



Market to Market Classroom

1980s Farm Crisis

Teacher Notes

Contents

The Teacher Notes for this module includes the following items:

- Module Overview
- Learning Goals
- Standards and Cross-curricular Connections
- Discussion Questions
- Challenge & Rubric
- Vocabulary
- Suggested Classroom Activities

Overview

The *1980s Farm Crisis* module recounts factors, such as massive grain stockpiles and a grain contract with the Soviet Union, that lead to agricultural prosperity and economic inflation in the 1970's. This prosperity was followed by the Federal Reserve's response and resulting history-making high interest rates. It describes how farmers incurred massive debt while income declined, and how an embargo of grain to the Soviet Union caused prices to collapse. It also explores the results of the farm crisis including rural population decline, decreases in the number of farms still in business and the impact incurred on related businesses.

This module introduces students to several big ideas. Agriculture can have boom and bust cycles and there are a variety of causes for economic crises. Global issues and government intervention can play a part and these cycles have had a significant impact on rural America.

Learning Goals

This module connects with the following learning goals:

- Rank and debate the causes and events leading into the Farm Crisis.
- Infer issues and problems related to the Farm Crisis based on historical accounts.
- Illustrate the impact of recurring recessions and the growing national debt of the 1980s on the agricultural economy.
- Evaluate the impact of international events on domestic issues.
- Compare the interests, values, perspectives, and points of view of those involved in the 1980s Farm Crisis.



Standards and Cross-curricular Connections

The *1980s Farm Crisis* module offers several standards and cross-curricular connections:

Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (AFNR) Standards

[National Council for Agricultural Education](#)

- Compare and contrast issues affecting the AFNR industry. (CS.09)
- Utilize appropriate management planning principles in AFNR business enterprises. (ABS.02)
- Use industry-accepted marketing principles to accomplish AFNR business objectives. (ABS.06)

Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects

[Common Core State Standards Initiative](#)

© Copyright 2010 National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers. All rights reserved.

- Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content. (WHST.9-10.1.)
- Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/experiments, or technical processes. (WHST.9-10.2.)
- Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital resources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation. (WHST.9-10.8.)

Social Studies

National Council for the Social Studies

[College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#)

- Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences. (D2.Civ.13.9-12.)
- Analyze how people use and challenge local, state, national, and international laws to address a variety of public issues. (D2.Civ.12.9-12.)
- Describe the possible consequences, both intended and unintended, of government policies to improve market outcomes. (D2.Eco.8.9-12.)
- Explain how current globalization trends and policies affect economic growth, labor markets, rights of citizens, the environment, and resource and income distribution in different nations. (D2.Eco.15.9-12.)
- Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. (D2.His.1.9-12.)
- Analyze change and continuity in historical eras. (D2.His.2.9-12.)
- Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources. (D2.His.12.9-12.)
- Analyze multiple and complex causes and effects of events in the past. (D2.His.14.9-12.)
- Integrate evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past. (D2.His.16.9-12.)



21st Century Skills

Partnership for 21st Century Skills

[Framework for 21st Century Learning](#)

- Learning from and working collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work and community contexts
- Knowing how to make appropriate personal economic choices
- Understanding the role of the economy in society
- Participating effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes



Discussion Questions

Discussion questions provide you with opportunities to engage your students in the module topic.

1. What were the main causes of the 1980s Farm Crisis?
2. Who were the stakeholders of the 1980s Farm Crisis? Who suffered most from the crisis? Did anyone benefit?
3. In what ways did international events impact the crisis?
4. Are some of the factors involved in the 1980s Farm Crisis at play today?
5. Do you think the agriculture industry is currently in a "boom" or "bust" period? What evidence can you find to support your opinion?
6. Are there events that have taken place in your lifetime that you can compare to the 1980s Farm Crisis? What are the similarities and differences?
7. Consider those businesses that survived the 1980s farm crisis and those that did not. What were the differences that led to those outcomes.
8. How can you learn from past historical events to inform your business decisions in the future? What evidence would you collect to support your ideas?
9. What was the government's role in the 1980s farm crisis? Did it help or hurt the situation? Back up your answer with evidence.
10. What actions can an agricultural business take now to manage the impact of a future economic crisis?

Challenge

The *1980s Farm Crisis* module Challenge invites students to identify an agriculture-related business, consider the various risks to the business, and create a plan to minimize this risk. The project-based framework requires students to think critically and creatively, and to communicate their learning. The rubric can be used for student formative self or peer-evaluation, or for summative assessment by the teacher.

[View the Challenge](#)

[Download and View the Rubric](#)



Vocabulary

This is a list of vocabulary terms used throughout the *1980s Farm Crisis* module. Students may use trusted sources to define each of the terms. Recommended sources for definitions include:

CME Group Glossary: <http://www.cmegroup.com/education/glossary.html>

Investopedia Dictionary: <http://www.investopedia.com/dictionary/>

- Commodity
- Consolidation
- Contract
- Debt
- Default
- Inflation
- Monetary
- Net
- Payroll
- Productivity
- Risk
- Sector
- Stockpile



Classroom Activities

There are several ways the *1980s Farm Crisis* module can be used in your class. Below are a few activity ideas to consider using with your students.

Vocabulary builder I: Give each student 5-10 sticky notes. Have students read the background and instruct them to write 5-10 unfamiliar words on individual sticky notes. When finished, have students place their sticky notes on a wall or board clustered with other notes with the same word. The words with the most sticky note “votes” will be terms to focus on in the next activity. Words with fewer notes pose an opportunity to differentiate instruction.

Vocabulary builder II: Assign students to groups of 2-3. Each group will choose 1-2 terms from the reading to research. Students should develop a poster or presentation for each word to share with classmates. The presentation should contain the following:

- Definition, pronunciation, and derivative forms
- Usage in sentences, questions and photos
- Usage in a quotation (if possible)
- A photo or video depicting usage of the term
- A group of questions all answered by the word

Rank the causes: As a class, make a list of causes and events that led to the 1980s Farm Crisis. Voting as a class, rank the causes according to student opinion regarding which causes/events were the most to blame. Discuss or debate the results as a class.

Interview: Have students develop a list of open-ended questions. Identify a person who experienced the Farm Crisis and have students use the questions to conduct an interview. Students can then condense the conversation into a paper or presentation to share with the class. Students may even take this further by interviewing more than one person (perhaps even from different perspectives such as a banker and a farmer) and incorporate a compare/contrast element into their presentation.

Write an article: Individually, ask students to research the topic of recurring recessions and/or growing national debt in the 1980's. Then have students write a news article or blog post about the topic. Be sure that students put themselves into the period and perspective by viewing appropriate clips from the *Market to Market Classroom 1980s Farm Crisis* module.

Communications extension: Have students select 1-2 photos that convey the tone of a news article or blog post related to the 1980s Farm Crisis or a similar economic crisis. Have students share their photos (giving credit) with captions.

Map it: Using a [world map](#), have students work in pairs to draw arrows to and from the U.S. depicting international events and their effects on the domestic economy leading up to the Farm Crisis of the 1980's. Be sure each arrow is labeled.



Point of view: Assign students to groups and research a perspective related to the 1980s Farm Crisis. Once the research is completed, students will share the effects of the 1980s Farm Crisis with the class. Assign the following perspectives or generate other options:

- Farmers
- Ag lenders (banks, Farm Credit Services, etc)
- Ag input providers (agronomy, machinery and animal product suppliers)
- Commodity buyers (elevators, livestock auction houses and grain terminals)
- Processors (grain and meat)
- Consumers
- Businesses in rural areas
- Rural county and city governments
- Rural schools
- Mental health providers, clergy, and other counseling services

150-word essays:

Consider using these essay topics as assessments or as general writing prompts:

- Compare/contrast the causes and effects of the Dust Bowl/Great Depression to the Farm Crisis of the 1980's.
- If you knew another farm crisis were imminent, how would you protect yourself, your business, and/or your community?
- Compare current market and industry conditions to those of the 1980's.