea.
Don't swap your old cow for a car, you'd better stay right where you are,
You'd better take this little tip from me.
'Cause I look through the want ads every day
But the headlines on the papers always say:*

[Chorus]



Unable to be categorized easily, the works of Ralph Ellison have confounded critics and enlightened readers for decades. Born in Oklahoma City, Ellison studied music at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama before turning his hand to writing. In 1936, he moved to New York City, then the center of the African-American literary world. However, many rich literary patrons from the 1920s had lost their money in the Great Depression and could no longer afford to encourage young writers. Without a patron, Ellison began documenting folklore for the Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1939. Most critics agree that the interviews he conducted with African Americans in Harlem gave him material and insights for his classic novel, *The Invisible Man*, published in 1952.

*“the Lawd
made all
men equal”*

Ellison's move to New York coincided with President Roosevelt's Second New Deal. As part of that plan, in 1935 Congress instituted the WPA, a program that invested \$5 billion in job creation. During the next eight years, the WPA restored the dignity of unemployed Americans by giving jobs to about 8.5 million, including laborers, students, teachers, writers, dramatists, musicians, and artists. Through the Federal Writers Project, authors composed travel guides and documented folklore.

Ellison conducted this WPA interview—sometimes titled “Colonial Park” or “Eli Luster”—in Harlem in 1939. Although the subject's name, Eli Luster, is fictitious, his voice conveys a realistic “slice-of-life” monologue. Ellison mimics the speaker's dialect and colloquialisms, lending authenticity to the subject's ideas and values. While many intellectuals and writers of the Great Depression took an interest in liberal ideologies, many ordinary Americans had more conservative notions about how equality between races and classes would be achieved. Eli Luster takes a Christian view of equality and predicts that the Apocalypse, or God's dramatic intervention, will put sinful matters right.

Colonial Park

It's too bad about them two submarines. They can experiment an' everything, but they cain't go but so far. Then God steps in.... Take back in 1912. They built a ship called the Titanic. Think they built it over in England; I think that was where it was built. Anyway they said it couldn't sink. It was for all the big rich folks: John Jacob Astor—all the big aristocrats. Nothing the color of this could git on the boat. Naw suh! Didn't want nothing look like me on it. One girl went down to go with her madam and they told her she couldn't go. They didn't want nothing look like this on there. They told the madam, “You can go, but she cain't.” The girl's madam got mad and told 'em if the girl didn't go she wasn't going. And she didn't neither. Yessuh, she stayed right here.

Well, they got this big boat on the way over to England. [In reality, the Titanic was sailing toward the United States when it sank.] They said she couldn't sink—that was man talking.... Had the richest folks in the world on it just having a big tune. Got over near England, almost ready to dock, and ups and hits an iceberg, and sank! That was the boat they said was so big it couldn't sink. They didn't want nothing look like this on it, no sir! And don't you think that woman wasn't glad she stuck by that girl. She was plenty glad. Man can go only so far. Then God steps in. Sho, they can experiment around. They can do a heap. They can even make a man. But they cain't make him breathe....

God's the only one can give life. God made all this, and he made it for everybody. And he made it equal. This breeze and these green leaves out here is for everybody. The same sun's shining down on everybody. This breeze comes from God and

man can't do nothing about it. I breathe the same air old man Ford and old man Rockefeller breathe. They got all the money and I ain't got nothing, but they got to breathe the same air I do.

Man cain't make no man....For nineteen hundred years man's had things his way. He's been running the world to suit hisself... Adam an' Eve sinned in the Garden and God left the world to itself. Men been running it like they want to. They been running it like they want to for nineteen hundred years. Rich folks done took all the land. They got all the money. Men down to the City Hall making fifty thousand dollars a year and nothing like this cain't even scrub the marble floors or polish the brass what they got down there.

Old man Ford and J.P. Morgan got all the money and folks in this part cain't even get on relief. But you just watch: the Lawd made all men equal and pretty soon now it's gonna be that way again. I'm a man. I breathe the same air old man Ford breathes cause God made man equal. God formed man in his own image.... One drop of God's blood made all the nations in the world: Africans, Germans, Chinamen, Jews, Indians; all come from one drop of God's blood. God took something outa Adam and made woman, he made Eve.... Eve started having children. Some of 'em was black and some of 'em was white. But they was all equal. God didn't know no color; we all the same. All he want from man is his heart thumping the blood. Them what take advantage of skin like this got to come by God. They gonna pay.

They tell me 'bout George Washington. He was the first president this country ever had. First thing I heard was he said to keep us look like this down in the cornfield. He tole 'em, "don't let 'em have no guns. You ain't to let 'em have no knife. Don't let 'em have nothing." He tole 'em if they wanted to have a strong nation to keep us down. He said if ever they git guns in they hands they'll rise up and take the land; don't let 'em have nothing. But he didn't say nothing about no pick and ax!

They been carrying out what he said. God didn't say nothing. That was just man's idea and here in this country they been carrying out what old man George Washington said. But God's time is coming. Today you hear all these folks got millions of dollars talking 'bout God. They ain't fooling nobody though. They even got IN GOD WE TRUST on all the silver money. But it don't mean nothing. This sun and air is God's. It don't belong to nobody and cain't no few get it all to theyself. People around this park can have all they want. But you wait. God's gonna straighten it all out.

Look at the dust blowing in the wind. That's the way all the money they got gonna be. You see things, folks they call white, but man ain't got no idea of how white God gon' make things. Money won't be worth no more'n that dust blowing on the ground. Won't be no men down to Washington making fifty thousand dollars a week and folks cain't hardly make eighteen dollars a month. Everybody'll be equal, in God's time.

GENEVIEVE TAGGARD (1894-1948)



An accomplished poet, Genevieve Taggard was well recognized during her lifetime. Her first volume of poetry was published in 1922. Thereafter, Taggard's literary career expanded to include editing a poetry anthology and writing a biography of Emily Dickinson. Like many authors in the 1930s, Taggard was a staunch liberal, supporting, among other causes, the advancement of minorities.

Those views were shared by President Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor Roosevelt. Her influence helped open doors in the Roosevelt administration to African Americans. For example, Mary McLeod Bethune—an educator and a friend of Mrs. Roosevelt—was appointed to head a new

department in the National Youth Administration, the Office of Minority Affairs. However, segregation remained a primary feature of American life during the Great Depression.

*“Something
spoke in my
patriot heart.”*

In 1939, the famous operatic singer Marian Anderson was denied access to perform at the concert hall of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) in Washington, D.C. Many believed this decision was made because she was black. Outraged, Mrs. Roosevelt canceled her membership in the DAR and helped coordinate Anderson's Easter concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial instead. Noted for her singing of spirituals, Anderson herself devoted much time to the civil rights crusade.

"Proud Day," published in 1939, is Taggard's response to Anderson's triumphant Lincoln Memorial performance. She notes the setting and the gaze of President Lincoln's statue not only to paint the event itself, but also to allude to slavery and the fierce war that was waged over it. That spirituals helped African Americans endure and overcome slavery was another moving parallel in this historic concert. The images and associations of Anderson's performance were so powerful that Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. would decide to give his now-famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the very same spot 24 years later.

Proud Day

*Our sister sang on the Lincoln steps. Proud day.
We came to hear our sister sing. Proud day.
Voice out of depths, poise with memory.
What goodness, what splendor lay long under foot!
Our sister with a lasso of sorrow and triumph
Caught America, made it listen. Proud day.*

*The peaceful Lincoln sat so still. Proud day.
Waiting the Republic to be born again. Proud day.
Never, never forget how the dark people rewarded us
Giving out of their want and their little freedom
This blazing star. This blazing star.
Something spoke in my patriot heart. Proud day.*

Marian Anderson's 1939 Easter concert on the Lincoln Memorial steps was a powerful event, not only because of the grand setting, but also because of her personal stand for civil rights.





The Great Depression: A Time of Loss

After you read the excerpts by Clifford Odets, Meridel LeSueur, and John Steinbeck, carefully think about each of the characters below. For each of the characters, describe how they experienced loss. What effects did the loss have? How did the character combat it? What was the perpetrator of the loss?

Waiting for Lefty:

1. Joe
2. Edna

Women on the Breadlines:

3. Narrator
4. The Girl



UNIT 4: THEME 3 INTRODUCTION



Mired in the Great Depression of the 1930s, U.S. leaders were more concerned with issues at home than with those abroad. Meanwhile, terrible events were unfolding in Europe and the Far East. German Chancellor Adolf Hitler was aggressively annexing neighboring territories, while Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was expanding his reach in southeastern Europe and North Africa. In 1937, Japanese troops stormed China, revealing their own imperial ambitions. By the time the United States formally entered World War II in December 1941, Hitler controlled most of Europe, and Japan's military machine had moved across Southeast Asia and the western Pacific. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt faced the overwhelming task of fighting a two-front war on an unprecedented scale.

By the early 1940s, preparation for this massive conflict had lifted the nation out of its economic depression. When millions of U.S. troops left the country, wartime production demanded more workers and opened up well-paying, skilled jobs to women and minorities for the first time.

Despite valiant civilian and military contributions by all groups, on the homefront racism took sinister forms. About 100,000 Japanese Americans were forcibly removed from their homes and held in internment camps for most of the war. Race riots flared, as black workers began to demand better working and living conditions.

By September 1945, American military and economic might had won the day. The victory however, came with high costs and responsibilities. Altogether about 290,000 Americans died in combat, and more than 670,000 were wounded. Included in the billions of dollars Congress spent on defense was a massive effort to develop the atomic bomb. The decision to use two such devices against Japan brought a swift end to the war, but the advent of nuclear weapons opened a Pandora's box of horror, anxiety, and nuclear proliferation for decades to come.

For today's readers, the literature of World War II is as varied as the men and women who lived through the conflict. Some soldiers, such as Leon Uris, came back and wrote novels about battlefront drama. Black writer Countee Cullen noted the irony in America's fight against racism abroad when segregation, poll taxes, and race riots persisted in the United States. War correspondents, such as Martha Gellhorn, reported on conflict from the front lines, while columnists at home, such as E.B. White, commented on American attitudes. Many minorities recounted wartime persecution and

Featured Authors

E.B. White

Leon Uris

Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

James D. Houston

Countee Cullen

Martha Gellhorn

Elie Wiesel

John Hersey

atrocities in arresting autobiographies, such as those written by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and Elie Wiesel. These authors give penetrating insight into the enormous scale of military conflict, heroism, and human suffering that characterized the 20th century's last world war.

E.B. WHITE (1899–1985)



Elwyn Brooks White was born in Mount Vernon, New York, and graduated from Cornell University in 1921. A journalist, essayist, and stylist, White is well known for his children's books, particularly *Charlotte's Web*. For more than 40 years, he wrote columns and articles for magazines such as *The New Yorker* and *Harper's Magazine*. In 1979, White revised the famous style book, *Elements of Style*, which was originally written by his professor, William Strunk Jr. White's unique voice is known for its simple grace and bemused observations.

While White was writing his column for *Harper's Magazine*, World War II was gearing up in Europe. In 1938, Hitler annexed Austria under the pretense of uniting all Germans under one nation. He then overtook a mostly German populated region of Czechoslovakia, called the Sudetenland. Flouting his promise to British and French leaders that the Sudetenland would be his last territorial conquest, Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia within six months. When Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

The first year of World War II in Europe was disastrous. In the spring of 1940, Hitler overtook Denmark, Norway, Belgium, and the Netherlands. In June, France fell to Germany, and German bombs were raining on England.

The following essay by White appeared in July of 1940, when President Roosevelt was having secret meetings with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to discuss an alliance. White criticizes the general mood of some Americans regarding events in Europe and voices his support for freedom, a theme that would echo in President Roosevelt's State of the Union address in January 1941. During that famous speech, President Roosevelt helped turn isolationist Americans in favor of war by describing basic human rights—ideas that would later become the foundation of the United Nations. He said, "In future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms. The first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world. The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world. The third is freedom from want... everywhere in the world. The fourth is freedom from fear... anywhere in the world."

*"I am in love
with freedom"*

Freedom

I have often noticed on my trips up to the city that people have recut their clothes to follow the fashion. On my last trip, however, it seemed to me that people had remodeled their ideas too—taken in their convictions a little at the waist, shortened the sleeves of their resolve, and fitted themselves out in a new intellectual ensemble copied from a smart design out of the very latest page of history. It seemed to me they had strung along with Paris a little too long.

I confess to a disturbed stomach. I feel sick when I find anyone adjusting his mind to the new tyranny that is succeeding abroad. Because of its fundamental strictures, fascism does not seem to me to admit of any compromise or any rationalization, and I resent the patronizing air of persons who find in my plain belief in freedom a sign of immaturity. If it is boyish to believe that a human being should live free, then I'll gladly arrest my development and let the rest of the world grow up.

I shall report some of the strange remarks I heard in New York. One man told me that he thought perhaps the Nazi ideal

was a sounder ideal than our constitutional system “because have you ever noticed what fine alert young faces the young German soldiers have in the newsreel?” He added: “Our American youngsters spend all their time at the movies—they’re a mess.” That was his summation of the case, his interpretation of the new Europe. Such a remark leaves me pale and shaken. If it represents the peak of our intelligence, then the steady march of despotism will not receive any considerable setback at our shores.

Another man informed me that our democratic notion of popular government was decadent and not worth bothering about— “because England is really rotten and the industrial towns there are a disgrace.” That was the only reason he gave for the hopelessness of democracy; and he seemed mightily pleased with himself, as though he were more familiar than most with the anatomy of decadence, and had detected subtler aspects of the situation than were discernible to the rest of us.

Another man assured me that anyone who took any kind of government seriously was a gullible fool. You could be sure, he said, that there is nothing but corruption “because of the way Clemenceau acted at Versailles.” He said it didn’t make any difference really about this war. It was just another war. Having relieved himself of this majestic bit of reasoning, he subsided.

Another individual, discovering signs of zeal creeping into my blood, berated me for having lost my detachment, my pure skeptical point of view. He announced that he wasn’t going to be swept away by all this nonsense, but would prefer to remain in the role of innocent bystander, which he said was the duty of any intelligent person. (I noticed, however, that he phoned later to qualify his remark, as though he had lost some of his innocence in the cab on the way home.)

Those are just a few samples of the sort of talk that seemed to be going round—talk that was full of defeatism and disillusion and sometimes of a too studied innocence. Men are not merely annihilating themselves at a great rate these days, but they are telling one another enormous lies, grandiose fibs. Such remarks as I heard are fearfully disturbing in their cumulative effect. They are more destructive than dive bombers and mine fields, for they challenge not merely one’s immediate position but one’s main defenses. They seemed to me to issue either from persons who could never have really come to grips with freedom, so as to understand her, or from renegades. Where I expected to find indignation, I found paralysis, or a sort of dim acquiescence, as in a child who is dully swallowing a distasteful pill. I was advised of the growing anti-Jewish sentiment by a man who seemed to be watching the phenomenon of intolerance not through tears of shame but with clear intellectual gaze, as through a well-ground lens.

The least a man can do at such a time is to declare himself and tell where he stands. I believe in freedom with the same burning delight, the same faith, the same intense abandon that attended its birth on this continent more than a century and a half ago. I am writing my declaration rapidly, much as though I were shaving to catch a train. Events abroad give a man a feeling of being pressed for time. Actually I do not believe I am pressed for time, and I apologize to the reader for a false impression that may be created. I just want to tell, before I get slowed down, that I am in love with freedom and that it is an affair of long standing and that it is a fine state to be in, and that I am deeply suspicious of people who are beginning to adjust to fascism and dictators merely because they are succeeding in war. From such adaptable natures a smell rises. I pinch my nose.

For as long as I can remember I have had a sense of living somewhat freely in a natural world. I don’t mean I enjoyed freedom of action, but my existence seemed to have the quality of freeness. I traveled with secret papers pertaining to a divine conspiracy. Intuitively I’ve always been aware of the vitally important pact that a man has with himself, to be all things to himself, and to be identified with all things, to stand self-reliant, taking advantage of his haphazard connection with a planet, riding his luck, and following his bent with the tenacity of a hound. My first and greatest love affair was with this thing we call freedom, this lady of infinite allure, this dangerous and beautiful and sublime being who restores and supplies us all.

It began with the haunting intimation (which I presume every child receives) of his mystical inner life; of God in man; of nature publishing herself through the “I.” This elusive sensation is moving and memorable. It comes early in life: a boy, we’ll say, sitting on the front steps on a summer night, thinking of nothing in particular, suddenly hearing as with a new perception and as though for the first time the pulsing sound of crickets, overwhelmed with the novel sense of identification, with the natural company of insects and grass and night, conscious of a faint answering cry to the universal perplexing question: “What is I?” Or a little girl, returning from the grave of a pet bird and leaning with her elbows on the

windowsill, inhaling the unfamiliar draught of death, suddenly seeing herself as part of the complete story. Or an older youth, encountering for the first time a great teacher who by some chance word or mood awakens something and the youth beginning to breathe as an individual and conscious of strength in his vitals. I think the sensation must develop in many men as a feeling of identity with God—an eruption of the spirit caused by allergies and the sense of divine existence as distinct from mere animal existence. This is the beginning of the affair with freedom.

But a man's free condition is of two parts: the instinctive freeness he experiences as an animal dweller on a planet, and the practical liberties he enjoys as a privileged member of human society. The latter is, of the two, more generally understood, more widely admired, more violently challenged and discussed. It is the practical and apparent side of freedom. The United States, almost alone today, offers the liberties and the privileges and the tools of freedom. In this land the citizens are still invited to write their plays and books, to paint their pictures, to meet for discussion, to dissent as well as to agree, to mount soapboxes in the public square, to enjoy education in all subjects without censorship, to hold court and judge one another, to compose music, to talk politics with their neighbors without wondering whether the secret police are listening, to exchange ideas as well as goods, to kid the government when it needs kidding, and to read real news of real events instead of phony news manufactured by a paid agent of the state. This is a fact and should give every person pause.

LEON URIS (1924–2003)



Born in Baltimore, Leon Uris traveled widely and wrote many bestselling novels. In early 1942, shortly after World War II broke out, Uris quit high school and joined the U.S. Marine Corps. His first novel, *Battle Cry*, published in 1953, drew heavily on his World War II experiences as a radio operator in the Pacific theater. Uris went on to write other historical fiction novels, most of them expansive and action-filled. His stories often center on oppressed peoples, including those in Israel and Ireland.

On December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes dealt a crushing blow to U.S. military installations at Pearl Harbor, on the Hawaiian island of Oahu. The next day, the United States declared war on Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, and Congress acknowledged a state of war with those Axis powers.

After Pearl Harbor, the United States and its allies rationalized that they needed to concentrate on defeating Germany first. However, in the summer of 1942, while Allied planes were bombing German cities, American forces won an important victory over the Japanese fleet at Midway Island. Thereafter, U.S. troops began a coordinated islandhopping campaign across the Pacific to protect Australia from Japanese occupation while moving into position to attack Japan itself. One of the first efforts by U.S. land forces was an attempt to evict the Japanese from the Solomon Islands, off the northeast coast of Australia.

Between August 1942 and February 1943, U.S. forces mounted a series of land, sea, and air battles on the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons. After six long months, U.S. troops took the island, inflicting heavy losses on the Japanese.

The following excerpt from Uris' first novel, *Battle Cry*, vividly illustrates the experiences of a company of marine radio operators during this long siege in the jungles of Guadalcanal.

*“How long
had we been in
the mud?”*

Battle Cry

Part 3, Chapter 7

January 19, 1943

How long had we been in mud? Only six days? We were up to our asses in mud. It was turning evening and the rain would be coming soon to make more mud. It was nearly knee deep in this ravine. The hills were slick and slimy, the air was heavy and putrid with the smell of dead Japs. You could smell one a mile away. The whiskerino contest was off to a good start, only you couldn't see the whiskers for the mud. Mud cakes in so thick on the face and body and the fast-rotting dungarees that it not only seemed the uniform of the day but our very flesh covering.

The drive had been slow, radio operation almost nil. We used one set, a TBX, to Regiment. Regiment's code was Topeka; we were Topeka White. Due to the snail's pace and the terrain, telephone squad carried most of the load in keeping communications. My boys were used as pack mules. They assisted the telephone men when needed. Mostly they made several trips a day to the beach supply dump, over glassy ridges, two miles to the coast. Back again in blistering sun, carrying five-gallon cans of water, dragged with curses back to the CP [command post]. It was a lifeline. They packed heavy boxes of ammunition, C-ration, D-ration, the chocolate candy bars that tasted like Ex-Lax but held enough vitamins to sustain a man for a day. They walked, limped, and crawled the tortuous miles back and forth to the dump like a line of ants, worn and beaten but coming back again for another load.

At darkness they'd crawl in holes in the mud to sleep until their round of guard duty—attempt to sleep with swarms of bugs all around, and the hated anopheles zinging down and biting into the flesh. And even as the mosquitoes bit and sucked blood, the Marines couldn't raise a dead-tired arm to slap them off.

We hadn't seen a Jap, not a live one. Only the dead with their terrible stench. The riflemen left them there for us to bunk with. But live ones were there. You could feel them all about, peeking at you from the treetops ... from the brush ... watching your every move.

In the hole at night you'd huddle next to your mate to stop the shakes. Getting malaria? Hell no, just shaking wet and the mud sliding around in your boondockers. Too beat out to think, even about home. Hard to sleep ... the jungle was alive with silence. It took time before you could tell a land crab from a Jap. Doc Kyser emptied a whole drum from his tommy gun into a bush one night, and it was a land crab. After a while you don't mind them crawling over you. You reached automatically for your knife and stabbed it and put it outside the foxhole. If you piled up more land crabs than the next foxhole, you might win a couple cigarettes on a bet.

Thirst ... always the hunger for water. Our water was salted and made your stomach rebel. Once in a while you got that vision of a long cool beer floating by. Nothing to do but lick your lips with your thick dry tongue and try to forget it.

How long had we been in the mud? Only six days.

We pulled into the new CP and waited for the rain to sink us deeper.

"O.K., you guys, dig in."

"Where the hell we going to dig? We're already in."

"On the slopes where it is dry, asshole."

Lieutenant Bryce approached the Feathermerchant, who was on his knees hacking the earth with a pick as Danny shoveled.

"Ski," Bryce said.

"Yes."

"After you finish your hole, dig me in." He unfolded a stretcher he was carrying. "Fix my hole so this fits in."

Zvonski threw down the trenching tool and arose. "Dig your own goddam hole, Lieutenant. I been lugging water cans for eleven hours."

"Don't address me by rank," Bryce hissed nervously "There is no rank up here. You want a sniper to hear you?"

"I sure do."

"I'll have you courtmartialed for this!"

"Like hell you will. Sam says we all dig our own holes. So start digging—and don't dig too close around here."

Bryce turned and left. Ski went over to Gunner Keats. "Bryce got a stretcher from sick bay to sleep on, Jack," he said.

"The dirty...mind your own business, Ski," he answered and took off after Bryce.

There was a swish overhead of an artillery shell. It landed and exploded on our reverse slope.

"Say, ain't the Tenth firing kind of late in the day?"

"Probably just lining up for effect."

Another shell landed, hitting the top of the ridge some two hundred yards away.

"Crazy bastards, don't they know we're down here?"

Huxley rushed to the switchboard. "Contact the firing officer at once. They're coming too close." Another shell crashed, sending us all flopping into the mud. It hit on our side of the hill.

"Hello," Huxley roared as another dropped almost in us, "this is Topeka White. You men are coming in right on our CP."

"But sir," the voice at the other end of the line answered, "we haven't fired since morning."

"Holy Christ!" the Major yelled. "Hit the deck, it's Pistol Pete!"

We scattered but the Jap 108s found us in their sights. We crawled deep in the mire, behind trees and rocks. Our foxholes hadn't been dug yet. Swish ...Whom! Whom! Whom! They roared in and the deck bounced and mud and hot shrapnel splattered everywhere.

Andy and Ski spotted a small cave on the hillside and dashed for it. They hung onto their helmets and braced their backs against the wall. There, opposite them, sat a Jap soldier. He was dead. His eyes had been eaten out by the swarms of maggots which crawled through his body. The stink was excruciating. "I'm getting out of here," Ski said.

Andy jerked him back in. "Hang on, Ski. They're blasting the hell outa us. Go on, put your head down and puke." A concussion wave caused the Jap to buckle over. He dropped, broken in half by rot. Ski put his head down and vomited.

Spanish Joe crawled through the muck to Sister Mary. He put his arm about Marion and held him.

American success in the Pacific theater was linked to the code used by Navajo Indians serving as radio operators. During the war, the Japanese military never did decipher the code, based on the unwritten Navajo language. Shown here are Navajo "code talkers" operating a radio in Bougainville, an island east of Papua New Guinea.



"Why didn't you stay where you were? You're safer there."

"I ... I ... want somebody to look at," he whined.

Highpockets was on his feet scanning the sky. He was the only man standing. He waded through the mire as though his feet were a pair of plungers. "Move over to the other slope, you people," he shouted to one group. He made his way to the switchboard, shouting commands as he went. "Give me the Tenth ... firing officer ... LeForce, go to the ridge and see if you can spot them. Hello, this is Topeka White ... Pete is right on us ... can you give us some help? I'll have a spotter up there in a minute."

"Hit the deck, Sam!" WHOM!

"Hello, this is Huxley, Topeka White ... about two thousand yards to our left. Hello, this is Topeka..."

It was dark before we crawled out. Two hours of it. We dug in and fell off to sleep, not even bothering to stab land crabs.



Poster Art of World War II

The United States government used poster art during World War II as part of its propaganda campaign at home. Posters encouraged people to enlist in the armed forces, work in factories, buy war bonds, and keep sensitive military information to themselves. One witty aphorism reminded Americans that "Loose lips sink ships." Posters also encouraged public support by painting enemies as merchants of death. Artist Thomas Hart Benton designed *The Sowers* (shown here) to bring war's dark reality to citizens at home. It shows fascists as evil monsters, tossing human skulls to the ground.

JEANNE WAKATSUKI HOUSTON (1934-) & JAMES D. HOUSTON (1933-2009)



Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston is a second generation Japanese American. She grew up in southern California and spent three and a half years in Manzanar War Relocation Center (in eastern California's Owens Valley) with her family between 1942 and 1945. She went on to study at San Jose State College, where she met her husband, James D. Houston. A novelist, Houston helped his wife articulate her experiences in the book *Farewell to Manzanar*. Together they published her classic autobiography in 1973, a time when few people knew the full story of the U.S. government's wartime treatment of Japanese Americans.

*"It would
have been
impolite."*

In February 1942, President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which allowed the War Department to declare "military areas" in Western states. Through the executive order, the War Department could exclude anyone from these areas (primarily along the West Coast) who might threaten the war effort. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, hostilities toward Japanese Americans ran high, and many politicians feared that they might serve as spies for the Japanese government. With Executive Order 9066, the federal government forced more than 100,000 Japanese Americans to leave their homes. Many had to sell off their possessions cheaply or leave them behind. Without

any evidence that the evacuees were spies, the government relocated them to internment camps further inland and kept most of them imprisoned behind barbed wire until the war was nearly over. A majority of the internees were U.S.-born, or second generation Americans.

In the 1944 Supreme Court case *Korematsu v. United States*, the Court upheld the relocation order, agreeing with the government that it was a national security measure. In the December 1944 case *Ex Parte Endo*, the Court overturned its previous ruling, stating that it was illegal to intern loyal Japanese Americans. At that point, the camps began to disband.

In the following excerpt from *Farewell to Manzanar*, Wakatsuki Houston describes her arrival at Manzanar, a relocation camp in the desert of California. She was about seven years old at the time.

Farewell to Manzanar

Chapter 2, *Shikata Ga Nai*

The name Manzanar meant nothing to us when we left Boyle Heights. We didn't know where it was or what it was. We went because the government ordered us to. And, in the case of my older brothers and sisters, we went with a certain amount of relief. They had all heard stories of Japanese homes being attacked, of beatings in the streets of California towns. They were as frightened of the Caucasians as Caucasians were of us. Moving, under what appeared to be government protection, to an area less directly threatened by the war seemed not such a bad idea at all. For some it actually sounded like a fine adventure.

The photographer Ansel Adams recorded stunning images of Manzanar internment camp in the fall of 1943. Adams later donated his negatives to the Library of Congress so that this sad chapter of American history would be forever preserved and remembered.

Our pickup point was a Buddhist church in Los Angeles. It was very early, and misty, when we got there with our luggage. Mama had bought heavy coats for all of us. She grew up in eastern Washington and knew that anywhere inland in early April would be cold. I was proud of my new coat, and I remember sitting on a duffel bag trying to be friendly with the Greyhound driver. I smiled at him. He didn't smile back. He was befriending no one. Someone tied a numbered tag to my collar and to the duffel bag (each family was given a number, and that became our official designation until the camps closed), someone else passed out box lunches for the trip, and we climbed aboard...



We rode all day. By the time we reached our destination, the shades were up. It was late afternoon. The first thing I saw was a yellow swirl across a blurred, reddish setting sun. The bus was being pelted by what sounded like splattering rain. It wasn't rain. This was my first look at something I would soon know very well, a billowing flurry of dust and sand churned up by the wind through Owens Valley.

might be on this bus. As we approached, they turned or stood up, and some moved toward us expectantly. But inside the bus no one stirred. No one waved or spoke. They just stared out the windows, ominously silent. I didn't understand this. Hadn't we finally arrived, our whole family intact? I opened a window, leaned out, and yelled happily "Hey! This whole bus is full of Wakatsukis!"

We drove past a barbed-wire fence, through a gate, and into an open space where trunks and sacks and packages had been dumped from the baggage trucks that drove out ahead of us. I could see a few tents set up, the first rows of black barracks, and beyond them, blurred by sand, rows of barracks that seemed to spread for miles across this plain. People were sitting on cartons or milling around, with their backs to the wind, waiting to see which friends or relatives

Outside, the greeters smiled. Inside there was an explosion of laughter, hysterical, tension-breaking laughter that left my brothers choking and whacking each other across the shoulders.

We had pulled up just in time for dinner. The mess halls weren't completed yet. An outdoor chow line snaked around a half-finished building that broke a good part of the wind. They issued us army mess kits, the round metal kind that fold over, and plopped in scoops of canned Vienna sausage, canned string beans, steamed rice that had been cooked too long, and on top of the rice a serving of canned apricots. The Caucasian servers were thinking that the fruit poured over rice would make a good dessert. Among the Japanese, of course, rice is never eaten with sweet foods, only with salty or savory foods. Few of us could eat such a mixture. But at this point no one dared protest. It would have been impolite. I was horrified when I saw the apricot syrup seeping through my little mound of rice. I opened my mouth to complain. My mother jabbed me in the back to keep quiet. We moved on through the line and joined the others squatting in the lee of half-raised walls, dabbing courteously at what was, for almost everyone there, an inedible concoction.

COUNTEE CULLEN (1903–1946)



Raised in a middle class family in New York, Countee Cullen earned his B.A. in 1925 from New York University and his M.A. in 1926 from Harvard. After graduating, he went on to become a teacher in New York public schools and a literary editor for *Opportunity* magazine. A part of the Harlem Renaissance literary movement, Cullen wrote in many genres but is best known as a poet. He was unusual among Harlem Renaissance authors because, instead of developing new “black” forms of poetry, he chose to use traditional forms. Thus, Cullen ensured himself a broad audience, including whites, to whom he could drive home his themes of racial inequality.

*“The Kiss
of hate and
bigotry”*

Feelings of racism and resentment reached a boiling point during World War II. Waves of black migrants came from the rural South to northern cities to work in factories; long-standing bigotry soon erupted into violence. Attacks on African Americans and other minorities grew into full-fledged

riots in 1942, and by 1943, riots occurred in virtually every major U.S. city. The Detroit riots of June 1943 reportedly left 25 African Americans and nine whites dead. Many more were injured. In response to these events, a new militancy took hold among black leaders. Noting that black men and women still endured segregation in the South—and that they served in segregated units in the U.S. armed forces—black leaders found it ironic that their nation was fighting racism in Europe. In short, they wanted to use the war-related goal of “fighting racism” to help bring social justice to their own country.

The following poem by Cullen points out the double standard U.S. policymakers applied toward racism at home and abroad. Cullen writes directly to “the land” for the United States, in a literary device called an “apostrophe.” An apostrophe is an address to an inanimate object or person to express intense emotion. He likens bigotry to a “worm” that divides the nation and undermines its best efforts to defeat racism overseas.

Apostrophe to the Land

*O land of mine, O land I love,
A Worm gnaws at your root;
Unless that worm you scotch, remove,
Peace will not be the fruit.
Let Hirohito be dethroned,
With Hitler gibbet-high,
Let Mussolini, bloody stoned,
Be spaded deep in lye;*

*Destroy these three by rope or pyre,
By poison, rack, or blade,
By every destruction dire
The Christian mind has made;*

*Yet while the Worm remains to gorge
Upon the nation's tree,
There is no armor we may forge
To fit Peace perfectly.*

*Rend, rend the Swastika in twain,
The Rising Sun deform;
But our flag, shall it remain
The garment of the Worm?*

*Is there no hand to lift it free
Of that miasmic kiss;
The kiss of hate and bigotry,
The seal of prejudice?*

*Is there no knight of burning zeal,
No gifted Galahad,
In accents of redemptive steel
To cry "Rejoice! Be glad!"?*

*Goliath's David long is dust;
From what heroic sperm
Shall come the deep and valiant thrust
To slay the loathely Worm?*

*The little men with slanting eyes,
They know our pedigree,
They know the length of the Worm
that lies
Under the lynching tree.*

*The men with strides that ape the geese,
They know the nation's thorn:
How one man will his brother fleece,
And hold his hue in scorn.
From Berlin, Rome, and Tokyo,
The gibing flashes run:
"That land's good picking for the crow,
Whose people are not one."*

*Not till the poll tax perishes
With peons of the South,
And all that hatred cherishes
With blatant, twisted mouth;*

*Not till the cheated cropper thrive
And draw his first free breath
(Though court and custom still contrive
His legalistic death);*

*Not till the hedges fall, the moats
Be mirrors for the stars,
And fair hands drop from darker throats
Shall we extinguish Mars.*

*O land of mine, O land I love,
The Worm gnaws at your root;
Unless that Worm you scotch,
remove,
Peace will not be the fruit.*

The Tuskegee Airmen were graduates of the first U.S. Army flight school for African Americans, located in Tuskegee, Alabama. About one million African Americans served in the military during World War II. As in previous wars, they served in segregated units under white officers.





In a literary career that spanned six decades, Martha Gellhorn distinguished herself early as one of the world's first female war correspondents. After writing a novel about the Great Depression, she began her journalism career in 1937, covering the Spanish civil war for the magazine *Collier's Weekly*. Around that time, she met Ernest Hemingway. Although she would later resent being associated with the famous author, she married Hemingway in 1940 and left him in 1945. Because they both served as World War II correspondents, their writing became a source of competition and argument between them. Hemingway reportedly resented the fact that his wife "scooped" him on the D-Day landings by stowing aboard a hospital ship and going ashore as a stretcher-bearer. Her exciting

*"there could
not be so many
ships in
the world"*

career included going on night bombing raids over Germany with British pilots and witnessing the liberation of Dachau concentration camp. She later covered the Vietnam War, the Arab-Israeli war of 1967, and the U.S. invasion of Panama in 1989. In addition to her illustrious war correspondence, Gellhorn wrote a number of novels and short stories.

Between July 1943 and June 1944, British and American forces in Europe bombed German cities and attacked what Prime Minister Winston Churchill termed "the soft underbelly of the Axis" in Italy. On June 6, two days after capturing Rome, Allied forces launched the massive D-Day invasion on France's northern coast. Success on the Normandy beaches was hard won, and bitter fighting continued as the Allies advanced through northern France. Nevertheless, British and American forces captured Paris two months later, on August 25, 1944. Historians now believe that the D-Day invasion marked the turning point of the war and foreshadowed Hitler's eventual downfall.

The following excerpt from Gellhorn's article "The First Hospital Ship" appears in her collection of correspondence, *The Face of War*. This article tells of her experiences aboard the first hospital ship to arrive on the D-Day landing scene.

The Face of War

The First Hospital Ship

Then we saw the coast of France and suddenly we were in the midst of the armada of the invasion. People will be writing about this sight for a hundred years and whoever saw it will never forget it. First it seemed incredible; there could not be so many ships in the world. Then it seemed incredible as a feat of planning; if there were so many ships, what genius it required to get them here, what amazing and unimaginable genius. After the first shock of wonder and admiration, one began to look around and see separate details. There were destroyers and battleships and transports, a floating city of huge vessels anchored before the green cliffs of Normandy. Occasionally you would see a gun flash or perhaps only hear a distant roar, as naval guns fired far over those hills. Small craft beetled around in a curiously jolly way. It looked like a lot of fun to race from shore to ships in snub-nosed boats beating up the spray. It was no fun at all, considering the mines and obstacles that remained in the water, the sunken tanks with only their radio antennae showing above water, the drowned bodies that still floated past. On an LOT [landing craft] near us washing was hung up on a line, and between the loud explosions of mines being detonated on the beach dance music could be heard coming from its radio. Barrage balloons, always looking like comic toy elephants, bounced in the high wind above the massed ships, and invisible planes droned behind the gray ceiling of cloud. Troops were unloading from big ships to heavy cement barges or to light craft, and on the

shore, moving up four brown roads that scarred the hillside, our tanks clanked slowly and steadily forward...

When night came, the water ambulances were still churning in to the beach looking for wounded. Someone on an LCT had shouted out that there were maybe a hundred scattered along there somewhere. It was essential to try to get them aboard before the nightly air raid and before the dangerous dark cold could eat into their hurt bodies. Going in to shore, unable to see, and not knowing this tricky strip of water, was slow work... [Gellhorn went on the water ambulance to search for wounded. She waded into shore, talked with American soldiers, and helped move wounded men into a beached British ship (called an LST) while they waited for the water ambulance.]

Suddenly our flak started going up at the far end of the beach and it was beautiful, twinkling as it burst in the sky, and the tracers were lovely as they always are—and no one took pleasure from the beauty of the scene. “We’ve had it now,” said the stretcher-bearer. “There isn’t any place we can put those wounded.” I asked one of the soldiers, just for interest’s sake, what they did in case of air raids and he said, well, you could go to a foxhole if you had time, but on the other hand there wasn’t really much to do. So we stood and watched and there was altogether too much flak for comfort. We could not hear the planes nor hear any bomb explosions but as everyone knows flak is a bad thing to have fall on your head.



The icon of World War II women was “Rosie the Riveter,” shown in this poster designed by J. Howard Miller. Rosie is depicted as a strong, competent, and determined patriot who works in factories to support the war effort. Altogether, about one-third of American women went to work outside the home during World War II.

The soldiers now drifted off on their own business and we boarded the LST to keep the wounded company. It seemed a specially grim note to be wounded in action and then to have to lie helpless under a strip of canvas while any amount of shell fragments, to say nothing of bombs, could drop on you and complete the job. The stretcher-bearer and I said to each other gloomily that as an air-raid shelter far better things than the hold of an LST had been devised, and we went inside, not liking any of it and feeling miserably worried about our wounded.

The wounded looked pretty bad and lay very still; and in the light of one bare bulb, which hung from a girder, we could not see them well. Then one of them began to moan and he said something. He was evidently conscious enough to notice this ghastly racket that was going on above us. The Oerlikons of our LST now opened fire and the noise inside the steel hold was as if your own eardrums were being drilled with a rivet. The wounded man called out again and I realized he was speaking German. We checked up then and found that we had an LST full of wounded Germans, and the stretcher-bearer said, “Well, that is just dandy, by golly, if this isn’t the payoff.” Then he said, “If anything hits this ship, dammit, they deserve it.”

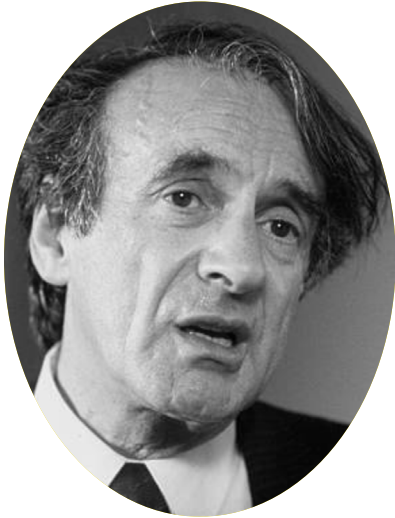
The ack-ack lifted a bit and the stretcher-bearer climbed to the upper deck, like Sister Anne on the tower, to see where in God’s name those water ambulances were. I clambered like a very awkward monkey up a ladder to the galley to get some coffee and so missed the spectacle of two German planes falling like fiery comets from the sky. They hit the beach to the right and left of us and burned in huge bonfires which lighted up the shore. The beach, in this light looked empty of human life, cluttered with dark square shapes of tanks and trucks and jeeps and ammunition boxes and all the motley equipment of war. It looked like a vast uncanny black-and-red flaring salvage dump, whereas once upon a time people actually went swimming here for pleasure.

Our LST crew was delighted because they believed they had brought down one of the German planes and everyone felt cheerful about the success of the ack-ack. A soldier shouted from shore that we had shot down four planes in all and it was nice work, by God. The wounded were silent and those few who had their eyes open had very frightened eyes. They seemed to be listening with their eyes, and fearing what they would hear.



Margaret Bourke-White

Margaret Bourke-White is one of the most celebrated photojournalists of World War II. She began her career after graduating from Cornell University in 1927 by taking industrial photos in Cleveland, Ohio. In 1929, she became the first photographer for *Fortune* magazine. Hired by the newly formed *Life* magazine in 1935, Bourke-White was the first female photojournalist there, and one of her photos graced the cover of the first edition. During World War II, she captured searing images from Moscow, North Africa, Italy, and the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp. Thereafter, Bourke-White photographed South Africa under apartheid and the Korean War. The photographs of this highly respected artist are now collected by museums across the country.



Born in the town of Sighet, now part of Romania, Elie Wiesel was raised in an Orthodox Jewish family. World War II affected him in ways few Americans at the time could imagine. Germans rounded up all the Jews of his village and forced them to live in a ghetto. Soon thereafter, when he was 15 years old, Nazis sent him and his family to concentration camps in Poland, where his mother, father, and youngest sister died. Given the trauma and indescribable horror he suffered, he vowed that he would not speak of his death camp experiences. Wiesel broke his silence with the 1958 French publication of *La Nuit*, which was translated into English and published as *Night* in 1960. Meanwhile, he had settled in the United States and had become an American citizen. A professor at Boston University, Wiesel wrote more than 40 books, many of them about Judaism, the Holocaust,

and oppressed peoples. He received many honors and awards, including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986, for his tireless human rights efforts. Wiesel was regarded as the primary spokesperson for Holocaust survivors in the United States.

*“Never shall
I forget these
things”*

One of Hitler’s stated objectives was creating a German “master race.” His orders and the implementation of them resulted in the most diabolical genocide the world has ever recorded. From the mid-1930s to 1942, Nazis rounded up Jews, Gypsies, and other victims of racial, ethnic, and religious hatred and forced them to live in ghettos and concentration camps. Many physically or mentally disabled people were killed outright. As Hitler conquered more European territory, he forced increasing waves of European Jews into the camp system. Between 1942 and 1944, Nazis devised the “final solution” for what they perceived as the Jewish “problem.” During those years, Hitler built many new concentration camps in an elaborate plan to annihilate Jews, Gypsies, other minorities, and political resistance fighters. Some concentration camps were run as forced labor camps. Life there was torturous, and starvation was an everyday occurrence. Those deemed unfit to work were sent to death camps designed for gassing masses of prisoners and incinerating their bodies. Largely in this manner, Nazis exterminated six million Jews and about five million Gypsies, Slavs, and other “undesirables.” In April of 1945, British and American troops reached camps in Germany and Poland. They were horrified at the emaciated prisoners and corpses that the Nazis left in their hasty retreat.

The following excerpt from *Night* tells of Wiesel’s arrival at Birkenau, the reception center for Auschwitz death camp. Separated from his mother and sister upon arrival, Wiesel had just undergone the trauma of “selection” with his father. Both had been chosen for work instead of death.

Night

Never shall I forget that night, the first night in camp, which has turned my life into one long night, seven times cursed and seven times sealed. Never shall I forget that smoke. Never shall I forget the little faces of the children, whose bodies I saw turned into wreaths of smoke beneath a silent blue sky.

Never shall I forget those flames which consumed my faith forever.

Never shall I forget that nocturnal silence which deprived me, for all eternity, of the desire to live. Never shall I forget those moments which murdered my God and my soul and turned my dreams to dust. Never shall I forget these things, even if I am condemned to live as long as God himself. Never.

The barracks we had been made to go into was very long. In the roof were some blue-tinged skylights. The antechamber of Hell must look like this. So many crazed men, so many cries, so much bestial brutality!

There were dozens of prisoners to receive us, truncheons in their hands, striking out anywhere, at anyone, without reason. Orders:

“Strip! Fast! Los! Keep only your belts and shoes in your hands...”

We had to throw our clothes at one end of the barracks. There was already a great heap there. New suits and old, torn coats, rags. For us, this was the true equality: nakedness. Shivering with the cold.

Some SS officers moved about in the room looking for strong men. If they were so keen on strength, perhaps one should try and pass oneself off as sturdy? My father thought the reverse. It was better not to draw attention to oneself. Our fate would then be the same as the others. (Later, we were to learn that he was right. Those who were selected that day were enlisted in the Sonder-Kommando, the unit which worked in the crematories. Bela Katz—son of a big tradesman from our town—had arrived at Birkenau with the first transport, a week before us. When he heard of our arrival, he managed to get word to us that, having been chosen for strength, he had himself put his father’s body into the crematory oven.)

Blows continued to rain down.

“To the barber!”

Belt and shoes in hand, I let myself be dragged off to the barbers. They took our hair off with clippers, and shaved off all the hair on our bodies. The same thought buzzed all the time in my head—not to be separated from my father.

Freed from the hands of the barbers, we began to wander in the crowd, meeting friends and acquaintances. These meetings filled us with joy—yes, joy—“Thank God! You’re still alive!”

But others were crying. They used all their remaining strength in weeping. Why had they let themselves be brought here? Why couldn’t they have died in their beds? Sobs choked their voices.

Suddenly someone threw his arms around my neck in an embrace: Yechiel, brother of the rabbi of Sighet. He was sobbing bitterly. I thought he was weeping with joy at being alive.

“Don’t cry Yechiel,” I said. “Don’t waste your tears...”

“Not cry? We’re on the threshold of death. ... Soon we shall have crossed over. ... Don’t you understand? How could I not cry?”

Through the blue-tinged skylights I could see the darkness gradually fading. I had ceased to feel fear. And then I was overcome by an inhuman weariness.

In April 1945, American troops liberated the concentration camp in Dachau, Germany, to the joy and relief of cheering survivors.



Those absent no longer touched even the surface of our memories. We still spoke of them—"Who knows what may have become of them?"—but we had little concern for their fate. We were incapable of thinking of anything at all. Our senses were blunted; everything was blurred as in a fog. It was no longer possible to grasp anything. The instincts of self-preservation, of self-defense, of pride, had all deserted us. In one ultimate moment of lucidity it seemed to me that we were damned souls wandering in the half-world, souls condemned to wander through space till the generations of man came to an end, seeking their redemption, seeking oblivion—without hope of finding it.

Toward five o'clock in the morning, we were driven out of the barracks. The Kapos beat us once more, but I had ceased to feel any pain from their blows. An icy wind enveloped us. We were naked, our shoes and belts in our hands. The command: "Run!" And we ran. After a few minutes of racing, a new barracks.

A barrel of petrol at the entrance. Disinfection. Everyone was soaked in it. Then a hot shower. At high speed. As we came out from the water, we were driven outside. More running. Another barracks, the store. Very long tables. Mountains of prison clothes. On we ran. As we passed, trousers, tunic, shirt, and socks were thrown to us.

Within a few seconds we had ceased to be men. If the situation had not been tragic, we should have roared with laughter. Such outfits! Meir Katz, a giant, had a child's trousers, and Stern, a thin little chap, a tunic which completely swamped him. We immediately began the necessary exchanges.

I glanced at my father. How he had changed! His eyes had grown dim. I would have liked to speak to him, but I did not know what to say.

The night was gone. The morning star was shining in the sky. I too had become a completely different person. The student of the Talmud, the child that I was, had been consumed in the flames. There remained only a shape that looked like me. A dark flame had entered into my soul and devoured it.

So much had happened within such a few hours that I had lost all sense of time. When had we left our houses? And the ghetto? And the train? Was it only a week? One night—one single night?

How long had we been standing like this in the icy wind? An hour? Simply an hour? Sixty minutes?

Surely it was a dream.

JOHN HERSEY (1914–1993)



John Hersey spent the first eleven years of his life in China until his family returned to the United States. He later earned his degree from Yale and went on to work as a World War II correspondent for *Time* magazine. His first novel, *A Bell for Adano*, was published in 1944 and earned him a Pulitzer Prize. In 1946, Hersey published his novel *Hiroshima*, which weaves the true stories of six people in that Japanese city when the atom bomb exploded. *Hiroshima* was widely acclaimed by U.S. audiences who believed that Hersey had made the incomprehensible ordeal of nuclear warfare potently real. The book also broke new ground in literary style and form, and some critics believe that it was the first "nonfiction novel."

*"skin hung
from their
faces and
hands"*

Throughout World War II, the U.S. government—operating on information that the Germans were developing atomic bombs—funded research labs to produce such weapons as quickly as possible. In July 1945, American physicists successfully detonated the first U.S. atomic weapon in the desert of New Mexico. President Harry Truman was faced with the task of deciding whether or not to use this gruesome bomb, with the power of 20,000 tons of TNT, to bring a quick end to the war in the Pacific. While his decision has since been questioned, President Truman rationalized that thousands of American lives would be lost if U.S. forces had to invade the Japanese mainland. Consequently, at 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, U.S. bombers dropped the first atomic weapon on Hiroshima, exacting an awful toll. About 78,000 residents were killed, and another 100,000 were injured in the blast. Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. On August 15, Japan surrendered.

This selection from *Hiroshima* details the observations of a Japanese cleric, Reverend Kiyoshi Tanimoto, in the immediate aftermath of the explosion.

Hiroshima

Chapter 2, The Fire

From the mound, Mr. Tanimoto saw an astonishing panorama. Not just a patch of Koi, as he had expected, but as much of Hiroshima as he could see through the clouded air was giving off a thick, dreadful miasma. Clumps of smoke, near and far, had begun to push up through the general dust. He wondered how such extensive damage could have been dealt out of a silent sky; even a few planes, far up, would have been audible. Houses nearby were burning, and when huge drops of water the size of marbles began to fall, he half thought that they must be coming from the hoses of firemen fighting the blazes. (They were actually drops of condensed moisture falling from the turbulent tower of dust, heat, and fission fragments that had already risen miles into the sky above Hiroshima.)...

More than 90 percent of the buildings were destroyed or damaged in the atomic blast in Hiroshima, Japan.

He had thought of his wife and baby, his church, his home, his parishioners, all of them down in that awful murk. Once more he began to run in fear—toward the city...

Mr. Tanimoto, fearful for his family and church, at first ran toward them by the shortest route, along Koi highway. He was the only person making his way into the city; he met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. The eyebrows of some were burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. Others, because of pain, held their arms up as if carrying something in both hands. Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing. On some undressed bodies, the burns had made patterns—of undershirt straps and suspenders and, on the skin of some women (since white repelled the heat from the bomb and dark clothes absorbed it and conducted it to the skin), the shapes of flowers they had had on their kimonos. Many, although injured themselves, supported relatives who were worse off. Almost all had their heads bowed, looked straight ahead, were silent, and showed no expression whatever.



After crossing Koi Bridge and Kannon Bridge, having run the whole way, Mr. Tanimoto saw, as he approached the center, that all the houses had been crushed and many were afire. Here the trees were bare and their trunks were charred. He tried at several points to penetrate the ruins, but the flames always stopped him. Under many houses people screamed for help, but no one helped; in general, survivors that day assisted only their relatives or immediate neighbors, for they

could not comprehend or tolerate a wider circle of misery. As a Christian he was filled with compassion for those who were trapped, and as a Japanese he was overwhelmed by the shame of being unhurt, and he prayed as he ran, "God help them and take them out of the fire."

He thought he would skirt the fire, to the left. He ran back to Kannon Bridge and followed for a distance one of the rivers. He tried several cross streets, but all were blocked. ... So impressed was he by this time by the extent of the damage that he ran north two miles to Gion, a suburb in the foothills. All the way, he overtook dreadfully burned and lacerated people, and in his guilt he turned to right and left as he hurried and said to some of them, "Excuse me for having no burden like yours:..." At Gion, he bore toward the right bank of the main river, the Ota, and ran down it until he reached fire again. There was no fire on the other side of the river, so he threw off his shirt and shoes and plunged into it. In midstream, where the current was fairly strong, exhaustion and fear finally caught up with him—he had run nearly seven miles—and he became limp and drifted in the water. He prayed, "Please, God, help me to cross. It would be nonsense for me to be drowned when I am the only uninjured one." He managed a few more strokes and fetched up on a spit downstream.

Mr. Tanimoto climbed up the bank and ran along it until, near a large Shinto shrine, he came to more fire, and as he turned left to get around it, he met, by incredible luck, his wife. She was carrying their infant daughter. Mr. Tanimoto was now so emotionally worn out that nothing could surprise him. He did not embrace his wife; he simply said, "Oh, you are safe." She told him that she had got home from her night in Ushida just in time for the explosion; she had been buried under the parsonage with the baby in her arms. She told how the wreckage had pressed down on her, how the baby had cried. She saw a chink of light, and by reaching up with a hand, she worked the hole bigger, bit by bit. After about half an hour, she heard the cracking noise of wood burning. At last the opening was big enough for her to push the baby out, and afterward she crawled out herself. She said she was now going out to Ushida again. Mr. Tanimoto said he wanted to see his church and take care of the people of his Neighborhood Association. They parted as casually—as bewildered—as they had met.



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