

Why Leave? Tenant Farming and Black Out-Migration in the 1930s

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Overview

During the 1930s, many tenant farmers experienced a number of years of hardship due to the Great Depression. In addition, many black farmers moved out of the South to try to find better lives for themselves in Northern cities.

Connection to the Curriculum

This lesson is related to the movement of population in the United States during the twentieth century as well as the effects of the Great Depression. It may be used to help students with designing charts and graphs in addition to entice student interest in the plight of tenant farmers in the South. It could also be related to mathematics and language arts.

South Carolina Social Studies Standards

- 3-5.4 Explain the impact and causes of emigration from South Carolina and internal migration from the rural areas to the cities, including unemployment, poor sanitation, and transportation services, and the lack of electricity and other modern conveniences in rural locations.
- 3-5.5 Explain the effects of the Great Depression and the New Deal on daily life in South Carolina, including the widespread poverty and unemployment and the role of the Civilian Conservation Corps
- 8-6.5 Explain the effects of the Great Depression and the lasting impact of the New Deal programs on South Carolina, including the Rural Electrification Act, the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration building projects, the Social Security Act, and the Santee Cooper electricity project.
- USHC-7.4 Explain the causes and effects of the stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, including the disparity in incomes, limited government regulation, stock market speculation, and the collapse of the farm economy; wealth distribution, investment, and taxes; government policies and the Federal Reserve System; and the effects of the Depression on human beings and the environment.

Social Studies Literacy Elements

- H. Construct maps, graphs, tables, and diagrams to display social studies information
- I. Use maps to observe and interpret geographic information and relationships
- K. Use texts, photographs, and documents to observe and interpret social studies trends and relationships
- M. Use tables and graphs to observe and interpret geographic trends and relationships

Grade Range

3rd, 8th, and 11th grade

Time

- 3rd Grade: Two 50-minute class periods
8th Grade: Three to five 50-minute class periods
11th Grade: Four to five 50-minute class periods

Materials

South Carolina: An Atlas

Textbook about South Carolina

Plain white paper

Colored pencils or markers

Construction paper if you would like for the students to cut out strips to use for their bar graph

Research materials such as library books or the internet

Objectives

1. Students will graphically demonstrate the percentage of tenant farmers for each group. (3rd, 8th)
2. Students will theorize about reasons for black out-migration in the 1930s. (3rd, 8th, 11th)
3. Students will research for reasons for black out-migration in the 1930s. (8th, 11th)
4. Students will summarize the link between the Great Depression and black out-migration in the 1930s. (11th)
5. Students will examine population and farm statistics from United States census data collected in 1930, 1940, and 1950 to determine changes and trends in tenant farm population as well as black population. (11th)

Suggested Procedures for 3rd Grade:

1. In the days prior to the activity, discuss the Great Depression and the lives of people in South Carolina during that time.
2. Examine the map entitled “Percent of Farm Operators Classed as Tenants, 1935.” Ask the students to describe what a tenant farmer is (must have prior knowledge). Also discuss the different colors on the map and what they stand for, demonstrating by having the appropriate number of people in the class stand up for each percentage.
3. Have the students make a bar graph showing the differences in numbers of counties for each percentage. For example, the 75-79.9 percent range shows up in 5 counties. On their bar graph, they would show that 5 counties make up that range. Teacher modeling would be very effective in this case.
4. On the next day, examine the black out-migration map. Have the students review material already learned about people’s living conditions in the South during the Great Depression. Ask the students to write 3-5 sentences describing why they would leave South Carolina if they were a black Southerner during that time.

Suggested Procedures for 8th Grade:

1. In the days prior to the activity, discuss the Great Depression and the lives of people in South Carolina during that time.
2. As an opener on the day of the activity, have students list adjectives in a word web around the words “tenant farmer.”
3. Discuss with the students what a bar graph is. Demonstrate to the students that they will be creating a bar graph to represent the information that they see in the map entitled “Percent of Farm Operators Classed as Tenants, 1935.” They will count how many counties are represented for each percentage level and turn those statistics into a bar graph.
4. On the next day, the students will examine the “Black Outmigration 1930” map and theorize reasons why so many black people left the South and why they went to the places indicated on the map. [Possible class opener activity.] Then they will research in their text and other available resources reasons why blacks left the South. [If you are able to go to the library or computer lab, this would be a good activity to do there.] It may take up to two days to complete the research.
5. The students will write an essay describing why blacks left the South during the 1930s and include locations to which they moved. I prefer students to do the writing in class so that I can ensure that they actually did the writing themselves. If you assign it as homework, then you may cut a day off the time period.

Suggested Procedures for 11th Grade

1. After study of the Great Depression, have students examine the maps page 25 and brainstorm ideas behind black out-migration and a link with tenant farming.
2. Students will research information about tenant farmers and migration during the Great Depression, looking for links between the out-migration and the Great Depression. They will then write an essay describing the topic using bibliographic citations. [May be assigned to be completed outside of class so that class time can be used to research and complete the graph]
3. In addition, students will access the library at the University of Virginia via internet and examine population and farm tenancy statistics from 1930, 1940, and 1950, looking for changes and trends. [This may be an individual or small group activity.]
4. Students will use the information obtained from the UVA library website to create a line or bar graph representing the following categories:
 - a. number of South Carolina tenant farmers
 - b. number of black South Carolina tenant farmers
 - c. total number of United States tenant farmers
 - d. total number of black United States tenant farmers
 - e. South Carolina total population
 - f. South Carolina black population
5. Students will then choose two other variables to represent in their graph that are important when studying this topic.

6. Students will present their graph as well as their interpretation of the changes in the statistics in an oral report. Students in the audience will have the opportunity to ask questions and debate the student's or group's interpretation.

Suggested Evaluation

3rd Grade

Category	1- Poor	2- Okay	3- Fair	4- Good	5- Excellent
Graph shows required information					
Graph is neat and easy to read					
Sentences are factual					
Sentences are grammatically correct					
Overall Score					

8th Grade

Category	1- Poor	2- Okay	3- Fair	4- Good	5- Excellent
Graph accurately shows required information					
Graph is neat and easy to read					
Graph is labeled correctly with a title					
Essay is factually accurate					
Essay is grammatically correct					
Essay reflects careful thought and reflection					

11th Grade

Category	1- Poor	2- Okay	3- Fair	4- Good	5- Excellent
Essay is factually accurate					
Essay is grammatically correct with a title					
Bibliographic citations used correctly					
Graph is labeled correctly with a title					
Graph accurately shows required elements as well as student-chosen elements					
Oral report is organized and interesting					

Lesson Extensions

1. Students may create their own map for percentage of tenant farmers using data from other years for comparison (1930, 1940, etc.).
2. Students may write essays comparing numbers of tenant farmers for other years describing why the numbers change.
3. Students may research to find out what the major crop was for each percentage category on the tenant farmer map.
4. Students may choose several cities and research to find out how many former tenant farmers moved to those cities during the 1930s.
5. Students may conduct oral interviews of people who lived during the 1930s to find out what their living conditions were like.
6. Students may read newspapers from the 1930s and write a paragraph or an essay describing life in the 1930s from those sources.

Resources

The University of Virginia's library website contains census information through 1960. The site allows people to choose their own variables to show up in a chart. The site also allows users to see the variable information in a map by clicking on "map it!" under the category name. The website's address is <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu/collections/stats/histcensus> and is easy to navigate.

A variety of sources exist for finding information about South Carolina during the 1930s. A general history that is easily accessible is Walter Edgar's *History of South Carolina*.

South Carolina: An Atlas. Produced and distributed by the South Carolina Geographic Alliance, 1-888-895-2023, www.cas.sc.edu/cege