

# Chapter 12

## The Great Depression and the Big War



### Chapter Preview

**Terms:** assembly line, moonshine, evolution, stretch-out, secret ballot, depression, stock market, relief, Live at Home Program, New Deal, Blue Ridge Parkway, tobacco allotment, parity, tobacco price support, minimum wage, collective bargaining, Social Security Act, rationing

**People:** Osmond Barringer, Harriet Morehead Berry, Cameron Morrison, O. Max Gardner, Clyde Hoey, Charles M. McCorkle, Harland Bowles

**Places:** Fontana Dam, Camp Mackall, Camp Lejeune, Cherry Point, Camp Butner

**H**is parents named him Arthel Lane Watson, but he eventually gained the nickname “Doc.” Blind since birth, Doc Watson grew up in a shack at Deep Gap, near Boone. After weathering hardships during the Great Depression and World War II, Doc went on to become the most famous North Carolina musician of the twentieth century. His soft voice and skilled picking brought the traditional sounds of the mountains to people everywhere. After years playing for anyone anywhere, for just about anything, he began to record music in the 1950s.

Doc Watson has said that if he had not been blind, he would have turned out to be a normal person, “an electrician, carpenter, or maybe a mechanic.” Instead, his handicap helped him focus. Both of his parents sang hymns at home and in church. His parents were too poor to buy him a good instrument, but his father carved him a banjo when Doc was eleven. Later, his parents spent twelve hard-earned dollars on a guitar, and Doc mastered it. After attending the Governor Morehead School for the Blind in Raleigh, Doc sawed wood and tuned pianos to make a living.



After World War II, Doc slowly, steadily made it in music. An early fan said he “ripped off some of the best pure mountain picking imaginable.” Doc got his “big break” at a 1960s folk festival. Later he played with a son, Merle, around the world. After Merle was killed in an accident, Doc carried on. Today, thousands come each year to North Wilkesboro to hear “old-time” music at MerleFest, to honor Doc and the memory of his son.

Doc Watson’s long road to success resembles the trials North Carolina endured during the Great Depression of the 1930s and the world war of the 1940s. The state’s industrial prosperity in the 1920s took a hit in the Great Depression, but the federal government helped North Carolina. The New Deal opened up new opportunities for some of the poor, the handicapped, the left behind. The way Americans worked together in World War II also gave North Carolinians a more secure basis for social and economic advancement.

**Opposite page, above:** Doc Watson of Deep Gap grew up in the Great Depression and, after World War II, became internationally famous as a folk singer. **Below:** One of the biggest accomplishments of the New Deal in North Carolina was the construction of the Blue Ridge Parkway, which runs from Virginia to the Great Smoky Mountains.





# SIGNS OF THE TIMES

## POPULATION

By the end of World War II, there were 3.2 million North Carolinians. Charlotte became the first city to exceed 100,000 in population. Even at that number, it was still not one of the fifty largest cities in the nation.

## MUSIC

North Carolina mountain music became known as “hillbilly music” after a North Carolinian first used that word on the air in New York City. In the 1930s, the most famous performers were the Monroe Brothers, who recorded a dozen records in Charlotte. Their fast-paced banjo picking was soon called “bluegrass.”

## EDUCATION

One of the most unusual schools in the country was Black Mountain College, which opened in 1933. The school had no grades and no degrees. It was organized around the idea that the arts were central to all learning. Some of its professors were refugees from Nazi Germany. Its advisors included the famous scientist Albert Einstein and the great psychologist Carl Jung.

## FADS

Harried urban residents flocked to the miniature golf courses across the nation by the 1930s. Some small-scale greens were even located on the roofs of New York skyscrapers. Miniature golf was first played in Pinehurst in the 1920s.

## TECHNOLOGY

The M1 carbine rifle was the principal weapon used by the United States army in World War II. It was designed by North Carolinian David M. Williams, while he was in prison in Halifax County in 1926. When the army began to make the weapon, Williams won a pardon.

## SPORTS

College football grew rapidly in popularity during the period. North Carolina’s big game was the UNC-Virginia contest, always played on Thanksgiving Day.

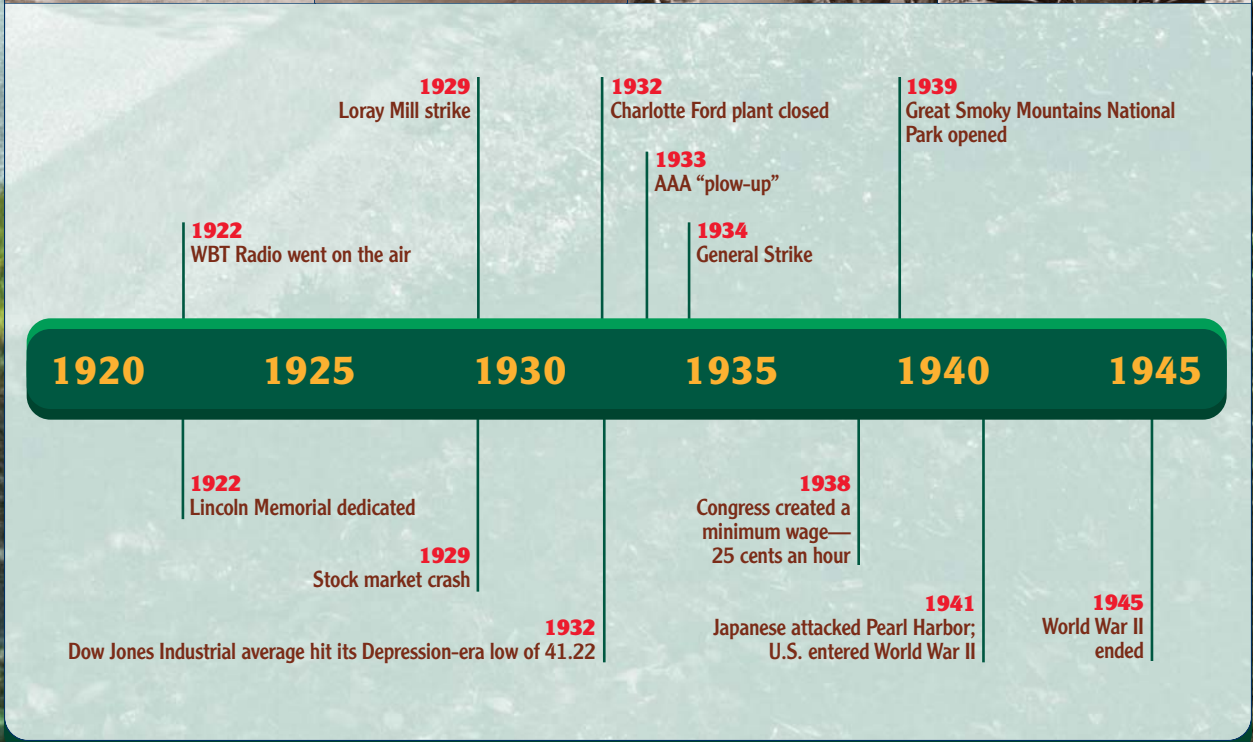
## THEATER

North Carolina became famous for its folk dramas, one-act plays that told the history of the people in the state. Paul Green of Harnett County developed them into “outdoor dramas,” the first one being *The Lost Colony*, performed at Manteo in 1937.

## INVENTION

Because bronchial problems often resulted from work in poorly ventilated factories, Greensboro druggist Lunsford Richardson developed a menthol-based salve to put directly on a congested chest. Within a decade, Vicks VapoRub was sold worldwide.

### Figure 24 Timeline: 1920–1945



# TARGET READING SKILL

## Interpreting Political Cartoons

### Defining the Skill

A *political cartoon* is a drawing that makes a statement about a subject. To get meaning from political cartoons, you must know the language of cartoons as well as have background knowledge of the subject being presented. Political cartoons have three parts, including

- a focus on content. A political cartoon can focus on a person, event, issue, or theme.
- a focus on how the author conveys the message. Good cartoons use few words but illustrate emotion to get their message across in a simple, sometimes humorous way.
- a focus on the purpose. Political cartoons generally support or oppose a cause.

When examining political cartoons, you should

- look at the date the cartoon was published to determine if it was published at the time the event it describes was taking place or if it was published later.
- determine if the author comes from a particular social, political, or cultural background.
- look for a title or caption to help identify the subject of the cartoon.
- identify any people, places, or events that are included.
- note the use of exaggeration, size of figures, mannerisms, or facial expression to determine point of view.



### Practicing the Skill

Look at the cartoon above entitled “The Suspense is Terrific,” drawn in 1940 by Carl Gomdal. On a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.

1. What is the subject of the cartoon?
2. When do you think the cartoon might have been drawn?
3. What are some examples of exaggeration in the cartoon?
4. Does the cartoon support or oppose a cause or event? If so, name the cause or event.