

## HISTORY™ CLASSROOM PRESENTS

### THE CENTURY: AMERICA'S TIME STORMY WEATHER

Reporter Peter Jennings hosts this important series that chronicles the events and experiences of America in the twentieth century, the century that Henry Luce dubbed "The American Century." Using archival footage and interviews with historians, veterans, activists and every-day people, this documentary explores the social, political, cultural, and economic changes that have transformed this nation from a burgeoning, isolationist economic power to one of the world's leaders. *The Century: America's Time* would be useful for classes on American History, American Culture, Women's History, Political Science, Civics, Science and Technology, Military History and Ethics. It is appropriate for middle school, high school and college.

#### STORMY WEATHER

The stock market crash of 1929 ushered in the greatest period of economic malaise in America's history. The Great Depression shaped the atmosphere for a decade; the most prosperous country on earth could not feed its own citizens. But even as Americans were trying to cope with poverty and hunger, the rumblings of a demagogue across the water became louder and louder. This episode examines the Great Depression and the decade of the 1930s, covering events such as the Bonus Army March, movies and radio, the Dust Bowl, FDR and the New Deal and the rise of Hitler in Germany.

#### OBJECTIVES

Students will analyze the effects of the twentieth century on American life, political institutions, economics, foreign policy and culture. They will also investigate how events in the twentieth century influenced America's position as a world leader, and how global and domestic events created change, and sometimes turmoil, in America itself.

#### NATIONAL HISTORY STANDARDS

*Stormy Weather* fulfills the following National Standards for History for grades 5-12: Chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research capabilities, historical issues-analysis and decision-making for Eras 7 and 8.

#### VOCABULARY

teeter  
bankruptcy  
instinctually  
synonymous

barricade  
unique  
demoralized  
resonance

knell  
solitude  
charisma  
lethargy

ostensibly  
demagogue  
advocate  
animus

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. What was the Bonus Army? What were its demands? How did the Bonus Army exemplify the frustration of the American people during the Great Depression?
2. The Great Depression was the most severe economic crisis in American history. What were some of the causes of the Great Depression?
3. Almost everyone in the country felt the effects of the Great Depression. How did the depression affect average Americans?
4. Even though the economy failed, many Americans blamed themselves for their unemployment and hard times. Why did so many unemployed Americans blame themselves?
5. People still went to the movies in droves despite the hard times of the depression. Why did the motion picture industry continue to thrive when most other businesses failed?
6. What was the Dust Bowl? How did it exacerbate the Great Depression?
7. Why did more Americans join the Communist Party in the 1930s than any other time?
8. Adolph Hitler and the Nazi party came to power during the German depression. Why were Hitler and Nazism so appealing to Germans in the 1930s?
9. How did Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the president during the Great Depression, use radio to help restore American confidence in their government and the economy?
10. Was FDR's New Deal radical? Why or why not?
11. What finally ended the Great Depression?
12. What is the legacy of the Great Depression?

## **EXTENDED ACTIVITIES**

1. Write and perform a radio serial.
2. Write and produce a short play that takes place during the Great Depression.
3. Read John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* and discuss how the novel depicts life and culture during the Great Depression.