The Great Depression was an economic crisis that began in 1929. Many people had invested money in the stock market and when it crashed they lost much of the money they had invested. People stopped spending money and investing. Banks did not have enough money, which led many people to lose their savings. Many Americans lost money, their homes and their jobs. Homeless Americans began to build their own camps on the edges of cities, where they lived in shacks and other crude shelters. These areas were known as shantytowns. As the Depression got worse, many Americans asked the U.S. government for help. When the government failed to provide relief, the people blamed President Herbert Hoover for their poverty. The shantytowns became known as Hoovervilles.

In 1932, Hoover lost the presidential election to Franklin Roosevelt. Roosevelt created programs that helped lift the U.S. out of the Depression. By the early 1940s, most remaining Hoovervilles were torn down.
The Great Depression sets in

The Great Depression was one of the most terrible events of the 1900s, and led to a huge rise in unemployment. By 1933, 1 out of 4 Americans was out of work.

Americans looked to the U.S. government for help. But President Hoover did not support using the government to help people find work. He believed that people just needed to work harder on their own to improve their lives. In Hoover's view, life would get better if people would simply help one another. Although people donated more to charity during the early 1930s, the amounts given were not enough to make a big difference. Many Americans were still struggling.

The rise of Hoovervilles

As the Depression got worse, many Americans lost their homes. Desperate for shelter, homeless people built shantytowns in and around cities across the nation. These camps came to be called Hoovervilles, after the president.

Hooverville shanties were made of cardboard, wood, tin and whatever other materials people could find. Most shelters needed constant repair. Some homes were not buildings at all, but deep holes dug in the ground. Roofs were laid over them to keep out bad weather.
Life in a Hooverville

No two Hoovervilles were quite alike, and the camps varied in population and size. Some were as small as a few hundred people, while others had thousands of inhabitants. St. Louis, Missouri, was home to one of the country’s largest Hoovervilles.

Whenever possible, Hoovervilles were built near rivers so that people had water. Some Hoovervilles were dotted with vegetable gardens. Individual shacks sometimes contained furniture a family had carried from their former home. However, Hoovervilles were usually grim and unclean. They posed health risks to their inhabitants as well as to those living nearby.

Hoover out, Roosevelt in

People used the term "Hooverville" to make fun of the president they blamed for their problems. They also used President Hoover's name in other ways. For example, newspapers used to protect the homeless from the cold were called "Hoover blankets." The cardboard used to patch holes in shoes was called "Hoover leather."
In 1932, people’s anger at the president reached its peak. That year, thousands of men who had fought in World War I set up a Hooverville on the banks of the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C. They had been promised money from the government for their service in the war. In June, many of these men marched to the Capitol to request their money. However, the government refused to pay. When the former soldiers refused to leave their shacks, President Hoover sent U.S. Army leader Douglas MacArthur to kick them out. MacArthur’s troops set fire to the Hooverville and drove the group from the city.

The next presidential election was in 1932. Hoover was so unpopular that he lost in a landslide to Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt created a government program known as the New Deal that helped put people back to work. By the early 1940s, many Hoovervilles had been torn down.
Quiz

1. Based on the section "The Great Depression sets in," which of the following statements is TRUE?
   (A) Led by Hoover, the government quickly created programs to help people who had lost their jobs.
   (B) Hoover believed the best way for people to make their lives better was to work harder on their own.
   (C) Money given to charities during the Great Depression made a big difference for struggling people.
   (D) People donated less money to charity during the Great Depression than they had before it started.

2. Which sentence from the article shows that people tried to fill their Hoovervilles with familiar objects?
   (A) Hooverville shanties were made of cardboard, wood, tin and whatever other materials people could find.
   (B) Some were as small as a few hundred people, while others had thousands of inhabitants.
   (C) Individual shacks sometimes contained furniture a family had carried from their former home.
   (D) They posed health risks to their inhabitants as well as to those living nearby.

3. Which answer choice BEST describes the structure of the section "Hoover out, Roosevelt in"?
   (A) compare and contrast
   (B) problem and solution
   (C) cause and effect
   (D) fact and opinion

4. Fill in the blank in the sentence below.
   In the two opening paragraphs, the author ___.
   (A) summarizes the main ideas detailed in the article
   (B) explains the pros and cons of events in the article
   (C) compares presidents who are the focus of the article
   (D) shows the actions of banks described in the article
Answer Key

1  Based on the section "The Great Depression sets in," which of the following statements is TRUE?
   (A)  Led by Hoover, the government quickly created programs to help people who had lost their jobs.
   (B)  Hoover believed the best way for people to make their lives better was to work harder on their own.
   (C)  Money given to charities during the Great Depression made a big difference for struggling people.
   (D)  People donated less money to charity during the Great Depression than they had before it started.

2  Which sentence from the article shows that people tried to fill their Hoovervilles with familiar objects?
   (A)  Hooverville shanties were made of cardboard, wood, tin and whatever other materials people could find.
   (B)  Some were as small as a few hundred people, while others had thousands of inhabitants.
   (C)  Individual shacks sometimes contained furniture a family had carried from their former home.
   (D)  They posed health risks to their inhabitants as well as to those living nearby.

3  Which answer choice BEST describes the structure of the section "Hoover out, Roosevelt in"?
   (A)  compare and contrast
   (B)  problem and solution
   (C)  cause and effect
   (D)  fact and opinion

4  Fill in the blank in the sentence below.
   In the two opening paragraphs, the author ___.
   (A)  summarizes the main ideas detailed in the article
   (B)  explains the pros and cons of events in the article
   (C)  compares presidents who are the focus of the article
   (D)  shows the actions of banks described in the article