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Immediate & Long-Term Impacts

The national economic crisis known as the Great Depression brought about many cultural, social, and economic changes that affected the American way of life and how our country operates. It also had both immediate and long-term impacts on the nation.

The short-term, or immediate, impacts of the Great Depression had a lot to with the fact that hopelessnes became a central theme. However, many families were actually strenghtened through the crisis. Another immediate impact was mass migration, which changed the “American mosaic” and demographics as cities gained and lost citizens due to the harsh times and unemployment (UShistory). For instance, upstate New York and the rural New England lost citizens seeking opportunities somewhere else, and the populations of California and Arizona increases as people migrated from the Great Plains. The Dust Bowl, which caused a severe draught, sent thousands of unemployed farmers to the cities to find work. There was also a rapid growth in crime rate as the jobless resorted to theft and other desperate actions to provide for their families. Suicide rates, malnutrition, and alcoholism also rose due to the lack of resources, health care, and the repeal of Prohibition. Popular culture saw changes as well with the development of new trends, including movies, music, and radio shows due to the need for a positive outlet during hard times.

The most lasting effects of the Great Depression were the large-scale unemployment, loss of homes and farms, and the failed economy itself. However, there were also a few positive impacts. The depression started America on many beneficial systems, including Social Security, the FDIC to guarantee investors’ money, and the SEC to set guidelines for the stock market. While some programs were created and still exist to help prevent another Great Depression or economic crisis, many of them take advantage of taxpayers. Other long-term impacts include the fact that it gave the President more power, it brought trade to a standstill, and the sudden crash of the stock market taught people to be more frugal with their money.