

READING CHECK

In what part of the country did the Dust Bowl occur?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does *drastic* mean in the underlined sentence? Read the underlined sentence aloud, but leave out the word *drastic*. What word could you use in its place? Use this strategy to help you figure out the meaning of *drastic*.

READING SKILL

Categorize Which of the following were present in both urban and rural America? Circle your answer.

- Hoovervilles
- Unemployment
- Farm foreclosures

The Great Depression deeply affected Americans. Some lost everything they had while others struggled simply to survive. In the cities, Americans faced rampant unemployment. Between 1921 and 1929, annual average unemployment rates never rose above 3.7 percent. By 1933, almost 25 percent of workers were without jobs. As unemployed families ran out of money, their hardship deepened. Drastic necessity forced them to sell their belongings. Sometimes a family's only food came from a **bread line**, where people lined up for handouts from charities or public agencies. Many people were evicted from their homes. With no place else to go, they sometimes grouped together in **Hoovervilles**—makeshift shantytowns of tents and shacks built on public land or vacant lots.

Conditions were bad in rural America, too. Before the depression, farmers had already been struggling. During the depression, their problems worsened. Crop prices dropped lower. Between 1930 and 1934, nearly one million farmers lost their homes for failure to pay their mortgages. Some farmers stayed on the land as **tenant farmers**, working for bigger landowners rather than for themselves. A severe drought and overfarming on the Great Plains turned the soil to dust, making farming impossible and creating huge dust storms. High plains regions in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, and Colorado became known as the **Dust Bowl**. Many farmers left the area and moved to California to look for work. Because some of these people were from Oklahoma, Dust Bowl refugees became known as **Okies**.

Minorities were hit the hardest by the depression. African American sharecroppers were thrown off the land they had farmed and migrated north. In 1932, unemployment among African Americans was nearly double the national rate. In the Southwest, many white Americans urged **repatriation** of Mexican Americans. Repatriation involved government efforts to send Mexican immigrants and their American children back to Mexico.

For many Americans, the depression was a time of great hopelessness and despair.

Review Questions

1. What were some of the problems that farmers faced during the depression?

2. What was repatriation, and who was most affected by it?
