



A SUMMER'S READING

By Bernard Malamud

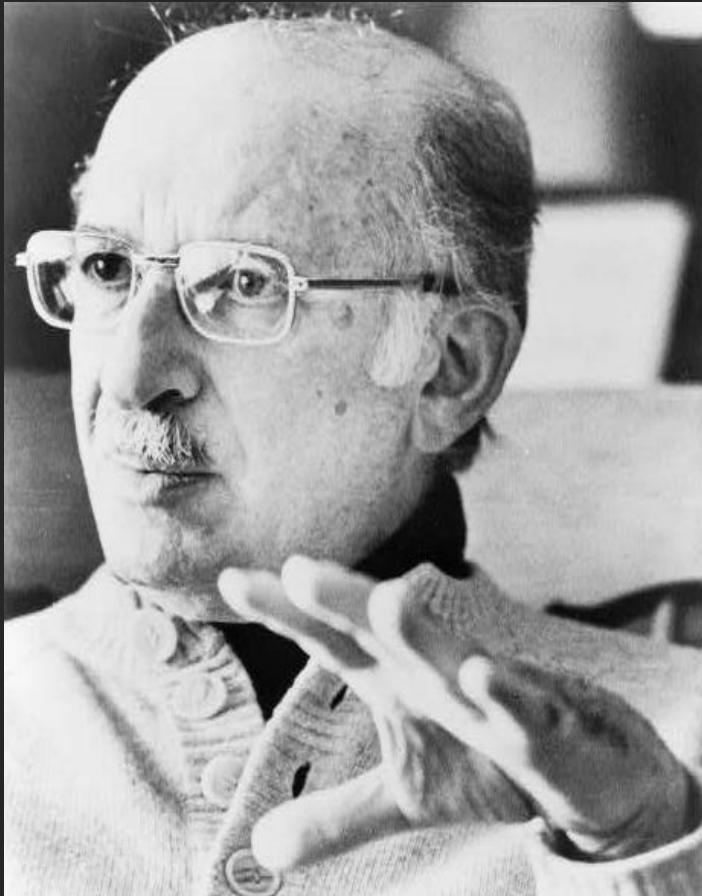
AND

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

A Presentation by RELI ZAKHEIM

Who Was Bernard Malamud

1914 New York – 1986 New York



Malamud's parents were Russian Jews who had fled tsarist Russia. He was born in Brooklyn, where his father owned a small grocery store. The family was poor. Malamud's mother died when he was 15 years old, and he was unhappy when his father remarried. He early on assumed responsibility for his handicapped brother. Malamud was educated at the City College of New York (B.A., 1936) and Columbia University (M.A., 1942). He taught at high schools in New York City (1940–49), at Oregon State University (1949–61), and at Bennington College in Vermont (1961–66, 1968–86).

(<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Bernard-Malamud>)

A Summer's Reading

A summer's Reading is a short story about George Stoyonovich, a 19 year old boy, who dropped out of school "on an impulse" when he was 16 years old. Since he has not completed his formal education, he cannot find a decent job. He thinks about going back to school to complete his education but finds excuses for not doing so.

When George meets Mr. Cattanzara, one of his neighbors, he is ashamed to admit he has not been doing anything. IN HIS FIRST MEETING WITH MR. CATTANZARA, GEORGE tries to gain his respect by telling him about a hundred books he has been reading. Mr. Cattanzara spreads the rumor that George is reading and as a result, George gains a lot of respect from the people in the neighborhood. Even his sister, Sophie, shows him that she is proud of him by giving him a dollar a week allowance.

Even though George is respected, he does not start reading. He decides to avoid Mr. Cattanzara, but one night the encounter is inevitable. THIS IS THEIR SECOND MEETING. George understands from Mr. Cattanzara's walk that he is drunk and hopes he will not notice him, but he does. He treats George like he treated him when George was a child, offering him a nickel to buy lemon ice. When George cannot name one book that he had been reading, Mr. Cattanzara warns him: "don't do what I did".

A Summer's Reding (continued)

After this conversation, George locks himself in his room for almost a week. He realizes that Mr. Cattanzara knows that he has lied about reading 100 books and is afraid that he told the truth to the neighbors. After 7 days George can no longer stand the heat in his room, bursts into the street and discovers that people are still friendly to him. He believes Mr. Cattanzara has forgotten about their meeting because he was drunk. However, when someone asks him if it is true that he has finished reading so many books, George understands that Mr. Cattanzara has spread another rumor, that makes him be respected once again.

This finally gives George the strength to justify the respect he gained. One evening in the fall he goes to the library, counts off a hundred books and finally sits down at a table to read.

<https://www.easybe.co.il/subjects/4-short-stories-5-units/4-3a-summers-readingbernard-malamud/>

The story takes place in a New York neighborhood, in the summer, during the Great Depression.



THE GREAT DEPRESSION

1929 - 1940

Immigration from Europe in 1930 in America

	How many	Where from	Where to	Religion	CONCLUSION
Italians	4.000.000	Italy	Ellis Island N.Y.	Catholics	Of the 123 million Americans
Jews	millions	From Russian controlled Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Ukraine		Jews	recorded in the census of 1930, one in ten was
Eastern and Southern Slavs	millions	From Byelorussia, Russia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Montenegro		Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim	foreign born, and an additional 20% had at least
Poles	1.500.000	Poland		Catholics	one parent born abroad
Greeks	500.000	Greece		Orthodox	<i>Freedom From Fear, p. 14</i>



The American Dream

The dream of the
immigrants

The phrase “the
American
Dream” was coined
by James Truslow
Adams in his 1931
bestseller *The Epic
of America*.

The American Dream: “a dream of a **social order** in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the **fullest stature of which they are innately capable**, and be **recognized** by others **for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position.**”

Barone, Adam *American Dream*

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp#:~:text=It%20is%20not%20a%20dream,circumstances%20of%20birth%20or%20position.%22>

THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY



- By 1929 ordinary Americans were driving more than 26 million motor vehicles, one for every five people in the country. They bought nearly 5 million vehicles in that year alone, and they paid for them far less than they had one generation earlier.
- However, the carmakers had apparently saturated available domestic markets. The introduction of consumer credit or **“installment buying”**, started at **General Motors** and tried to increase sales.
- The explosive growth of **advertising** provided further sign that the limits of **“natural”** demand were being reached.

(Freedom From Fear, p. 21-22)

The Stagnation in Agriculture

The Dust Bowl (1930-1936)



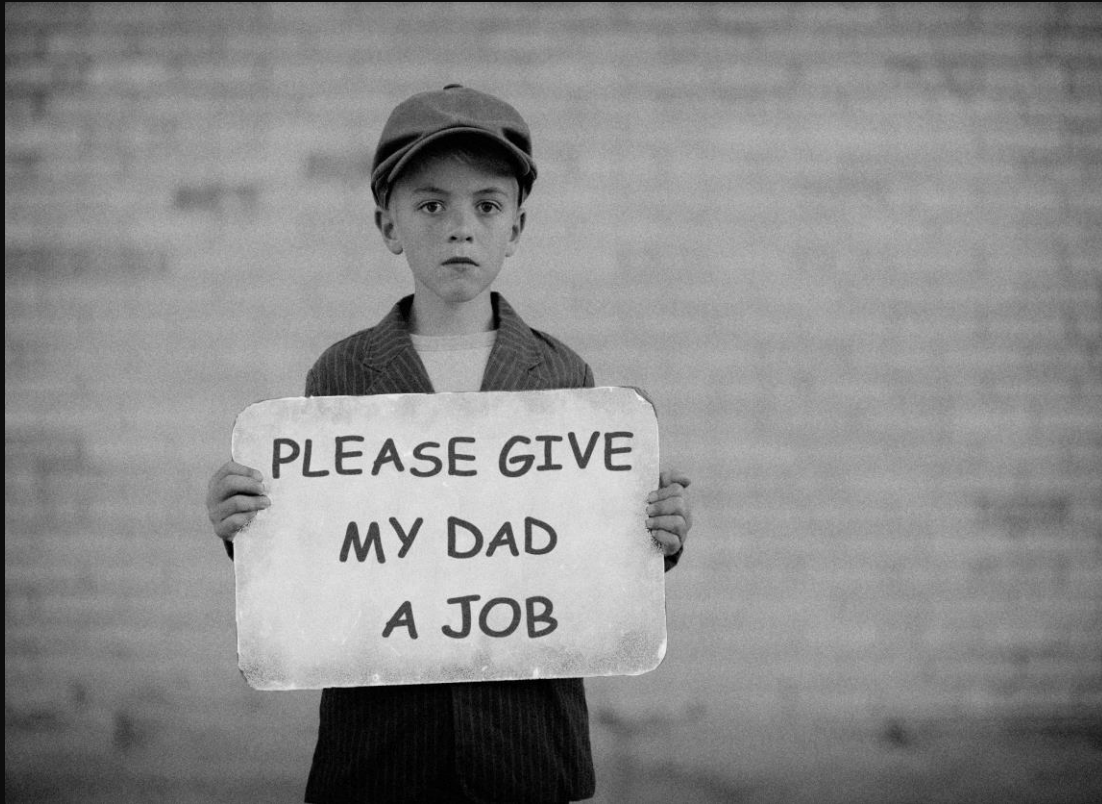
- Shrinking export markets, the declining of American population growth and the closure of immigration, led to a drop in demand for agricultural products.
- **The Dust Bowl** was a period of severe dust storms that greatly damaged the ecology and agriculture of American prairies during the 1930s.
- **Down to early 1931, the American depression seemed to be the product of American causes: A decade of stagnation in agriculture, flattening sales in the automobile and housing markets, the piratical abuses on Wall Street, the evaporation of asset values in the Crash, and the anarchic banking system.**

(Freedom From Fear, Chapter 2, "Panic", p. 43-69)

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN

in the Great Depression

The Average American in the Great Depression



- The typical American was 26. He was making a little more than 100\$ a month. He had been laid off several times in the preceding years but he kept some savings at his bank to help him over if unemployment hit again, as he knew it must.
- The stock market had just crashed, but in any case he owned no stocks.
- Evenings he “radioed”.
- Weekends he went to the movies (better now that they had sound).
- Sometimes he broke the law and lifted a glass.
- On his one day a week off, he took a drive in the car that he was buying on the installment plan.
- In 1928 he married a girl 3 years younger than he. She gave up her job to have her first baby. They started to think of buying a house, perhaps in one of the new suburbs. Life was just beginning. AND THEIR WORLD WAS ABOUT TO COME APART.
- (*Freedom From Fear*, p. 41-42)

The typical women worker in the Great Depression



- The 10 million women who worked for wages in 1929 were concentrated in a small handful of occupations including teaching, clerical work, domestic service and the garment trades.
- Women made up about 22% of all workers in 1930, when one of four women was employed.
- The typical woman worker was single and under the age of 25. Once she married, typically before the age of 22, she was unlikely to work again for wages, particularly when she had children at home.
- Only 1 mother in 10 worked outside the household, and the numbers of older women workers, with or without children, were few.
- The traditional division of family labor – a husband working for wages outside the home, and a wife working without wages within it – still held powerful sway in American culture.
- (*Freedom From Fear*, p. 27-28)



What Really Ended the GREAT DEPRESSION?

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