Historical Background

When the prosperous Roaring Twenties ended abruptly with October, 1929’s Stock Market Crash, many Americans looked to the federal government for immediate aid and long-term economic solutions. The New Deal was introduced by President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration in 1932. His promise to help the American people out of the Great Depression included the creation of dozens of government agencies that would increase employment rates, stabilize and regulate the economy, and provide relief for Americans who were suffering financially.

Many citizens supported New Deal agencies and benefited from their economic policies, opportunities for employment, heightened standards of living, and public facilities. However, increasing government intervention was also met with hesitation and at times, outright condemnation from people who viewed New Deal policies as a form of socialism.

Though the effects of the Great Depression were still evident until America’s entry in World War II, the New Deal’s tremendous impact can still be seen today in parks, bridges, schools, and lasting agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC).

Additional Links

- TPS-MTSU Newsletter: February 2018
- Lesson Plan: TVA Opportunities for African Americans
- Cumberland Homesteads, TN & Skyline Farms, AL
- Primary Source Set: Tennessee Valley Authority
- Teacher’s Guide: The New Deal
- WPA Poster Collection
- WPA: The African-American Mosaic

Suggestions for Teachers

This primary source set is organized thematically and includes sources related to the impact of the Great Depression, Dust Bowl, and New Deal. In addition, sources connect Roosevelt and New Deal politics, as well as the success, failure, and challenges of individual New Deal agencies.

Encourage students to critically analyze these sources and make note of their creators and publication dates to determine their purpose. How were individuals affected differently by the Great Depression or New Deal? How might global events have affected policy in the United States? How did Americans view Roosevelt? How did the New Deal change the future of politics and the relationship between citizens and the federal government?
Oklahoma dust bowl refugees, San Fernando, California [June 1935]

Floyd Burroughs and Tingle children, Hale County, Alabama [Summer 1936]

“Why the Newspapers Refrain From Playing Up News of Fear-Crazy People Forcing Banks to Close” [Jan. 8, 1932]

Power farming displaces tenants from the land in the western dry cotton areas. Texas Panhandle [June 1938]

Toward Los Angeles, California [Mar. 1937]
Migrant agricultural worker’s family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California [Feb. or Mar. 1936]

Stock watering hole almost completely covered by shifting topsoil. Cimarron County, Oklahoma [Apr. 1936]

Years of dust Resettlement Administration rescues victims, restores land to proper use / / Ben Shahn. [1936]

Map of California by the Rural Rehabilitation Division showing areas where different crops are grown, proposed location of initial camps for migrants, and routes of migration [1935?]

Dust storm. Amarillo, Texas [Apr. 1936]

Text
- The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Collecting Expedition
Scene in county agent’s office, San Augustine, Texas. Farmer is receiving his AAA check [April 1939]

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 [June 1942]

Southern farmers demand basic principles of New Deal Farm Program be retained. Washington, D.C., Jan. 9. As two southern Senators Ellison D. Smith, left, of South Carolina, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and John H. Bankhead of Alabama, listen intently, Ranson Aldridge, President of the Mississippi Farm Federation, today told a group of Senators and Representatives that southern farmers want the basic principles of the New Deal Farm Program retained but at the same feel that additional funds should be allotted for benefit payments to producers, 1/9/39

Jitterbugging in Negro juke joint, Saturday evening, outside Clarksdale, Mississippi [Nov. 1939]
“Let’s go to the Trans-Lux and hiss Roosevelt!” [1936]

Mrs. Catherine Herbster budgets herself carefully. She buys those vegetables and food which are plentiful and cheap. She must see that her family of growing children get the right foods to make them strong and healthy [1941?]

Training. Work Projects Administration (WPA) vocational school. The complicated mechanism of an airplane engine will be no mystery to these District of Columbia students when they finish their WPA vocational training course in airplane mechanics. Upon completion of training, they will be qualified for jobs in some phase of the construction or maintenance of the United Nation’s air armada [July 1942]

Lunchtime for young migrants at Shafter Camp, California. The nursery school for migrant children is conducted in camp under nursery school teachers trained by WPA (Work Projects Administration), and assigned to work in the camp under WPA project [Feb. 1939]
Hands and cards, Representing New Deal, ca. 1920–ca. 1950

Image 1 of Why I voted for Franklin D. Roosevelt... N. Schafter. 2432 Linden Place, Chicago, Illinois. Reprinted from the Chicago Times. Nov. 2-3, 1936. [1936]

Statue by George Segal of a citizen listening to one of President Roosevelt's "fireside chats" at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, D.C. [between 1980 and 20006]
Wilson Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) boy weeds loblolly pine seedlings at TVA nursery [June 1942]

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 [ca 1933-1945]

Girls - are you interested in a job? Find out what an occupation has to offer you in pay, employment, security, and promotion: Free classes in occupations. [1936 or 1937]

Audio
- Home In The Government Camp [14 August 1941]
- “Cornfield Song” by Henry Truvillion [1939]

CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) workers, Prince George's County, Maryland [Nov. 1935]

Swimming pool created by CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) dam, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania [July 1941]

Annual farm and home week [1941]
CITATIONS

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is February 1st, 2018.


[Map of California by the Rural Rehabilitation Division showing areas where different crops are grown, proposed location of initial camps for migrants, and routes of migration]. 1935?. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2002723443/.


Harris & Ewing, photographer. Southern farmers demand basic principles of New Deal Farm Program be retained. Washington, D.C., Jan. 9. As two southern Senators Ellison D. Smith, left, of South Carolina, Chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, and John H. Bankhead of Alabama, listen intently, Ranson Aldridge, President of the Mississippi Farm Federation, today told a group of Senators and Representatives that southern farmers want the basic principles of the New Deal Farm Program retained but at the same feel that additional funds should be allotted for benefit payments to producers, 1/9/39. District of Columbia United States Washington D.C. Washington D.C, 1939. [January 9] Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/2016874744/.


Mrs. Catherine Herbster budgets herself carefully. She buys those vegetables and food which are plentiful and cheap. She must see that her family of growing children get the right foods to make them strong and healthy, 1941?. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/oem2002000560/PP/.

Liberman, Howard, photographer. Training. Work Projects Administration (WPA) vocational school. The complicated mechanism of an airplane engine will be no mystery to these District of Columbia students when they finish their WPA vocational training course in airplane mechanics. Upon completion of training, they will be qualified for jobs in some phase of the construction or maintenance of the United Nation's air armada, 1942 July. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/oem2002004886/PP/.
CITATIONS


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 between modern and ancient ways of life so that individuals, similar to those which are shown in the picture, will be benefited. Tennessee Valley, None. Between 1933 and 1945. Photograph. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/item/owi2003050990/PP/.


CITATIONS


