

America in the 1920s: The Crash

Source: "PROSPERITY." *Stock Market Crash of 1929, America in the 1920s, Primary Sources for Teachers, America in Class, National Humanities Center. National Humanities Center, 2012. Web. 20 Jan. 2015.*

<http://americainclass.org/sources/becomingmodern/prosperity/text4/text4.htm>

Commentary_____

1. Why did some observers of the stock market boom, including Alan Temple, Roger Babson, and cartoonist "Ding" Darling, warn of a coming crash?
2. Why did others, including John Raskob, Irving Fisher, Charles Dice, and the *Wall Street Journal*, dismiss such warnings?
3. Describe the variety of editorial responses in the nation's newspapers on October 30, 1929, the day after "Black Tuesday." Who and what was to blame? What was the nation to do?
4. Why was the 1929 crash described as a "new kind of panic"? How did it differ from the panics of 1907, 1901, 1896, and earlier years? (See Supplemental Sites below.) Use ushistory.org and wikipedia to help with the comparison.
5. Study the variety of phrases coined to describe the unique nature and severity of the crash, such as "the prosperity panic of 1929" and "a stock market hurricane." What do they illustrate about the nation's response to the crash?
6. Why did some financial analysts believe the crash would not fundamentally disturb national prosperity?
7. What role did President Hoover assume during the financial crisis? What was expected of him as chief executive?
8. Why was the Federal Reserve System blamed by some and praised by others for its role in the stock market boom and crash?
9. How did analysts judge the banking system? the "small speculator"? What other factors were singled out as contributors to the crash?

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10. According to two commentators, how did the stock market boom fit the "American temperament"—its historic "pioneer spirit"?
11. In what way was the commentary by journalist Frederick Lewis Allen, written two years after the crash, an elegy for the lost optimism of the 1920s?
12. What did lawyer Bernie Winkelman mean by the "magic of red ink" in his study *Ten Years on Wall Street*, published three years after the crash? What changes in national attitude were apparent by 1932?

Political Cartoons_____

1. Did the cartoonists applaud or lament the unprecedented stock market speculation that preceded the crash?
2. How did they depict the tumultuous response after the crash?
3. Complete the [cartoonist analysis chart](#) to analyze their viewpoints and the visual devices they used to convey them.
4. How is the "small speculator" depicted in the cartoons? Is he wise or foolish? informed or gullible?
5. How did the cartoonists use the common symbols of Uncle Sam, the bull and the bear (markets), the wealthy man with cigar and top hat, and the bankrupt man wearing a wooden barrel? What common symbols appear in political cartoons today?
6. How did the cartoonists use recent news events unrelated to the stock market as central symbols in their cartoons, as in "Another Record for Sustained Flight" and "This Way Out"?
7. Consider cartoonists' selection of objects to serve as symbols. For example, in "Halted!" why might Holleran have depicted a horse-drawn carriage instead of an automobile? In "Amateur Night," why did Darling not depict standard jugglers' fare like plates, balls, etc.? In "Somebody Had to Save Him from Himself," why

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did Gale not depict Uncle Sam drinking too much beer instead of eating too much food?

8. Check the political cartoons for details, often unlabeled, that one might miss on first view. What does each add to the cartoon's meaning? Add examples to the chart below.

9. Cartoons	10. Details
<i>Des Moines Register</i> , Nov. 24, 1928	aghast audience members
<i>Washington Post</i> , Jan. 4, 1929	robot-like pilot as ticker tape machine dollar-sign drops of gasoline
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Oct. 18, 1929	lamb's tear drop
<i>Atlanta Constitution</i> , Oct. 31, 1929	astonished emergency medics
<i>Atlanta Constitution</i> , Nov. 17, 1929	speculator's black eye horse's broken reins
<i>Los Angeles Times</i> , Dec. 31, 1929	earth as the dwelling awaiting a new resident

11. Drawing evidence from the commentary and cartoons in this section, write an overview of the 1929 stock market crash. Include the preceding years of stock speculation and the post-crash inquiry into causes and consequences. Begin or end your summary with one of these statements:

- —*"It's fine as long as you're going up."*
 - Jay N. "Ding" Darling, political cartoon, *Des Moines Register*, March 29, 1928
- —*"Fair weather cannot continue. . . . Sooner or later a crash is coming and it may be terrific."*
 - Roger Babson, businessman and investment analyst, address, July 1928
- —*"Don't you know when you've had enough?"*
 - Waiter in cartoon by Edmund Gale, *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 8, 1929
- —*"It is clear that the Street is going through the greatest disaster in its history. No fair words can gloss over that fact."*
 - *New York Evening Post*, Oct. 30, 1929
- —*"[T]he country will be better off for the lesson it has had, costly though it be."*

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- *Nashville* [Tennessee] *Banner*, Oct. 30, 1929
- —*"Never again—until the next one comes along."*
 - Jay N. "Ding" Darling, political cartoon, *Des Moines Register*, Nov. 8, 1929
- —*"Oh it was a great game while it lasted."*
 - Will Rogers, syndicated column, Nov. 24, 1929
- —*"Is the country headed for calamity, with the stock market carrying the flag?"*
 - *The Nation*, Nov. 27, 1929
- —*"It is impossible to grasp the change in life and thought produced by the economic upheaval."*
 - Bernie Winkelman, *Ten Years of Wall Street*, 1932
- —*"On that day of October 29, they told me I needed more cash to cover up. I couldn't get it. I was wiped out that day."*
 - George Mehales, WPA Life Histories interview, December 1938