LESSON ACTIVITY:
THE BIG PICTURE: CELEBRATING THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Activity Overview
The purpose of this activity is to allow students to put together all the puzzle pieces (photographs) and come up with the big picture (unifying theme)—in this case, the Tennessee Valley Authority. The activity works best as an introduction to the study of the TVA, within a larger unit on the New Deal in Tennessee. Even students with no prior knowledge of the TVA can learn about its different aspects and impacts through this activity. Students who have already learned about this topic can expand their knowledge through analyzing these photographs and by “piecing together” the puzzle.

This lesson activity was first created in 2008 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the TVA.

Grades: 5th, high school
Subjects: Social Studies, U.S. History, TN History

CURRICULUM STANDARDS

5th grade Social Studies
5.48 Describe the effects of the Great Depression on Tennessee and the impact of New Deal policies in the state (i.e., Tennessee Valley Authority and Civilian Conservation Corps).

High School Tennessee History
TN.51 Describe how the Great Depression and New Deal programs impacted Tennesseans, including the significance of: the Agricultural Adjustment Act, Civilian Conservation Corps, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

High School U.S. History
US.43 Analyze the impact of the relief, recovery, and reform efforts of President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs, including:
- Agricultural Adjustment Act
- Civilian Conservation Corps
- Fair Labor Standards Act
- Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation
- National Recovery Administration
- Securities and Exchange Commission
- Social Security
- Tennessee Valley Authority
- Works Progress Administration
**Instructions**

1. If you have the resources available, print out each of the thirty photographs from the URLs provided in the index list. You may either print the title on the back or front of each page, or you can leave it off entirely. However, the titles are often quite illuminating, so make sure students have some access to them. (For example, you can have them find their pictures on the index list and read the titles from the list.) The alternative to printing would be to provide each student with one photograph URL and have her/him examine the photograph straight off the Library of Congress. You may also choose to focus on fewer than all thirty pictures; you can choose to leave off one of the groups of photographs, or one photograph from each group, for instance.

2. Divide students into five groups of six students each, dividing them by the group numbers in the index list. Assign one photograph to each student and have her/him fill out the Primary Source Analysis Tool, using the Analyzing Photographs and Prints guide to suggest questions.

3. Now have students share their photographs among their groups and discuss the following questions:
   - What are you looking at?
   - In what time period were these photos taken?
   - What words and ideas come to mind when looking at the photos?
   - What are the unifying themes and stories?

Suggested themes:
- Group 1: architecture, engineering, power, modernity
- Group 2: recreation, convenience, domestic life
- Group 3: workers, labor unions, nature of employment
- Group 4: agricultural improvements, public health, intrusion into personal lives
- Group 5: young people’s lives, education, job preparation

4. Let each group describe to the entire class what is going on in its particular set of photos. Once each group has had a chance to present, discuss with the class as a whole: What is the “big picture”? Students can read a good introduction to the history of the TVA on the Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture Web site.

**Reflections**

Discuss with the whole class how their initial reactions to their individual photographs changed when they saw other photographs. How does each individual photograph contribute to the “big picture”? How do all these different aspects come together to describe a larger, complex picture? What do these photographs tell you about the Tennessee Valley Authority that you wouldn’t learn from textbooks?
Guntersville Dam and powerhouse. View of entrance end of generator hall from generator floor. Raised platform at end serves as delivery and assembly space for machinery, also as visitors' overlook. Machine repair and electrical shops are located under platform. Offices in downstream wing are served by open corridor, beginning of which is seen on upper floor to the right of the picture. Directly below, control room which can be inspected from entrance platform. Windows of generator hall along sides are of glass brick (as at Chickamauga, also) for heat insulation and easier maintenance.

http://www.loc.gov/item/2017877267/

Guntersville, Ala. 1935-40? The Tennessee Valley Authority dam powerhouse.

https://www.loc.gov/item/2017826263/

Wheeler Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Lock.

http://www.loc.gov/item/2017832971/

Pickwick Dam. End of spillway section of dam showing service stair and heavy concrete buttresses, surmounted by light fixtures, which act as bumpers for the great gantry cranes that travel on the spillway deck and operate the gates.

http://www.loc.gov/item/2017877270/

Cherokee Dam, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Installation of third 30,000 kilowatt generator at Cherokee Dam on the Holston River.

https://www.loc.gov/item/2017873095/

Watts Bar Dam, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Electric switchyard.

https://www.loc.gov/item/2017873130/
Group Two:

Norris Dam, Tennessee. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Lake created by Norris Dam provides swimming facilities for people of Knoxville.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017831877/

Recreational structures. Big Ridge Lake. Diving tower, beach and bath house may be seen in the background. This forty-five acre body of water has proved an attractive recreation spot for thousands of visitors since it was first opened to the public in May 1934. Encircled by the 3,500 acres of wooded hills in Big Ridge Park, the resort is provided with a boathouse, bath house, a public lodge, nineteen modern vacation cabins and a beach with a specially constructed pool for children. Located on the eastern boundary of Norris reservoir about twenty-five miles northeast of Knoxville, Tennessee, the lake was formed by construction of a small dam across one of the arms of the reservoir. This recreation area and the 3,800 acre Norris Park near Norris Dam were developed by the National Park Service and the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) in cooperation with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). This is one of many comparable parks on TVA reservoirs, most of which are in use and greatly enjoyed by tourists as well as residents of the surrounding area who previously had few, if any, outdoor opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation. The completion of other recreational parks has been prevented by the war.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017871876/

Overlook terrace in front of Norris visitors' building described under K 1868 and K 1867. Refreshments served under gay umbrellas added a new note to the resources of pleasant living in this area which was notably deficient in facilities for outdoors enjoyment. The place proved a major attraction and has thousands of visitors on holidays. The broad stairs which begin at either side of the semicircular terrace lead to a pathway connecting to the picnic grounds.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017871876/

Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Mr. Bacon adjusts an electric fan for his wife who is using an electric iron. The Bacons use 500 kilowatt hours of TVA electricity a month.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832582/

The grocery store in the group of buildings shown in K 1870 was likewise designed as an offset to the usual dark and messy crossroads establishment typical of rural areas. While originally established to serve TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) employees, it is now used by residents of the vicinity in general.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017877252/

Sheffield, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Prefabricated home.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017833019/
Group Three:

Sheffield, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Union members.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017832991/

Tennessee Valley Authority. Construction of Douglas Dam. Pay day at the TVA’s new Douglas Dam on the French Broad River. This dam will be 161 feet high and 1,682 feet long, with a 31,600 acre reservoir area extending forty-three miles upstream. With a useful storage capacity of approximately 1,330,000 acre-feet this reservoir will make possible the addition of nearly 100,000 kilowatts of continuous power to the TVA system in dry years and almost 170,000 kilowatts in the average year.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017694891/

Tennessee Valley Authority power and conservation. Fort Loudoun Dam construction. Ready for action against saboteurs is the hand and weapon of a public safety service officer at the new Fort Loudoun Dam, furthest upstream of the TVA’s main Tennessee River projects. Scheduled for closure and first storage of water early in 1943, this dam will create a 15,000-acre lake reaching fifty-five miles upstream to the city of Knoxville. The reservoir will have a useful storage capacity of 126,000 acre-feet. Power installation of 64,000 kilowatts is authorized, with a possible ultimate of 96,000 kilowatts.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017694211/

Large electric phosphate smelting furnace used in the making of elemental phosphorus in a TVA chemical plant in the Muscle Shoals area, Alabama
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017878705/

Negroes speed war work for Tennessee Valley Authority. Alonzo Bankston is a furnace operator in the TVA plant producing carbide for use of plants manufacturing synthetic rubber.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017697610/

Production. Steam power plant equipment. Maintenance men on a 6,000-ton press used to form parts for high-pressure boiler. Steam boilers and other power-house equipment to supplement the hydroelectric installations of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) system are produced in the large Chattanooga shops of the Combustion Engineering Company.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017695582/
Group Four:

Lauderdale County, Alabama. Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Small grains and hay are Julien H. Chase’s chief crops. 
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017873071/

Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Shearing sheep with electric clippers. 
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832593/

General planning. This photograph is included in the series as a vivid document on the impingement of Twentieth Century technology upon the neglected and backward rural scene. The meter on the wall of the rural shack indicates that it now receives its share of electricity from the power carried overland by the huge TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) transmission line. TVA program must resolve the conflict between modern and ancient ways of life so that individuals, similar to those which are shown in the picture, will be benefited. 
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017877225/

Wilson Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Collecting anopheline mosquitoes in malaria control area. 
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832482/

Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Mr. Robert Bacon with electric chick brooder. 
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832580/

Wilson Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Workers in chemical plant receive free medical care. 
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017873080/
Group Five:

Knoxville, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Training for war production at NYA (National Youth Administration) school.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832657/

Knox County, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Learning to use an electric iron at Farragut Agricultural School.
https://www.loc.gov/item/2017832654/

Knoxville, Tennessee (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Training for war work at Stair Vocational High School.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017832627/

Sheffield, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Mrs. Hall combs daughter Peggy's hair. They live on a defense housing project.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017832367/

Wilson Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) boy weeds loblolly pine seedlings at TVA nursery.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017832986/

Miscellaneous design. Libraries in rural areas are among the great needs of the Tennessee Valley. The one shown in this photograph was built and equipped with the assistance of work relief labor out of primitive local materials.
http://www.loc.gov/item/2017877292/