

Surviving the Depression in Champaign-Urbana

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Lesson #3: Urbana Money

Abstract: In this lesson, students will investigate primary sources related to Urbana Money, which was developed in 1933 to keep the Urbana banks open during the Depression. Students will focus on the reasons for the development of Urbana Money, as well as its uses in the community. Students will also evaluate the effectiveness of Urbana Money in dealing with the problems of the Depression.

Essential Questions:

- How did Urbana Money attempt to solve the banking crisis in Urbana in 1933?
- Did Urbana Money serve as a viable solution for dealing with bank failures in Urbana?

Assessment: Students will be assessed based on their ability to analyze the primary sources related to Urbana Money, as well as understand how the currency was used. Students will also be assessed on their ability to determine the effectiveness of Urbana Money in dealing with the bank failures in Urbana. Finally, students will be expected to incorporate information from the primary sources in this lesson in their essays at the end of the unit.

Procedures:

- 1) *Setting the Purpose:* The teacher should begin this lesson by reviewing with students the federal bank holiday declared by President Roosevelt in March 1933. The teacher may want to have students read or listen to President Roosevelt's speech declaring the bank holiday.
- 2) The teacher should then divide the students into groups of three to four. Once students have been divided, hand out a set of Urbana Money (**Source #7**) to each group. Give the students a few minutes to look at the money and brainstorm its possible uses. After the students have looked at the money, the teacher should hand out two advertisements from the *Urbana Courier*—"Urbana Money Ready for Distribution Now" (March 7, 1933) and "Why Should I Use My Currency to Buy Urbana Money?" (March 8, 1933). The teacher should also hand out the Urbana Money analysis sheet to the students, and students should work in their groups to analyze the money and the advertisements.
- 3) After students have analyzed the money and the ads, the teacher should hand out the March 6, 1933, *Champaign News-Gazette* article: "Urbana Dollars Kept Trade Rolling in '33" (**Source #8**). As students read this article, they should note the positives and negatives of Urbana Money that are discussed. After students have read the article, the teacher should discuss with the class whether Urbana Money served as a viable solution

for dealing with the Depression in Urbana. Students should also document the sources from this lesson on their source charts to use on their essays at the end of the unit.

Analysis of Local Primary Sources: During this lesson, students will analyze Urbana Money and advertisements related to Urbana Money from the *Urbana Courier*. Students will also read and analyze a *Champaign News-Gazette* article looking back on the use of Urbana Money during the Depression.

Ties to National Primary Sources: During this lesson, students will read President Roosevelt's Fireside Chat on the 1933 banking holiday, which was used to determine which banks were stable enough to reopen.

List of Materials and Resources:

"Urbana Dollars Kept Trade Rolling in '33," *Champaign News-Gazette*, March 6, 1933

"Urbana Money Ready for Distribution Now," *Urbana Courier* advertisement, March 7, 1933

"Why Should I Use My Currency to Buy Urbana Money?" *Urbana Courier* advertisement, March 8, 1933

President Roosevelt's Fireside Chat, March 12, 1933

Urbana Money

Urbana Money analysis sheet