



“TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD”: AN INTRODUCTION TO 1930S AMERICA

Activity Items

The following items are part of this activity and appear at the end of this student version.

- Item 1: 1930s Overview
- Item 2: 1930s Decennial Census Questionnaire
- Item 3: Unemployment (Results of 1930 Decennial Census)
- Item 4: 1937 Unemployment Census
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Student Learning Objectives

- I will be able to use census data to describe unemployment numbers from the 1930s and to make inferences about the plot, setting, and conflict in “To Kill a Mockingbird.”
- I will be able to use the RAFT technique to create a written piece that demonstrates an understanding of 1930s America and an explanation for why the major events occurring during this time period are relevant to the first three chapters of “To Kill a Mockingbird.”

Part 2

Now that you’ve started reading “To Kill a Mockingbird,” you will write a response using the **RAFT** technique: **R**ole of the writer, **A**udience, **F**ormat, **T**opic.

First, you must decide how you will complete your RAFT response. The only thing decided for you is the topic: poverty in the 1930s. Your writing must include both references to and direct quotes from the novel and/or the readings from Part 1.

Keep in mind as you’re writing: Your RAFT response must demonstrate that you understand the time period in which the novel was set, based on Part 1 of this activity.

Use this table to help you get started:		
R ole of the Writer	Who are you as the writer?	Scout? Jem? Atticus? Calpurnia? Walter Cunningham? An enumerator? A reporter? Someone else?
A udience	To whom are you writing?	Walter Cunningham? The government? The president? A teacher? The Census Bureau? A group of students? Someone else?
F ormat	What form is your written piece going to take?	A newspaper article? A diary entry? A letter? A poem? Something else?
T opic	What are you writing about?	Poverty in the 1930s

Item 1: 1930s Overview

1930

Census Day was April 1, 1930.

Authorizing Legislation

The Fifteenth Census Act, approved June 18, 1929, authorized "a census of population, agriculture, irrigation, drainage, distribution, unemployment, and mines [to be] taken by the Director of the Census." This act was the first to specify only general areas to be investigated, leaving the content of specific questions to the discretion of the director. The census encompassed each state, along with Washington, DC, Alaska, Hawaii, and Puerto Rico. The governors of Guam, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands each completed a census that same year. So did the governor of the Panama Canal Zone.



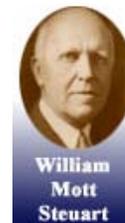
Herbert C. Hoover was President of the United States on Census Day, April 1, 1930.

Crises and Controversies

In the time between the passage of the act and census day, the stock market crashed and the nation plunged into the Great Depression. The public and academics wanted quick access to the unemployment information collected in the 1930 census. The Census Bureau had not planned to process the unemployment information it had collected - which some statisticians considered unreliable - until quite a bit later and was unequipped to meet these demands. When it did rush its data on unemployment out, the numbers it reported were attacked as being too low. Congress required a special unemployment census for January 1931; the data it produced confirmed the severity of the situation.

Intercensal Activity

Congress mandated that another unemployment census be conducted in 1937. This special census was largely voluntary; postal carriers delivered a form to every residential address in the country and those who were unemployed were expected to fill it out and mail it back. This special census is noteworthy because it was an early opportunity for Census Bureau statisticians to experiment with statistical sampling. Two percent of households were delivered a special census questionnaire whose results were used to test the accuracy of the larger census.



William Mott Steuart was Director of the U.S. Census Bureau on Census Day, April 1, 1930.

www.census.gov/history/pdf/1930overview.pdf

Item 3: Unemployment (Results of 1930 Decennial Census)

UNEMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

The census of unemployment was taken in April, 1930, as a part of the enumeration of the population for the Fifteenth Census. The enumerators were instructed to ask each person reporting a gainful occupation whether or not he (or she) was at work on the preceding day. If not, the enumerator was instructed to obtain further information and to make entries on a separate unemployment schedule.

Unemployment classes.—Since the enumerators were asked to make entries on the unemployment schedule for all persons who were not at work “yesterday,” it is obvious that many persons were returned on these schedules who were not “unemployed,” in accordance with the general acceptance of the term. The returns were therefore separated, in accordance with answers to specific questions on the schedule, into seven classes, designated classes A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

Class A, comprising all persons reported as “out of a job, able to work, and looking for a job,” which constitutes by far the greater part of the unemployment returns, is made up of those persons who are unemployed in the strictest sense of the term.

Class B, comprising persons “having jobs but on lay-off without pay, excluding those sick or voluntarily idle,” includes many persons who are working on part time and are therefore better situated than those who have no jobs at all. The question as to whether a man has a job or not has proved to be a difficult one to answer, and class B includes many persons who have been laid off from their jobs for long periods (the tabulation by weeks idle will show how long), some of whom are practically in the same position as those in class A. Nominally, they have a job, but practically they are not receiving any income from that job, and they may have no definite promise as to when that income will be resumed.

Class C is made up of persons “out of a job and unable to work,” and Class D of persons “having jobs but idle on account of sickness or disability.” Their separation from their jobs is a matter of personal misfortune rather than the result of a scarcity of employment.

Classes E, F, and G are made up for the most part of persons whose idleness is voluntary, and who were included in the unemployment count as an incidental result of the method of selection used. Class E is composed of persons able to work and having no job, who were reported by the enumerator as not looking for work. Class F is made up of persons having jobs but not drawing pay, for whom the reason for idleness was reported to be “voluntary lay-off,” or its equivalent. Class G includes all those having jobs who were reported by the enumerator as not losing pay as a result of their idleness, being mainly persons on vacation with pay.

The detailed tabulations shown in the following tables are limited to classes A and B. These two classes include practically all persons returned on the unemployment schedules who would be considered as “unemployed” in the commonly accepted meaning of the term.

Item 3: Unemployment (Results of 1930 Decennial Census) (Continued)

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ABSTRACT OF THE CENSUS—UNEMPLOYMENT

Gainful workers.—The term “gainful workers,” as it is used in the census reports, includes all persons who usually work at a gainful occupation, even though they may not have been actually employed or at work at the time the census was taken. While occupations are occasionally returned for children under 10 years of age, the figures presented in the tables, both for gainful workers and for the several unemployment classes, represent persons 10 years old and over.

The special census of unemployment.—In January, 1931, a special census of unemployment was taken in 21 selected areas, of which 18 were entire cities and 3 were boroughs of New York City. The combined population of these cities and boroughs, according to the Fifteenth Census, was 20,638,981, amounting to 16.8 per cent of the total population and 56.8 per cent of the population living in cities of 100,000 or more inhabitants.

In order to make the returns comparable with those of the unemployment census of April, 1930, the same schedule form was used as in the census of the previous year, with the addition of questions on sex, age, occupation, marital condition, color, and nativity, which in 1930 were transcribed to the unemployment schedule from the population schedule. So far as possible the same enumerators who canvassed these areas in 1930 were reemployed for the special census. These enumerators were instructed to visit each family and to inquire of some responsible person whether or not any member of the household who ordinarily worked at a gainful occupation was unemployed on the preceding day, or on the last regular working day and, if so, to ask the specified questions and make detailed entries on the special unemployment schedule.

Detailed reports on unemployment.—The statistics on unemployment presented in this section have been taken from the two volumes of the Fifteenth Census Reports on Unemployment, in which the subjects covered are presented in much greater detail. These volumes are:

Volume I. Unemployment Returns by Classes for States, Counties, Urban and Rural Areas, and Cities.

Unemployment bulletins: Published for each State, with a summary bulletin for the United States as a whole.

Volume II. General Report: Statistics by Subjects.

This volume comprises the following chapters:

Chapter 1. Unemployment by Occupation.

Chapter 2. Unemployment by Period of Idleness.

Chapter 3. Unemployment by Marital Condition.

Chapter 4. Part-time Employment.

Chapter 5. The Special Census of Unemployment, January, 1931.

Item 3: Unemployment (Results of 1930 Decennial Census) (Continued)

UNEMPLOYMENT CLASSES

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TABLE 1.—UNEMPLOYMENT RETURNS BY CLASSES, BY SEX, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1930

DESCRIPTION OF CLASS	Total	Male	Female
Total population.....	122,775,048	62,137,080	60,637,968
Population 10 years old and over.....	98,723,047	49,949,798	48,773,249
Gainful workers (persons reporting a gainful occupation).....	48,829,920	38,077,804	10,752,116
UNEMPLOYMENT RETURNS BY CLASSES			
CLASS A.—Persons out of a job, able to work, and looking for a job.....	2,429,062	2,058,738	370,324
Per cent of total population.....	2.0	3.3	0.6
Per cent of gainful workers.....	5.0	5.4	3.4
CLASS B.—Persons having jobs but on lay-off without pay, excluding those sick or voluntarily idle.....	758,585	627,407	131,178
Per cent of total population.....	0.6	1.0	0.2
Per cent of gainful workers.....	1.6	1.6	1.2
CLASS C.—Persons out of a job and unable to work.....	172,661	140,864	31,797
CLASS D.—Persons having jobs but idle on account of sickness or disability.....	273,588	208,278	65,310
CLASS E.—Persons out of a job and not looking for work.....	87,988	61,068	26,920
CLASS F.—Persons having jobs but voluntarily idle, without pay.....	84,595	60,254	24,341
CLASS G.—Persons having jobs and drawing pay, though not at work (on vacation, etc.).....	82,335	63,544	18,791

TABLE 2.—UNEMPLOYMENT CLASSES A AND B, BY SEX, COLOR, AND NATIVITY, FOR THE UNITED STATES: 1930

CLASS, SEX, ETC.	Total	Native white	Foreign-born white	Negro	Mexican	Other races
Total population.....	122,775,048	95,487,800	13,366,407	11,891,143	1,422,533	597,163
Male.....	62,137,080	48,010,145	7,153,709	5,855,609	758,674	358,883
Female.....	60,637,968	47,487,655	6,212,698	6,035,474	663,859	238,280
CLASS A.—Persons out of a job, able to work, and looking for a job.....	2,429,062	1,613,860	514,535	255,931	34,782	9,954
Male.....	2,058,738	1,359,444	473,311	187,355	32,203	9,425
Female.....	370,324	257,416	41,224	68,576	2,579	529
Per cent of population:						
Total.....	2.0	1.7	3.8	2.2	2.4	1.7
Male.....	3.3	2.8	6.6	3.2	4.2	2.6
Female.....	0.6	0.5	0.7	1.1	0.4	0.2
CLASS B.—Persons having jobs but on lay-off without pay, excluding those sick or voluntarily idle.....	758,585	512,680	167,340	65,605	10,274	2,686
Male.....	627,407	417,695	149,926	48,220	9,027	2,539
Female.....	131,178	94,985	17,414	17,385	1,247	147
Per cent of population:						
Total.....	0.6	0.5	1.3	0.6	0.7	0.4
Male.....	1.0	0.9	2.1	0.8	1.2	0.7
Female.....	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1

www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/00476589ch06.pdf

Item 4: 1937 Unemployment Census

UNEMPLOYMENT REPORT CARD

Please fill out this card if you are totally or partly unemployed

Answer all questions promptly

It is important that EVERY total y or partly unemployed worker in your household fill out a SEPARATE report card. Additional cards can be secured from your postman or post office. You can get help in answering these questions, if you need it, at any post office or from any postal employee.

1. Print full name (First) (Middle) (Last) Do you live on a farm? (Yes or no)

2. Are you: (Street and number or R. F. D.) (City, town, or village) (County) (State) Sex (Check) Male Female

3. Are you able to work? (Check one) Yes No
4. Age at last birthday years
5. Color or race (Check one) White Negro Other
6. Sex (Check) Male Female
7. How many hours did you work last week? hours (If none, write "None")

8. How many weeks did you work in the last 12 months? weeks (If none, write "None")
Enter total number of hours worked at ALL jobs (except WPA, NYA, CCC, or other emergency work) during the week from Sunday, November 7, through Saturday, November 13.

9. What is your occupation, or kind of work?
The occupation which you give in answer to this question (number 9) describes the kind of business or industry in which the work is done. Enter "New worker" in both questions 9 and 10 if you have never had a steady job, and want work. Do not give the name of your company or employer as an answer to question 10.
(Examples: Tool maker, waitress, watchman, farm laborer, etc.)

10. Kind of business or industry in which you did, or are doing, this kind of work?
(Examples: Machine shop, restaurant, railroad, cotton farm, etc.)

11. How many other workers are there in your family living in the same household with you? workers
Count all persons working for pay or profit, or wanting work, except yourself.

12. How many of these workers are: (a) Totally unemployed and want work? workers
(b) Partly employed and want more work? workers
(c) Working at WPA, NYA, CCC, or other emergency work? workers
Do not count yourself

13. How many persons are mainly dependent on you for support? (Do not count yourself) dependents

14. What was your individual total income, cash and other, last week? \$
Do not include payments from relief, WPA, NYA, CCC, or other emergency work.

Sign here [OVER]
Mail this card before midnight November 20, 1937. No postage stamp is needed

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Item 5: Photo of Employees and Supervisors Processing the 1937 Unemployment Census



Census Bureau Director William L. Austin and Unemployment Census Director John D. Biggers supervise the receipt and check-in of questionnaires from the 1937 unemployment census, November 24, 1937.

www.census.gov/schools/resources/historical-documents/unemployment-census.html

Item 6: Photo of Vice President John Garner and
Unemployment Census Director John Biggers



Vice President John Garner selects at random the number of the postal route to be sampled during the 1937 unemployment census, November 19, 1937. To his left is Unemployment Census Director John Biggers.

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