

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Acknowledgments	2
PART 1: Overview	
What is the intention of this book?	3
What was the 1930s Depression?	3
Unemployment during the Depression	7
PART 2: The response of Australians to the crisis: The social response	
What do we mean by the term social?	8
What were the causes of the Depression?	8
Life during the depression	11
The urban experience	12
The rural experience	13
Unemployment and its effects	14
Charitable organisations	15
The role of women during the Depression	16
PART 3: The plans and changes: The political and economic response	
The Theodore Plan	18
The Premiers' Plan	18
The Lang Plan	19
The New Guard	20
Recovery	21
PART 4: The social cohesion of Australian society during the 1930s	
Sport	23
Entertainment	24
Aborigines: The forgotten people	25
Case studies	26
PART 5: Skills of the historian	
Historians' views on the Depression	28
The process of writing an effective essay	29
Structuring your essay	30
Endnotes	31
Bibliography	32
About the author	32

Part 2: The response of Australians to the crisis: The social response

What do we mean by the term social?

The term social is the way human beings behave and interact with one another. In the context of the 1930s Depression students need to observe how people lived, their housing, food, entertainment, religious practices, dress, speech, education and health.

Source 2: From J.E. Tate, *Life in the 1930s*, The Jacaranda Press, Australia, 1976, p6. Housewife, Richmond (Vic).

We ate ordinary food; there were never any luxuries, like cakes ... because we did not have the money to buy them ... The cheaper cuts of meat ... could get steak for two shillings per pound or less. Two shillings bought enough meat for one meal at least ... A man would come to the door and sell you a basket of vegetables for a shilling. These would last all week...

By 1929 the only work experience my husband had was as a clerk with Ball and Welch ... He had to take a week off every third week.

Source 3: From Tate, *Life in the 1930s*, p7. Schoolgirl, Brighton (Vic). Her father was a teacher.

One of the main recollections of the Depression is of the constant discomfort of cold during the greater part of the year ... We piled coats on the bed to keep warm - or curtains or anything else we could lay hands on... we could never afford a fire during the day and did not always have one at night ... I know that children were often kept home from school because of lack of clothes ...

I thought it dreadful to see so many men on relief ... I never pass the Shrine of Remembrance without thinking of men on sustenance digging around it for the lawns.

QUESTIONS

1. What types of values and attitudes do you think the housewife and school girl would have had?
2. What evidence from the extracts can you give to support such a view?

What were the causes of the Depression?

The Depression in Australia was caused by a series of internal and external factors. Some of the internal factors were high overseas borrowing by the Bruce-Page Government in the 1920s. During this time, as goods were in abundance, consumers were living beyond their means by entering into hire-purchase agreements, which increased household debt. The business sector capitalised on the upsurge of consumer spending by expanding their industrial operations and borrowed money from banks and other willing lenders. This situation led to an oversupply of goods that caused prices to fall and benefit the consumer. But, these latter years of prosperity in the 1920s was short lived, as external factors began to exert pressure.

Internal causes:

The first internal cause of the Depression was the rapid growth in the 1920s that resulted in heavy borrowings by the Bruce-Page Government that amounted 200 million pounds at high

interest payments. The second internal cause was the oversupply of manufactured goods, which caused prices to fall and businesses to lose profits.

The third internal cause was the increasing number of imports coming into the country, which meant that money left the country. Also, local manufacturers had to compete with overseas imports and needed to be more competitive.

The fourth internal cause was the droughts of 1927 and 1929, which reduced primary exports.

External causes:

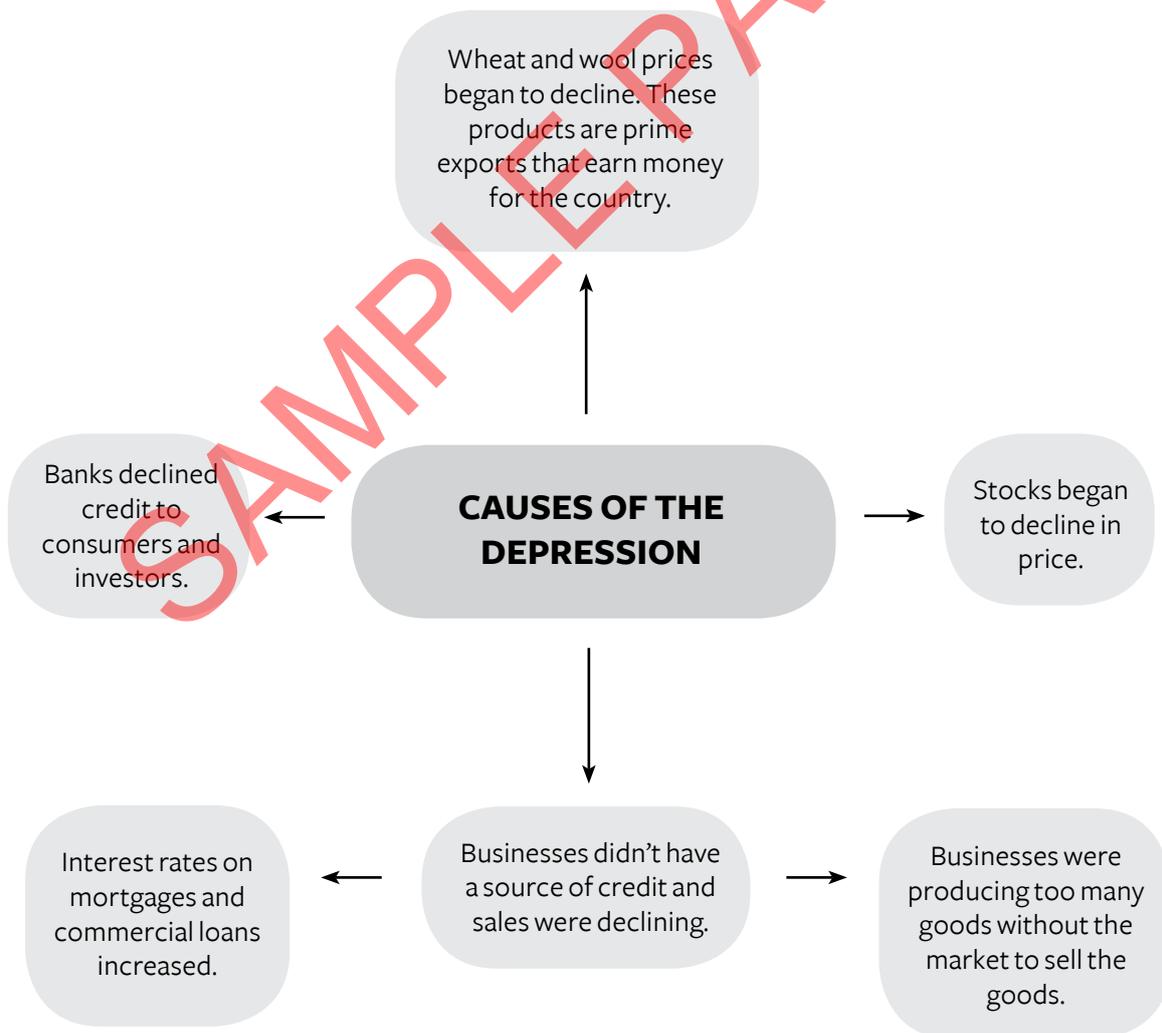
The first external cause was the reduction of wheat prices from 4/10 (48 cents) per bushel to 2/5 (24 cents) followed by the reduction of wool prices 1/6 (15 cents) per lb. in 1928, to 9d (8 cents) per lb. in 1930.

The second cause was the collapse of the stock market in America in October 1929. This crash resulted in a decline in loan money, public works programs ceased and unemployment began to increase as private investors began to close their businesses.

The third cause was the high customs duties on imports, which were increased even further.

Refer to the following concept map (Source 4) to enhance your understanding.

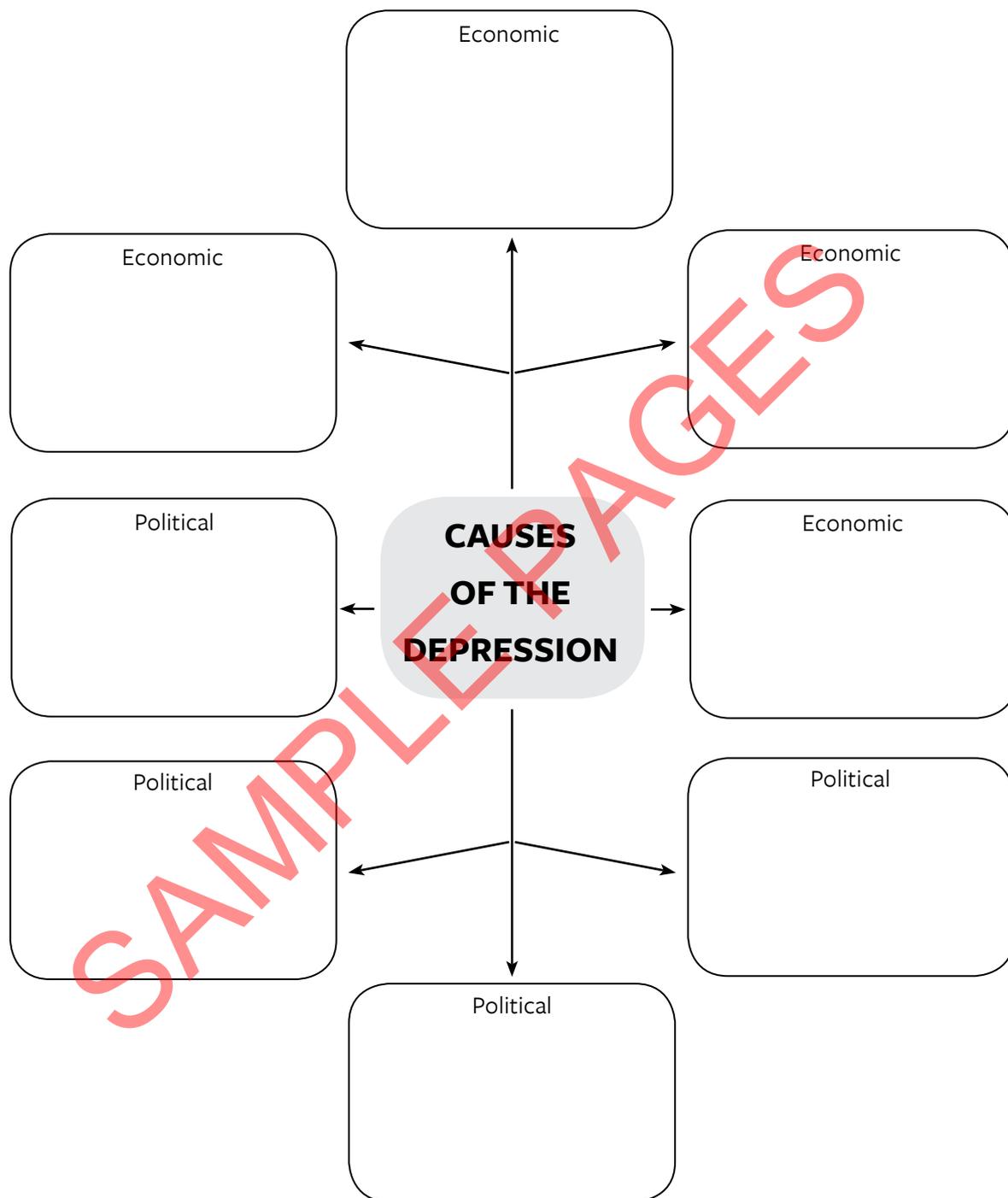
| **Source 4:** Concept map



TASK 5

Refer to Source 4

1. Using the headings 'Economic' and 'Political,' list as many causes of the Depression as you can under these headings in the diagram.
2. What lessons can future governments learn from the causes of the 1930s Depression?



Source 5: From Tate, *Life in the 1930s*, pp6–7.
Housewife Ascot Vale (Victoria).

I believe the cause of the Depression in Australia was the fact that we were too ready to beggar ourselves for England ... I think the government should have postponed paying the debt to England until it became economically possible to begin repayments.