

## “Depression-Era Bloomington Mayor Besieged by Jobseekers”

### Materials

- Article: “Depression-Era Bloomington Mayor Besieged by Jobseekers,” *The Pantagraph*, Oct. 19, 2009
- Primary Documents
  - Document set: Letters to Bloomington Mayor Louis Wellmerling
  - Song: “Brother, Can You Spare a Dime” (Background music/extension discussion)
  - Guided Analysis Questions (Handout)

### Procedure (1-2 class periods)

- Students should read the article “Depression-Era Bloomington Mayor Besieged by Jobseekers” in preparation for the class.
  - Discussion question:
    - How did the Great Depression locally affect McLean County?
- Differentiate the letters for students according to reading levels. The letters are categorized in number order, 1 being the most difficult and 17 being the least difficult. (Teacher tip: You may choose to use testing data to adequately assign the letters.)
- Allow for students to read, transcribe and analyze their letters using the guided questions. With 16 letters, the teacher might consider letting students work in partner groups.
- After students read their letters, put students into groups of 4, making sure that each student in the group has a different letter (Jigsaw Method)
  - Have students answer the following:
    - What job is being solicited, and why is this citizen in need of a job? Cite evidence from each letter.
    - What are some of the personal hardships faced by local residents?
    - If you were Mayor Wellmerling, to which of the four letters would you choose to respond? Rank them in order of need.
    - As a group, discuss how citizens in 1933 voiced their employment needs. How do citizens today find employment in strained economic environments? How has the process changed over time?

## Standards

### **Illinois State Standards**

- **14.C.4** Describe the meaning of participatory citizenship (e.g., volunteerism, voting) at all levels of government and society in the United States.
- **16.A.3b** Make inferences about historical events and eras using historical maps and other historical sources.

### **NCSS (National Council for Social Studies)**

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (Thematic Standard)

- Help learners analyze groups and evaluate the influences of institutions, people, events, and cultures in both historical and contemporary settings

### **Common Core Standards**

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.6-8.1 – Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.8.3 – Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

### **NCHE Vital Themes & Narratives**

- Values, beliefs, political ideas, and institutions
- Patterns of social and political interaction

## Bibliography

### **Additional Materials**

- *Out of the Dust*
- “A New Deal for Bloomington” *The Pantagraph*
- “Sample Ballot: Third Ward, City of Bloomington, 1935”
- “Journey through the Great Depression: Local History Series, Book II,” McLean County History of Museum, eds. Laura Wheaton and Susan Hartzold

## Glossary

**Scrip** – A term for any substitutes for legal tender and is often a form of credit

**Lieu** – instead

**Incumbent** – (of an official or regime) currently holding office.

**Deluged** – an overwhelming amount or number

**Maelstrom** – a restless, disordered, or tumultuous state of affairs