

## **The Great Depression – Reading List - Monday, July 26 – 7:00 pm**

### **Non-Fiction**

#### **Available at HTFL and other Delaware County Libraries**

#### ***The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl, Timothy Egan***

The dust storms that terrorized the High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since. Timothy Egan's critically acclaimed account rescues this iconic chapter of American history from the shadows in a tour de force of historical reportage. Following a dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, Egan tells of their desperate attempts to carry on through blinding black dust blizzards, crop failure, and the death of loved ones. Brilliantly capturing the terrifying drama of catastrophe, Egan does equal justice to the human characters who become his heroes, "the stoic, long-suffering men and women whose lives he opens up with urgency and respect" (New York Times).

#### ***The Complete Idiot's Guide to The Great Depression, H. Paul Jeffers***

You're no idiot, of course. You're aware that Wall Street crashed in 1929, leading to a financial disaster that lasted more than a decade. But despite what you've heard about "Black Tuesday," the Great Depression didn't happen overnight or because of one bad day on Wall Street.

#### ***The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression, Amity Shales***

Challenging conventional history, Amity Shales offers a reinterpretation of the Great Depression. She shows how both Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt failed to understand the prosperity of the 1920s and heaped massive burdens on the country that more than offset the benefit of New Deal programs.

#### ***Little Heathens: Hard Times and High Spirits on an Iowa Farm During the Depression, Mildred Armstrong Kalish***

*Little Heathens* offers a loving but realistic portrait of a "hearty-handshake Methodist" family that gave its members a remarkable legacy of kinship, kindness, and remembered pleasures. Recounted in a luminous narrative filled with tenderness and humor, Kalish's memoir of her childhood shows how the right stuff can make even the bleakest of times seem like "quite a romp."

#### ***A Secret Gift: How One Man's Kindness and a trove of letters revealed the hidden history of The Great Depression, Ted Gup***

An inspiring account of America at its worst - and Americans at their best - woven from the stories of Depression-era families who were helped by gifts from the author's generous and secretive grandfather.

#### ***The Girl Who Fought the Great Depression: Shirley Temple and the 1930's America, John F. Kasson***

What distinguished Shirley Temple from every other Hollywood star of the period—and everyone since—was how brilliantly she shone. Amid the deprivation and despair of the Great Depression, Shirley Temple radiated optimism and plucky good cheer that lifted the spirits of millions and shaped their collective character for generations to come. Distinguished cultural historian John F. Kasson shows how the most famous, adored, imitated, and commodified child in the world astonished moviegoers, created a new international culture of celebrity, and revolutionized the role of children as consumers.

***An Eyewitness History: The Great Depression, David F. Burg***

Beginning with the prelude to this crisis immediately following the Treaty of Versailles and continuing to the emergence of another world war, *The Great Depression* collects the words and thoughts of those who experienced bank foreclosures, waited in front of soup kitchens, listened hopefully to fireside chats, and worked to build a stronger America with the New Deal.

***The Great Depression: America in the 1930's, T.H. Watkins***

The Great Depression, as Watkins shows, was a scarring experience that forever changed the United States, instilling ubiquitous fear of job loss while also creating an activist federal government inextricably involved in the everyday life of ordinary Americans. This type of government, he adds, is precisely what most of us want. Augmented with reproductions of news clips, documentary stills and period photographs in both black-and-white and color, this lively, involving chronicle--companion to a PBS series--begins with the "thoroughly repressive" 1920s, then moves on to the Stock Market crash, the ascendancy of organized labor, mass migrations caused by drought, persistent racism within New Deal programs, the powerlessness of agricultural labor even as industrial unions got stronger, and the ugly domestic rise in intolerance and political confusion as Europe sank into a totalitarian quagmire.

***The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America, T.H. Watkins***

It was the worst of times and the best of times. It was an era of unprecedented crisis and a time of unprecedented courage. In a single, comprehensive volume, *The Hungry Years* tells the story of the Great Depression through the eyes of the people who lived it. Less concerned with the power brokers in Washington than with the daily struggles of ordinary people at the grassroots across America, it draws on little-known oral histories, memoirs, local press, and scholarly monographs to capture the voices of men and women in a time of extreme crisis. The result is a richly detailed narrative that traces the stages of the disaster chronologically without losing touch with the personal wounds it inflicted or the ways in which people responded.

***The Great Depression and The New Deal: America's Economic Collapse and Recovery, Anne E. Schraff***

Synthesizing information culled from a variety of sources, Schraff offers a readable and objective look at the decade in which "America would be changed forever." She summarizes the gathering "storm clouds" of disaster in the late 1920s and quickly segues into an account of the stock market crash of 1929. (It is in this chapter that Schraff misidentifies Oklahoman Will Rogers as a Hoosier.) The immediate aftermath of the crash, the deepening depression, the Bonus Army debacle, and Franklin Roosevelt's election to the presidency--covered concisely but with sufficient detail--lead into a discussion of the New Deal and its heritage. Especially interesting and informative is the chapter concerned with minorities during the Depression. The book complements the older, lengthier *The Great Depression*.

***Dancing in the Dark: A Cultural History of the Great Depression, Morris Dickstein***

Hailed as one of the best books of 2009 by the *New York Times* and the *Los Angeles Times*, this vibrant portrait of 1930s culture masterfully explores the anxiety and hope, the despair and surprising optimism of distressed Americans during the Great Depression. Morris Dickstein, whom Norman Mailer called "one of our best and most distinguished critics of American literature," has brought together a staggering range of material--from epic Dust Bowl migrations to zany screwball comedies, elegant dance musicals, wildly popular swing bands, and streamlined Deco designs. Exploding the myth that Depression culture was merely escapist, Dickstein concentrates on the dynamic energy of the arts, and the resulting lift they gave to the nation's morale. A fresh and exhilarating analysis of one of America's most remarkable artistic periods, with *Dancing in the Dark* Dickstein delivers a monumental critique.

***The Boys in the Boat: Nine Americans and Their Epic Quest for Gold at the 1936 Olympics,* Daniel James Brown**

It was an unlikely quest from the start. With a team composed of the sons of loggers, shipyard workers, and farmers, the University of Washington's eight-oar crew team was never expected to defeat the elite teams of the East Coast and Great Britain, yet they did, going on to shock the world by defeating the German team rowing for Adolf Hitler. The emotional heart of the tale lies with Joe Rantz, a teenager without family or prospects, who rows not only to regain his shattered self-regard but also to find a real place for himself in the world. Drawing on the boys' own journals and vivid memories of a once-in-a-lifetime shared dream, Brown has created an unforgettable portrait of an era, a celebration of a remarkable achievement, and a chronicle of one extraordinary young man's personal quest.

***Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929-1945,* David M. Kennedy**

*Freedom from Fear* explores how the nation agonized over its role in World War II, how it fought the war, why the United States won, and why the consequences of victory were sometimes sweet, sometimes ironic. In a compelling narrative, Kennedy analyzes the determinants of American strategy, the painful choices faced by commanders and statesmen, and the agonies inflicted on the millions of ordinary Americans who were compelled to swallow their fears and face battle as best they could.

***The Orchard: A Memoir / by Adele Crockett Robertson / 1996***

*The Orchard* is an exquisitely beautiful and poignant memoir of a young woman's single-handed struggle to save her New England farm in the depths of the Great Depression.

**Found at other Delaware Co Libraries**

***It's Up to the Women,* Eleanor Roosevelt**

"Women, whether subtly or vociferously, have always been a tremendous power in the destiny of the world," Eleanor Roosevelt wrote in *It's Up to the Women*, her book of advice to women of all ages on every aspect of life. Written at the height of the Great Depression, she called on women particularly to do their part--cutting costs where needed, spending reasonably, and taking personal responsibility for keeping the economy going.

Whether it's the recommendation that working women take time for themselves in order to fully enjoy time spent with their families, recipes for cheap but wholesome home-cooked meals, or America's obligation to women as they take a leading role in the new social order, many of the opinions expressed here are as fresh as if they were written today.

***The Great Crash, 1929,* John Kenneth Galbraith**

Of Galbraith's classic examination of the 1929 financial collapse, the *Atlantic Monthly* said: "Economic writings are seldom notable for their entertainment value, but this book is. Galbraith's prose has grace and wit, and he distills a good deal of sardonic fun from the whopping errors of the nation's oracles and the wondrous antics of the financial community." Now, with the stock market riding historic highs, the celebrated economist returns with new insights on the legacy of our past and the consequences of blind optimism and power plays within the financial community.

***Since Yesterday: The 1930's in America, Frederick Lewis Allen***

"Vividly and with great skills he marshals the men, the mountebanks, the measures, and the events of ten years of American life and causes them to march before us in orderly Panathenaic procession."--"Saturday Review"

***American Made: The Enduring Legacy of the WPA, Nick Taylor***

The WPA is American history that could not be more current, from providing economic stimulus to renewing a broken infrastructure. Introduced in 1935 at the height of the Great Depression, when unemployment and desperation ruled the land, this controversial nationwide job program would forever change the physical landscape and social policies of the United States. The WPA lasted eight years, spent \$11 billion, employed 8½ million men and women, and gave the country not only a renewed spirit but a fresh face. Now this fascinating and informative book chronicles the WPA from its tumultuous beginnings to its lasting presence, and gives us cues for future action.

***The Great Depression and the New Deal, Kevin Hisstrom***

Detailed and filled with primary sources, this account examines a period in American history of unparalleled hardship: The Great Depression. Beginning with an exploration of the Roaring Twenties, in which the appetite for the consumption of goods and for the good life was a primary focus of many, it also looks at the warning signs that went largely unheeded as well as the Crash of 1929, the Hoover administration's difficulties, Roosevelt's election, and his New Deal. In addition, this comprehensive history not only discusses the Great Depression's legacy—such as the political and social effects on present day American society—but also includes numerous biographies of individuals who were noteworthy during the era.

***Children of the Great Depression, Russell Freedman  
(young adult non-fiction)***

Russell Freedman illuminates the lives of the American children affected by the economic and social changes of the Great Depression. Middle-class urban youth, migrant farm laborers, boxcar kids, children whose families found themselves struggling for survival . . . all Depression-era young people faced challenges like unemployed and demoralized parents, inadequate food and shelter, schools they couldn't attend because they had to go to work, schools that simply closed their doors. Even so, life had its bright spots—like favorite games and radio shows—and many young people remained upbeat and optimistic about the future.

***Let Us now praise famous men: The American Classic, in Words and Photographs, of  
Three Tenant Families in the Deep South, Walker Evans***

In the summer of 1936, James Agee and Walker Evans set out on assignment for *Fortune* magazine to explore the daily lives of sharecroppers in the South. Their journey would prove an extraordinary collaboration and a watershed literary event when, in 1941, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* was first published to enormous critical acclaim. This unsparing record of place, of the people who shaped the land and the rhythm of their lives, is intensely moving and unrelentingly honest, and today—recognized by the New York Public Library as one of the most influential books of the twentieth century—it stands as a poetic tract of its time. With an elegant new design as well as a sixty-four-page photographic prologue featuring archival reproductions of Evans's classic images, this historic edition offers readers a window into a remarkable slice of American history.

### ***Music of the Great Depression, William Young***

Prior to the stock market crash of 1929 American music still possessed a distinct tendency towards elitism, as songwriters and composers sought to avoid the mass appeal that critics scorned. During the Depression, however, radio came to dominate the other musical media of the time, and a new era of truly popular music was born. Under the guidance of the great Duke Ellington and a number of other talented and charismatic performers, swing music unified the public consciousness like no other musical form before or since. At the same time the enduring legacies of Woody Guthrie in folk, Aaron Copeland in classical, and George and Ira Gershwin on Broadway stand as a testament to the great diversity of tastes and interests that subsisted throughout the Great Depression, and play a part still in our lives today. The lives of these and many other great musicians come alive in this insightful study of the works, artists, and circumstances that contributed to making and performing the music that helped America through one of its most difficult times.

### ***Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression, Studs Terkel***

In this unique recreation of one of the most dramatic periods in modern American history, Studs Terkel recaptures the Great Depression of the 1930s in all its complexity. Featuring a mosaic of memories from politicians, businessmen, artists, and writers, from those who were just kids to those who remember losing a fortune, *Hard Times* is not only a gold mine of information but a fascinating interplay of memory and fact, revealing how the Depression affected the lives of those who experienced it firsthand.

### ***Ava's Man / by Rick Bragg / 2001***

The Pulitzer Prizewinning journalist and author of *All Over But the Shoutin'* continues his personal history of the Deep South with an evocation of his mother's childhood in the Appalachian foothills during the Great **Depression**, and the magnificent story of the man who raised her. Rick Bragg brings his astonishing gift for story-telling to the tale of his grandfather, a man who kept his family one step ahead of poverty and starvation during the decade of the Great **Depression**.

### **Obtained through ILL**

### ***Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits, Linda Gordon***

We all know Dorothea Lange's iconic photos—the "Migrant Mother" holding her child, the gaunt men forlornly waiting in breadlines—but few know the arc of her extraordinary life. In this sweeping account, renowned historian Linda Gordon charts Lange's journey from polio-ridden child to wife and mother, to San Francisco portrait photographer, to chronicler of the Great Depression and World War II. Gordon uses Lange's life to anchor a moving social history of twentieth-century America, re-creating the bohemian world of San Francisco, the Dust Bowl, and the Japanese American internment camps. She explores Lange's growing radicalization as she embraced the democratic power of the camera, and she examines Lange's entire body of work, reproducing more than one hundred images, many of them previously unseen and some of them formerly suppressed. Lange reminds us that beauty can be found in unlikely places, and that to respond to injustice, we must first simply learn how to see it. 128 photos

## **Fiction Books Published During the Depression Era about the Depression**

### **Tobacco Road / by Erskine Caldwell / 1932**

Unsentimentally realistic, this classic novel is a reflection of the effects of poverty on tenant farmers in the South during the Great Depression. It focuses on the Lester family, former cotton farmers who continue to live on their ancestors' plantation even though it has long ceased to be prosperous. The family's antics, while at times vile and perverse, depict the racism and moral ambiguity that existed among some impoverished Southerners at that time and represent Erskine Caldwell's critique of the failed economic system and its consequences.

*Available through the Delaware County Library System.*

### **As the Earth Turns / Gladys Hasty Carroll / 1933**

The story of a southern Maine farm family in the early depression through the seasons of the year--starting and ending in winter. International best-seller in 1933. Became a film in 1934.

*Available through Access PA.*

### **Miss Lonelyhearts & The Day of the Locusts / by Nathanael West / 1933**

Miss Lonelyhearts: Set in New York during the Depression and probably West's most powerful work, *Miss Lonelyhearts* concerns a nameless man assigned to produce a newspaper advice column – but as time passes he begins to break under the endless misery of those who write in, begging him for advice.

The Day of the Locusts: Set in Hollywood during the Depression, the narrator, Tod Hackett, comes to California in the hope of a career as a painter for movie backdrops but soon joins the disenchanting second-rate actors, technicians, laborers and other characters living on the fringes of the movie industry. Many critics consider it with F. Scott Fitzgerald's unfinished masterpiece *The Last Tycoon* (1941) among the best novels written about Hollywood.

*Find under F WES – or available through another library in Delaware.*

### **The Grapes of Wrath / by John Steinbeck / 1939**

Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic of the Great Depression chronicles the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s and tells the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads—driven from their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. Out of their trials and their repeated collisions against the hard realities of an America divided into Haves and Have-Nots evolves a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision, elemental yet plainspoken, tragic but ultimately stirring in its human dignity.

*Find under F STE – or available through another library in Delaware.*

### **Whose Names are Unknown / by Sanora Babb / 2004**

The poor but proud Dunne family and their friends struggle to survive on the dust-plagued prairies of the Oklahoma Panhandle, but discover bitter disappointment in the orchards and vineyards of the so-called promised land of California. Slated for publication in 1939, but set aside until 2004. A female-oriented companion to *The Grapes of Wrath*.

*Available in the Delaware County Library System.*

## **Modern Day Fiction Books Set in the Depression**

### **North River / by Pete Hamill / 2007**

Tending to his poor and sick neighbors throughout a Depression-era winter, New York City doctor James Delaney is haunted by memories from World War I and the disappearances of his wife and daughter, until his three-year-old grandson is abandoned on his doorstep.

*Find under F HAM – or place on order from another Delaware County Library.*

### **Harpson / by Rilla Askew / 2007**

A folk singer and his teenaged bride ride the rails during the Great Depression.

*Available in the Delaware County Library System.*

### **Stormy Weather / Paulette Jiles / 2007**

Four Texas women struggle against nature and opportunists on their Brazos River ranch during the Great Depression.

*Find under F JIL - or place on order from another Delaware County Library.*

### **Half-Broke Horses / Jeanette Walls / 2009**

A true-life novel about Lily Casey Smith (the author's grandmother) who at age six helped her father break **horses**, at age fifteen left home to teach in a frontier town, and later as a wife and mother runs a vast ranch in Arizona where she survived tornadoes, droughts, floods, the Great Depression, and the most heartbreaking personal tragedy--but despite a life of hardscrabble drudgery still remains a woman of indomitable spirit.

*Find under F WAL – or place an order from another Delaware County Library.*

## **Popular Books Published During the Depression about other topics**

Cimarron / by Edna Ferber / 1930

The Good Earth / by Pearl S. Buck / 1931

Lost Horizon / by James Hilton / 1933

Appointment in Samarra / by John O'Hara / 1934

The Yearling / Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings / 1938

The Sheltered Life / by Ellen Glasgow / 1938