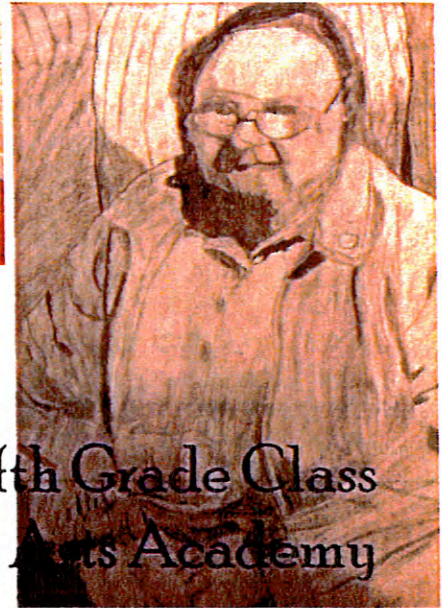


FACES OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION: A Glimpse into History



2006-2007 Fifth Grade Class
Fitchburg Arts Academy

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This book is dedicated to our volunteers at the
Fitchburg Senior Citizen Center:

Dot Cassady
Joanne Doherty
Nancy Fitzgerald
Fay Laroche
Dolly Leimeur
Jane Lonngvist
Phyllis McGurn
June Rhodes
Virginia See
Lorraine Walsh

We offer our sincerest thanks for all of your
help in achieving this project.

Dear readers,

This community book is a result of numerous months of hard work and many different, exciting steps which we wanted to share with you.

Our project began in English Language Arts class where we read the novel *Esperanza Rising*, written by Pam Muñoz Ryan. *Esperanza Rising* is a historical fiction book set during the Great Depression. The main character Esperanza is growing up in Mexico, but tragic events force her family to immigrate to California to work in migrant camps. Esperanza is met by a number of challenges that she eventually overcomes, learning many lessons along the way.



As we read and enjoyed *Esperanza Rising*, we also began to explore the Great Depression and learn more about its causes and the far reaching effects. We took a closer look into the depression through the poignant images of Dorothy Lange, a photographer we had learned about earlier in the year. Despite the information we had gained, we wanted to understand and know more about the Great Depression from the people who actually lived it. We decided to collect interviews and personal stories from local community members.



This is where we turned to the generous volunteers at the Fitchburg Senior Citizen Center. Many of the active seniors there agreed to share their lives and stories with us. But first, we had to prepare!

By the time we came to talk to our volunteers, we had practiced interviewing and felt confident and prepared. We interviewed a number of volunteers and photographed them. We turned the interviews into short, descriptive profiles of our volunteers' experiences. At the same time, in art class, we used our photographs to sketch a pencil shaded portrait of our volunteers. Through the process of creating these portraits we learned about capturing accurate proportion, shape, and value.

Just like Esperanza, the people in these pages overcame hardships to become who they are and the lessons they learned during the Great Depression have stayed with them until today. We hope you enjoy reading about their lives and seeing their faces.



Sincerely,

The 5th Grade Class at Fitchburg Arts Academy

THE GREAT DEPRESSION: An Overview

The Great Depression was the worst economic slump ever in U.S. history, and it spread to other parts of the world as well. The depression began in late 1929 and lasted for about ten years. Many factors played a role in starting the depression: unequal distribution of money, the stock market crash, and extreme drought.

The 1920's were nicknamed the "roaring twenties" because the U.S. was making a lot of money. People in the upper classes controlled all the money so most people in the country couldn't afford things. Prices went up but salaries didn't increase. This made the economy unstable because too many products were being made but not bought. The demand for things did not equal the supply of things. There were just too many goods that no one wanted.

People had to spend all of their salaries just to buy the things that they needed like food, clothes, and cars. Since people didn't have enough money to afford things, they started using credit cards. That put families into debt and meant they weren't saving any of their money for the future. People's salaries still didn't go up so they started to get more and more in debt.

The government favored the new industries as opposed to agriculture. During World War I the government had lots of programs to help farmers. The farmers were making lots of food to feed the people fighting in the war in Europe. After the war ended the government stopped helping farms so they started to struggle. They couldn't make money because they had to charge a lot of money for their food, and no one could pay it.

Stock prices started dropping and that made people nervous so they sold all their stocks. This made the stock market crash. People stopped buying things so companies started to go bankrupt. That meant that factories were closing so people lost their jobs. People took all their money out of the bank so the banks closed because they didn't have enough money. Unemployment went from 5 million people in 1930 to 13 million people in 1932.

Herbert Hoover became president right before the Great Depression. He didn't do a good job of helping people through it and most Americans didn't like him. Franklin D. Roosevelt became president in 1932 and he started to help people. He made laws and created a program called "The New Deal." It created new jobs for people like building special structures, taking photographs, clearing land, etc. African Americans suffered more than whites, since their jobs were often taken away from them and given to whites. In 1930, 50 percent of blacks were unemployed. FDR's wife helped black people get more jobs.

Out in "the dust bowl" area (parts of Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas) people were working the land too much. The land became really dry and then there was also a drought. The land dried out even more from all the intense heat of the sun. The winds started to pick up all the dirt and blow it all around and ruin crops. People in those areas relied mostly on farming. They lost all of their income when the crops died and had to give up their farms and start looking for a new place to live and work. A lot of the people from Oklahoma, for example, traveled to California to work in migrant camps.

Joanne Doherty

Interviewed by: Bryanna , Dawn , Ian , and Samantha

Joanne Doherty and her family just pulled up to her grandparent's farm in Ashby, a plantation with animals and crops. Other farmers pull up in their trucks looking for fertilizer. Joanne comes out of the barn barefoot with a shovel and starts scooping manure into the back of the trucks. Her dad is disgusted shoveling the manure, he didn't even



want to come here in the first place but they need the money. Even though the Great Depression did not affect her family very much, they still needed all the extra money they could get. Joanne tells us about her childhood as we listen to her in the senior center.

Joanne was only two-years-old when the depression started. She lived in Fitchburg with her parents, and she traveled to Ashby to work on her grandparents' farm. The Great Depression was pretty easy on her family. Joanne's parents had not been expecting the depression to affect them. They had just gotten married and had plans for their family. Her father worked in an organization called OPA a few hours a week to earn enough money to buy groceries. Part of his work helped to make Cogshall Park. Her father could not

find a full time job, and she was too young to work, so her family never had extra money. The Great Depression stopped affecting them in 1938 and in 1940 she went to school.

“Times can get hard so think twice and listen before you vote.”

The Great Depression brought her family closer together unlike the experience of some families. They did not invest in the stock market. While some people lost a lot during the Great Depression, Joanne's family had nothing to lose. After the Great Depression their lives returned to normal and it did not affect them any longer. From her experiences, Joanne learned that “times can get hard” and to always “think twice and listen before you vote” because she found that some presidential candidates were more committed to helping end the Great Depression than others.



Portrait by: Dawn



Portrait by: Ian



Portrait by: Samantha



Portrait by: Bryanna

Dot Cassady

Interviewed by: Cassie , Rolisha , Josie , and Casey

Have you ever had to pinch your cheeks because you could not afford make up? Well guess who had to... Dot Cassady's mother! During the Great Depression when she could not afford make up she would pinch her cheeks. Times were so hard women were forced to be creative. The girls would pinch their cheeks to make it look like they were wearing blush. Just imagine having to pinch your cheeks multiple times before you went to a party or out in public.

Dot Cassady's mother and father went through the Great Depression seven years after it started, which was around 1937. Her mother's name was Merle and her father's name was Russell. The Great Depression didn't affect Dot's family much. It actually brought her family closer together. Dot Cassady's family never lived in a migrant camp and luckily never experienced the harsh dust bowl.



Dot explained that the stock market crash was the start of the Great Depression. One surprising fact she told us is that people jumped out of windows at that time because they were so upset about losing their money. Her father had to work hard to keep his job building machines. Her mother did not go to college but she did have a chance to do some work to help support the family. Teachers were very helpful to families in every way possible. They would organize different free events so families could still have fun and forget about their worries.

“[The depression] took longer than people realized to have it affect them. It lasted longer than expected [too].”

Did you know that some people are still afraid that the Great Depression will happen again? During the twenties, Dot said “anything went.” Everyone had money so they were always having fun and spending it carelessly. After the Great Depression people became more careful with their money because you never knew what could happen. Dot Cassady was born after the Great Depression, and her brother was born during World War II. It's around that time she said that things began to calm down and return to normal.



Portrait by: Rolisha



Portrait by: Cassie

Portrait by: Josie



Jane Lonngvist

Interviewed by: Cassidy , Tori , Emily , and Alex

Jane Lonngvist did not go through the Great Depression, her parents did. She reflects back on the stories her parents told her. Picture this: one gloomy day you are going to sit down for dinner when two guys come walking right into your house without knocking. They grab the couch and order you to get up out of your chairs too. You stand up from the chairs with your mouths hanging open in shock. The men go to the car, load everything inside, and take off.

This is what happened to Jane's family. As a result of the Great Depression, her family couldn't afford the payments on their furniture so the company sent men to take the items back. Jane's family had no idea what to do after that so they just went on with the rest of their night. That is just one story of the experiences her family went through during this challenging time.



“The Great Depression brought neighborhoods and families together.”

Everyday her mother Ida would go out and walk around under her father's grapevines which held ripe, juicy grapes. Her father's side of the family was wealthier. Sometimes her mother would go out there with a little basket and pick the grapes, looking up at all the winding grape arbors. For a minute Jane stops reflecting on her family's memories and says longingly, “I almost wish I lived back then.” People grew their own vegetables and fruit, and had to walk a lot so they got good exercise. There were very few people over weight because there were not a lot of unhealthy foods available unlike today.

Jane explains that “the Great Depression brought neighborhoods and families together.” They would sew, make clothes, and plant together. Sometimes there were people who could afford better things, which made the other kids jealous. For the most part, however, people would work together to live through the hard times. Jane's family was just one of the millions of families that went through the Great Depression.



Portrait by: Alex



Virginia See
Portrait by: Cassidy



Virginia See
Portrait by: Emily



Portrait by: Tori

June Rhodes

Interviewed by: Adam , Arielyss , Erin and Darren

When most ten-year-olds were playing outside, June Rhodes was selling ice cream. June had to work at such a young age because her family was experiencing the Great Depression. At the age of ten, June worked by selling ice cream at the park and made money for her and her family. When she was a senior in high school she was a book keeper. After high school she made a living by working in a drug store.

“If you go through something like that it makes you a stronger person.”

June Rhodes was born in Fitchburg, Massachusetts in 1925. June’s family was a strong family and before the Great Depression they lived comfortably. Her parents both had jobs. Her father worked in a wool mill, and her mother worked at a plastic factory. When



the depression started her mother lost her job and she was forced to become a stay at home mother. Her father got a job at the WPA center, which was a place that helped people find jobs.

June Rhodes and her family were very close. She had two sisters and the whole family would often go to Maine on Sundays to visit their grandparents. One of their biggest challenges became not having enough money for their family. Luckily, June’s parents never invested in the stock market because they were afraid of losing money.

June learned many things from her experiences during the Great Depression. One lesson that she learned was that you have to be careful with your money. She learned how to save her money by being careful about what she bought. When we questioned June about how the Great

Depression affected her, she explained that “if you go through something like that it makes you a stronger person.” From our experience meeting June we had the opportunity to get to know just what a strong person she truly has become.

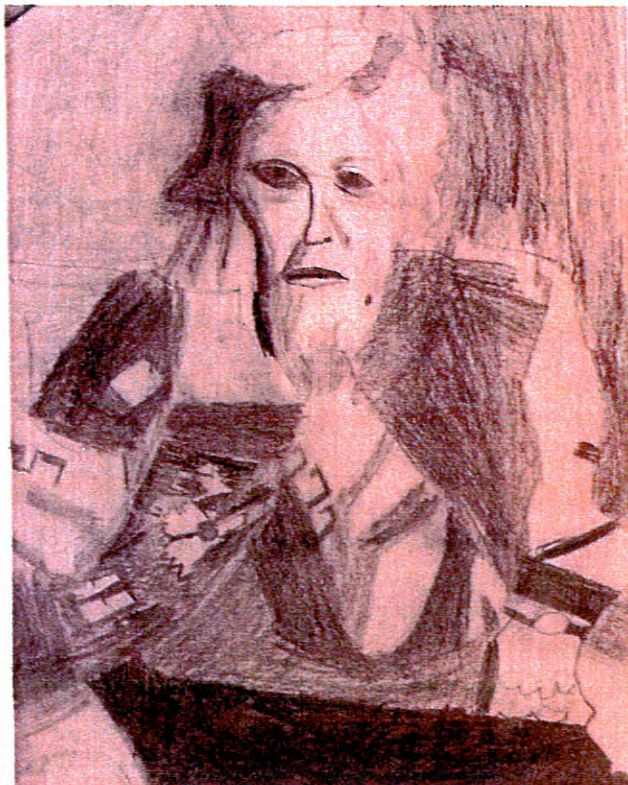


Portrait by: Erin



Portrait by: Arielyss

Portrait by: Darren



Portrait by: Adam



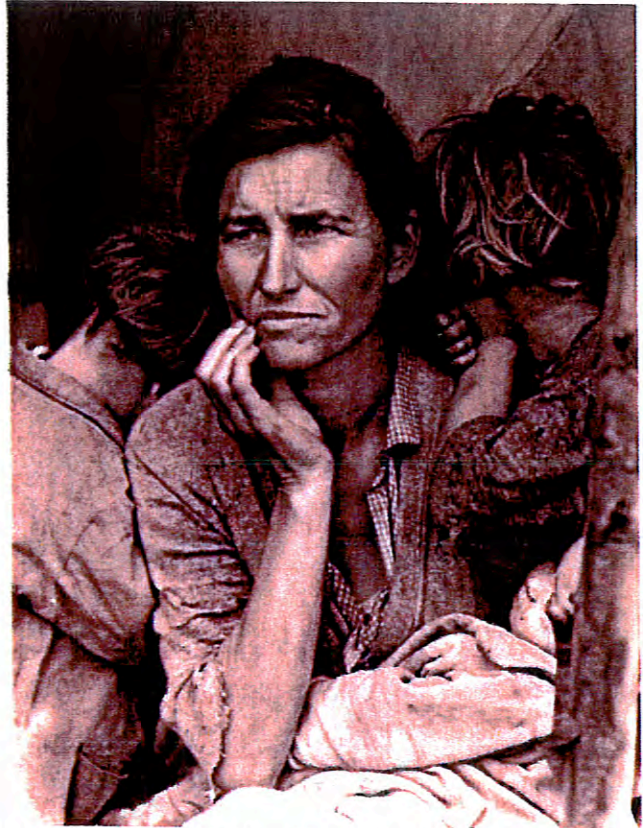
Lorraine Walsh

Interviewed by: Mitchell , Katie , Angela , and Megan

Have you ever had to break into someone's home just to steal a piece of moldy bread? Well Lorraine Walsh did! At age eleven, the Great Depression started for her and her family. It was rough making money and finding food so she was forced to do things like that because no one could feed her. She broke into an apartment and stole a piece of bread that had mold on it; she took off the mold and ate the bread! "If you were hungry enough you would eat anything during the Great Depression," said Lorraine.

Her troubles, however, did not start there. At an early age, her father died and her mother was forced onto welfare. When that happened, she and her sisters had to be split up and sent to live with different aunts. Often she and her family had difficult sleeping arrangements, and they wouldn't even have a mattress. During this time she went to school until she was nine years old, but she eventually left school because her family needed her to work.

When Lorraine left school she took a job babysitting. She babysat for five cents or sometimes even ten cents. If Lorraine was really good at babysitting she would get a dollar. To Lorraine, one dollar was a lot of money, but it sure was not enough to get through the depression. The money she made was put toward helping to get food, although it did not buy much because she made so little money.



"If you were hungry enough you would eat anything during the Great Depression."

In the end, Lorraine was able to persevere through many challenges like finding food or finding a place to sleep. From all these experiences, Lorraine learned an important lesson: she learned to share.

Lorraine did not wish to be photographed. We chose images from the Depression to represent her.



Portrait by: Angela



Portrait by: Megan



Portrait by: Katie



Portrait by: Mitchell

Virginia See

Interviewed by: Kalli , Barbara , David , and Brittany

People had all different kinds of experiences during the Great Depression. Virginia See's experience was what you might call unique because she did not have a hard life or an easy life. Her life during the Great Depression fell in between realms of difficulty. The depression forced her to grow up.



Virginia's mother did not have a steady outside job; it was her responsibility to take care of the family because many women did not work during that time period. Her father worked in a grain mill. Virginia was too young to work. She was two-years-old when the Great Depression started. She was born in 1927. She lived in Fitchburg, Massachusetts. Virginia and her family never traveled because they were too poor.

Virginia See and her family had trouble with finances and did not have a lot of money. They never invested in the stock market so they had nothing to lose in the crash luckily. Virginia explained that some people benefited from the Great Depression because they learned valuable lessons. One benefit was that it brought families closer together. One lesson and other positive influence of the depression was that "it taught people not to take things for granted." It also "taught people to save their money." The effects of the Great Depression ended a little while after World War II. The Great Depression posed a challenge for Virginia See and her family but in the end she learned from her experiences.

"[The depression] taught people not to take things for granted."



Portrait by: Barbara



Fay Laroche
Portrait by: Brittany



Fay Laroche
Portrait by: Kalli



Portrait by: David

Joanne Doherty

Interviewed by: Jess , Mikala , Laura , and Brenna

Would you be willing to scoop manure barefoot to make money? Well, Joanne Doherty was. Joanne used to go up to her uncle's farm in Ashby, Massachusetts to work. She was the only one in her family willing to do it! She said that she "would scoop the manure into wheelbarrows" and then a truck would come by to pick it up. It would be sold to people to use in their gardens and on farms. That is one way she helped to make money for her family during the Great Depression.

"I would scoop the manure into
wheelbarrows!"

Joanne started working at a very young age. For most of the Great Depression she worked on her uncle's farm with her family. She also worked, however, at a shoe factory for a couple of years making shoes. Those were the only jobs she had during the Great Depression.

Joanne's family watched where their money went since her father did not have a full time job. They did not invest in the stock market luckily enough. The Great Depression affected their lives for eight years until 1938. Joanne's family had not expected the Great Depression to happen; it was a shock. Times got hard in Joanne's family, but it really brought her family closer together.





Portrait by: Jess



Portrait by: Brenna



Portrait by: Mikala



Portrait by: Laura

Nancy Fitzgerald

Interviewed by: Joey , Jessie , Kara , and Anthony

During the Great Depression many people were frugal and afraid to share because there was not a lot of extra money. But Nancy Fitzgerald was not one of those people, in fact she was extremely generous. Nancy washed dishes and babysat to raise money. With the money she raised she donated it to the less fortunate. With her left over money she bought milk for her family and clothes that she needed. During a time when money was precious, Nancy was mature enough to give to others, despite the fact that she was not much better off.

Nancy's family owned many fruit trees which were scattered through her backyard. They grew apples, pears, cherries, and peaches. After they picked the ripe fruits off the trees, their mother would make a couple containers of peach jam. They would also eat the other pieces of fruit. She remembers that it was hard to mow the lawn because they had to pick up all the fruits off the ground first so they would not get stuck in the lawn mower.

Nancy's family was poor because her mother was a waitress and her father worked at the greenhouse. Those jobs did not provide a lot of money. The Great Depression made it even more difficult for her family because they struggled with money beforehand.



“We grew apples, pears, cherries, and peaches.”

Nancy was an only child. She had two close friends, but she did not get to spend a lot of time with them because she had to work a lot as well. Sometimes Nancy and her family would travel to New York to visit a favorite uncle. She enjoyed listening to country and jazz music on the radio when she had the chance.



Portrait by: Kara



Portrait by: Anthony



Dolly Leimeur
Portrait by: Jessie



Dolly Leimeur
Portrait by: Joey

Fay Laroche

Interviewed by: Ailynn , Stephanie , Arianna , Liam ,
and Laura

Have you ever had to catch your own food? Fay Laroche's family has. Her dad caught the fish they would eat for dinner some nights. Because of the Great Depression, her family couldn't afford to buy food always, but luckily where they lived provided enough food. Growing up in Maine, Fay's family used the resources of the ocean to have enough food. Her sister and her mom would catch clams. You could say they "lived off the land."

Fay Laroche was born in Maine in 1932, four years after the Great Depression started. She had a sister and a brother, although he was born two years after the depression ended. She lived with her family and her aunt. Her father was a quarry man, which is a person that works with rocks to cut them smaller for companies to use for building. Most of her clothes were hand made by her mother who was a stay at home mom.

Later on when her family moved to Fitchburg, she said that the car ride was so much fun: "My sister and I had fun riding in the back of our station wagon going up and down, up and down."

When Fay turned six she started school in Fitchburg. School was much like it is today but the girls were not allowed to wear jeans. Fay did not know what was going on during this time; she was too young to understand the concept of the Great Depression.

Fay Laroche's family was never separated during the depression. They had not invested in the stock market. Her family was very close and very much together. They would listen to the radio together and play card games. Fay did not lose anything special during the Great Depression. When she became an adult she began to write and became an author. Perhaps she uses these past experiences in her writing today.



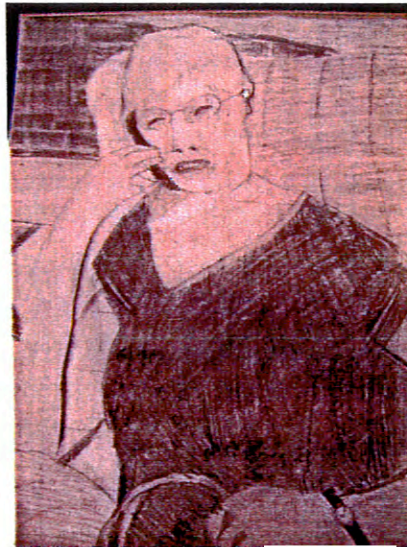
"My sister and I had fun riding in the back of our station wagon going up and down, up and down."



Portrait by: Arianna



Portrait by: Stephanie



Portrait by: Laura



Portrait by: Liam



Portrait by: Ailynn

June Rhodes

Interviewed by Brenda _____, Vinnie _____, Amber _____, and Bianca _____

June Rhodes was very lucky. Her family had their own food because her grandfather and father grew food in their garden. Her mother also baked fresh bread. During the Great Depression, when times got hard, her family had vegetables and other items from the garden. Her family's experience during the Great Depression was different than a lot of families' hardships because they had some resources.

“No one realized that they were poor because everybody else was poor.”

Before the Great Depression June had a normal life. She and her family did not expect the Great Depression to happen. She said “no one really expected it.” When she got older she had to start working. She said her first job was at a bookstore then shortly after she worked selling ice cream bars. Her dad worked at Park Hill Mills and her mother was a stay at home mom. One way she said she helped her family during the depression was by being a good kid and not misbehaving or causing more problems.

She said that “no one realized that they were poor because everybody else was poor.” She had to wear donated clothes and some people had to share clothes with people they did not even know. The Great Depression changed people's perspective on things. It forced people to work together. June and her family did just that, and they always stayed very close. Later on in life, when her father passed away, she grew tomato plants around his grave in honor of his love for gardening.





Portrait by: Amber



Portrait by: Vinnie



Portrait by: Brenda