

Title of Lesson: *The Effect of the Great Depression on Children and Education*
(Suggested grade level: 4, 6, 11)

This lesson was created as a part of the Alabama History Education Initiative, funded by a generous grant from the Malone Family Foundation in 2009.

Author Information: **Kathy DeFoor** (Cohort 2: 2010-2011)

Eva School
Morgan County Schools
Eva, Alabama

Background Information:

Background information regarding education during the early 20th century can be found in [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#).

Download the following letters from the Alabama Department of Archives and History to be used in Step 3:

- [Letter to Governor Miller from James Paulk](#)
- [Letter to Governor Miller from Jake Ward](#)
- [Letter to Governor Miller from Harry Peterman](#)
- [Letter to Governor Miller from J. J. Collins](#)

Overview of lesson: Students will view pictures, letters, and a news article to determine why students were not able to attend school during the Great Depression.

Content Standards

[Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies](#) (Bulletin 2004, No. 18)

Fourth Grade: Content Standard 12, p. 33

Sixth Grade: Content Standard 7, p.44

Eleventh Grade: Content Standard 6, p. 77

[Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts](#) (Bulletin 1999, No. 17)

Fourth Grade: Content Standard 1, p. 37

Sixth Grade: Content Standard 21, p. 55

Eleventh Grade: Content Standard 11, p. 83

[National Standards for History, 1996](#)

Standards in History for Grades K-4 (p. 30)

Topic 2, Standard 3D – The student understands the interactions among all these groups throughout the history of his or her own state.

Standards in Historical Thinking for Grades K-4, (p.16)

Standard 5 – Historical Issues – Analysis and Decision-Making

Standards in History for Grades 5-12 (p. 117)

Era 8, Standard 1B – The student understands how American life changed during the 1930s.

[National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), (Bulletin 111, 2010)

Early Grades, Standard 2 – Time, Continuity and Change, p. 70

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

Primary Learning Objective(s):

- Students will analyze pictures to determine what schools were like during the Great Depression.
- Students will read and discuss letters regarding the closing of schools and determine why these schools were closed.
- Students will make connections between reasons for school closings in the Great Depression and the reasons for school closings today.

Time allotted: 30-40 minutes

Materials and Equipment:

- School pictures from the Great Depression
- Letter to the governor of Alabama from Bertha Byrd concerning her school (attached)
- Sticky notes
- Chart paper or white board
- “Missing Diploma No More” (attached)
- “Letter Analysis” worksheet (attached)
- Letter rubric (attached)

Technological Resources:

- Interactive Board or LCD projector
- Computer
- Internet access

Background/Preparation:

- The student should have an understanding of how the Great Depression affected everyone in all aspects of life.
- The student should have an understanding of school attendance policies today.

Procedures/Activities:

Engagement/Motivation Activity: Have students brainstorm what they think schools were like during the Great Depression. Have them write their ideas on sticky notes, share their ideas with the class, and post their ideas on a sheet of chart paper.

Step 1	Show the students pictures of students in a classroom in Jackson County and students in a classroom in Gee’s Bend . Ask students to point out things that they see in the pictures that are different from how our schools are today. Lead the class in a discussion while writing the students’ responses and observations on chart paper which will be on display in the classroom. Point out any additional features that the students did not notice.
Step 2	Show the students a copy of a letter written to the Governor from Bertha Byrd (attached). Ask, “What is the problem being described in the letter?” Have students brainstorm solutions to the problem of school closing.
Step 3	Form cooperative groups, and give each group a copy of a letter and a “Letter Analysis” worksheet. Give groups time to fill out the worksheets and time to share their analyses with the class.

Step 4	Project the newspaper article, “Missing Diploma No More” (attached), about the Falkville woman who finally got her diploma in 2010. Point out the reason that Falkville School had to close during the Great Depression. Ask the students, “Why do you suppose the class of 2010 included her in their graduating class?”
Step 5	Ask, “For what reasons might a school be closed today?” Share with students any local information regarding recent school closings whether temporary or permanent. Possible reasons for closures could be due to illness (Swine Flu); weather; damage; lack of state/local funding.

Assessment Strategies:

Have each student write a letter to Governor Miller (Alabama governor during the Great Depression) pretending that he/she is a student during the Great Depression, and his/her school is going to be closed. Include the reasons why the school should not be closed in the letter. Evaluate the letter using the attached rubric.

Extension:

Instead of the teacher doing research about school closings in the area, the students can be put in groups to do the research themselves. The findings of each group could be shared with the class.

Remediation:

After evaluating the letters and finding that some students do not seem to understand the difference between schools in the Great Depression and schools of today, review the previous day’s studies.

Accommodation:

Preferential seating will be used for students who are visually or hearing impaired. Give hard copies of the letters and news article to the student.

Modification:

Students may be given an outline to follow when writing their letters.

Hartford, Alabama
Jan. 5, 1934

Hon. B. M. Miller
Montgomery, Ala.

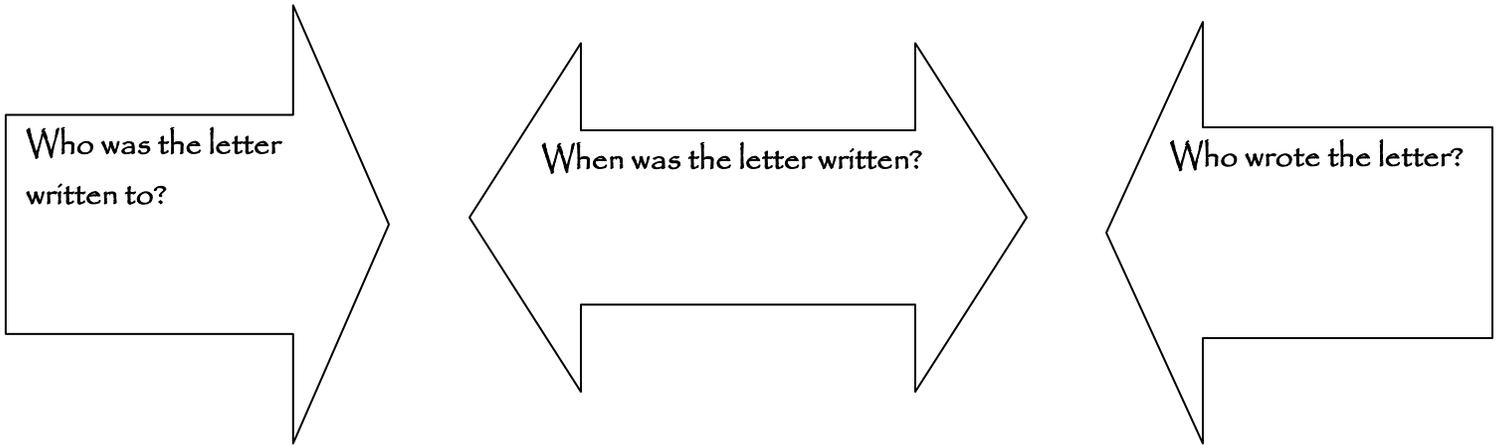
Dear Gov. Miller:

I am a Jr. II student in Kinsaul Jr. High school. We have heard that the schools are to close in three more weeks. I am anxious to finish my grade, and I want you and the legislature to provide some plan to lengthen the schools in order to make my grade. So please do everything that you can to keep schools open. I am fourteen years old. I have some good teachers and they are also anxious for me and the rest of the class to finish this grade. Please try to find some way to lengthen the schools.

Yours Truly

Miss Bertha Mae Byrd
Hartford, Ala
Route 2

LETTER ANALYSIS



What mode of writing is the author using?
Descriptive, expository, narrative, or persuasive?

What clues lead you to this conclusion?

What is main idea of the letter?

This letter makes us feel.....

Missing diploma no more

Falkville honors woman who didn't graduate because of the Depression

Bayne Hughes
Staff Writer

FALKVILLE - Not earning a high school diploma with Falkville High's class of 1933 bothered Earlene Harvey-Morris for a while, but she eventually went on with her life.

The school closed in December 1932 because the county didn't have the money to keep it open, leaving Harvey-Morris one semester short of graduation.

But Falkville High's current seniors are making up for that by adopting her as a member of the class of 2010. She will receive an honorary diploma during graduation May 24.

"This is just something I never thought would happen," the 95-year-old Massey resident said Wednesday while speaking to the senior class about her life.

The daughter of the county's first bus driver, Harvey-Morris was one of Falkville High's original students.

After first attending a one-room schoolhouse in Massey, she started Falkville High in fourth grade.

Students went to school in a church that first year while the Morgan County school board built the school. They moved in the following year.

Volleyball, plays

She played volleyball and was in school plays. She worked on her father's farm on Alabama 55 and, occasionally, attended a party or hung out with friends.

The Great Depression hit the area hard. Harvey-Morris was one of the few lucky ones. Her father, John Harvey, owned his own farm. Many of her friends moved from place to place because they didn't own their homes.

"I was never hungry or cold, but we didn't have much," she said. "We were happy. We didn't know any better."



Daily photo by Bayne Hughes

Earlene Harvey-Morris discusses with Falkville High School seniors her life during the Great Depression. She fell one semester short of graduating in 1932 because the school board had to close her school because of lack of funding.

Closing the school

The school board announced in November 1932 that it was closing the school because it didn't have enough money. The seniors bought class rings and held their school play.

Harvey-Morris gave up on graduating, so she married her boyfriend, Thurman, on Christmas Eve.

She didn't know that the parents would raise enough money to reopen the school.

They got enough together to hire teachers but not enough to run the buses.

Only seven students, who lived within walking distance, got to graduate. She lived about 10 miles away.

Harvey-Morris said her father probably would have come up with the money so she could finish, but the school didn't allow married students.

So she and her husband settled into married life.

They farmed and raised a son, Bob. They were married 71 years until Thurman's death. She still lives at home by herself, tending to her garden and flowers.

Diploma idea

The idea of getting Harvey-Morris a high school diploma came out of a discussion about a year ago with her inquisitive daughter-in-law, Shelby Morris.

"I thought 77 years of life experience would afford her the knowledge necessary for a semester of learning," Shelby Morris said.

Without her mother-in-law's knowledge, Shelby Morris contacted Falkville High counselor Ken James. Harvey-Morris' son said she wouldn't have been receptive to the recognition if asked beforehand because she doesn't like someone making a fuss over her.

"I think it's exhilarated her," Bob Morris said. "She's finally achieving something that's obviously meant so much to her."

Principal Sue Wood pitched the idea of adopting Harvey-Morris to the student council.

"They were speechless, which very seldom happens," Wood said. "But then they were excited."

Student council President Morgan Morrow and fellow council member Devin Miller said they are excited to get to sit beside Earlene at graduation. The school is buying her a cap and gown for the occasion.

"I thought it (Harvey-Morris' story) was awful," Morrow said. "There shouldn't be obstacles like that keeping someone from graduating."

Morrow said the 1932 story gives a different perspective to today's school financial problems.

"We thought we had it bad," Morrow said. "But it shows how lucky we are."

Letter to Governor Miller

Student Name _____

Directions: Write a letter to Governor Miller (Alabama governor during the Great Depression) pretending that you are a student during the Great Depression, and your school is going to be closed. Include the reasons why the school should not be closed in the letter.

CATEGORY	4 points	3 points	2 points	1 point	Score
Salutation and Closing	Salutation and closing have no errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 1-2 errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and closing have 3 or more errors in capitalization and punctuation.	Salutation and/or closing are missing.	
Ideas	Ideas were expressed in a clear and organized fashion. It was easy to figure out what the letter was about.	Ideas were expressed in a clear manner, but the organization could have been better.	Ideas were not very clear. It took more than one reading to figure out what the letter was about.	The letter seemed to be a collection of unrelated sentences. It was very difficult to figure out what the letter was about.	
Content Accuracy	The letter contains at least 5 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 3-4 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains 1-2 accurate facts about the topic.	The letter contains no accurate facts about the topic.	
Sentences	Sentences are complete, well-constructed and of varied structure.	All sentences are complete and well-constructed (no fragments, no run-ons).	Most sentences are complete and well-constructed.	This letter contains many sentence fragments or run-on sentences.	
Organization	The letter is well organized. One idea follows another in a logical sequence with clear transitions.	The letter is organized, but one idea may seem out of place. Clear transitions are used.	The letter is hard to follow. The transitions are sometimes not clear.	Ideas and scenes seem to be randomly arranged.	

Total _____