

## Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt

1. What number letter did you read \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is your letter dated \_\_\_\_\_
3. If it is dated, what year was the letter written \_\_\_\_\_
4. Does your letter have a location for the sender \_\_\_\_\_
5. If it does have a location, what is the location \_\_\_\_\_
6. What is the name of the sender \_\_\_\_\_

7. What is your letter about, what is the sender asking for in your letter

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8. Why do you think American children sent letters asking the First Lady of the United States for items such as dresses and shoes and not their relatives or friends.

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9. Eleanor Roosevelt got more than 300,000 letters during her first year in the White House. Many of them were just like the letter you read. Do you think Americans lives were **HARD** or **EASY** during the Great Depression. Give evidence from the letter to support your answer

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## **Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt**

Both Eleanor Roosevelt and her husband received record amounts of mail from Americans. The public sent FDR more than three times the amount of mail any other president had gotten. In her first year in the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt received more than 300,000 pieces of mail, far more than any previous First Lady. And it was not merely the number of letters that was unique. Unlike in prior administrations, the majority of letters were from the working class and wrote to seek help rather than merely voice an opinion. The First Lady in particular received letters from the poor because in newspapers and on the radio she repeatedly indicated her interest in hearing from ordinary Americans about their problems. She was genuinely sympathetic to their problems.

Many of the letter writers were children and teens. By analyzing the requests for material assistance that young Americans between the ages of five and nineteen sent to the First Lady, it becomes possible to understand the problems and despair which linked American children during the Great Depression. The letters came from kids (mostly daughters) whose parents are working poor, farmers and unemployed.

The children who wrote to Mrs. Roosevelt often displayed trust in the First Lady and the president. Often the teens confided to Mrs. Roosevelt about feelings they were keeping from their parents. Poor teens and children opened up to Mrs. Roosevelt in this way because most felt that she was on their side and that she cared personally about them

The First Lady was a former schoolteacher and settlement house worker who was familiar and outspoken about the problems children faced. No resident of the White House has ever approached the level of concern, activism, and empathy that Eleanor Roosevelt displayed for American youth.

It is through the study of these letters, which are almost 100 years old, that we can know what it was like to be young and poor during the worst economic crisis in our nation's history.