

FLASH POINTS

POWER ON!



The First Fireside Chat

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THE FIRST FIRESIDE CHAT

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It is a cold evening in late winter. Families gather in the warmest part of the house: the living room, near the fireplace. It is a hard time for many Americans. Business is bad, and lots of people have lost their jobs. They have very little money. This time period is known as the Great Depression (1929–1939).

Tonight, people aren't talking about money. They are talking about the new president: Franklin D. Roosevelt. They are hoping he can turn the **economy** around and bring back jobs. They want Roosevelt to save them and the country. Tonight, he is going to talk to the people.

Everyone is quiet as they turn on the radio. The room fills with the soothing voice of the president. "I want to talk for a few minutes with the people of the United States about banking," he says. He then explains what went wrong and what the government is doing to help, in a way that everyone can understand.

This is the first time a president has shared information with the people in such an **amiable** way. This is the first "fireside chat."

President Roosevelt sat at a desk when he gave fireside chats, surrounded by microphones and wires.



economy: the exchange of money for products and services in a particular country or area

amiable: easy to like

DID YOU KNOW?

At the time of the first fireside chat, a radio cost around \$10, which would be about \$185 today.

How and Why

The creation and use of new technology is a process. Many different people, events, and ideas come together when technology is used in new ways. Take a moment to explore some of the things that caused Roosevelt to begin broadcasting his historic fireside chats.

The Great Depression

In 1929, the US economy fell. The stock market crashed. Banks closed. More than \$25 billion of the American people's money was lost. That would be more than \$300 billion today. Up to 30 percent of working people lost their jobs. This was the start of the Great Depression.



Bank Runs

When a bank closed, customers lost all the money they had in it. Everyone was afraid of losing their money. They went to the banks and withdrew all of their cash. These “bank runs” hurt the struggling banks even more. By 1933, almost half of all the banks in the United States had closed.





Broadcasting Boom

The 1920s and early 1930s saw a big increase in radio broadcasting. By 1933, more than 60 percent of homes had a radio. People were able to listen to the news, weather reports, and sports updates. They also listened to music, short stories, educational lectures, and kids' shows. The radio provided low-cost entertainment for struggling families.



A New President

A presidential election was held in 1932. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the governor of New York, ran against Herbert Hoover, who was president at the time. Roosevelt said it was the government's job to fix the economy and give people back their jobs. On election day, he won 42 states. Hoover won six. Roosevelt became the 32nd president of the United States.

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