

## New Deal SAC Lesson Plan

**Central Historical Question:**  
*Was the New Deal a success or a failure?*

### Materials:

- New Deal SAC Documents A-G
- New Deal SAC Graphic Organizer

### Plan of Instruction:

*[NOTE: This lesson should follow a more thorough lesson on the Great Depression and the New Deal programs].*

1. Introduction: *Today you're going to decide whether or not you think the New Deal was a success or failure.*
2. Divide students into groups of 4, and then into Team A and Team B.

Team A: The New Deal was a success.

Team B: The New Deal was a failure.

*Remind students that their best arguments come from **sourcing**: Who wrote the document? What is their motive? Are they reliable?*

*EXAMPLE: If a representative from the WPA says that the New Deal is so great, kids on Team B should challenge the trustworthiness of her claim, given that she'll lose her job if the program ends.*

3. Team A presents to Team B, and Team B repeats arguments back to Team A, until Team A is satisfied.

Team B presents to Team A, and Team A repeats arguments back to Team B, until Team B is satisfied.

Teams try to reach consensus.

4. Whole class discussion:
  - Was the New Deal a success or failure? What evidence did you use to support your claim?
  - What other evidence would you need to strengthen your claim?

Citations:

Franklin Roosevelt, Fireside Chat, May 7, 1933, in John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database).  
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14636>.

Gilder Lehrman, African Americans and the New Deal,  
[http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/module18/intro\\_pop19.html](http://www.gilderlehrman.org/teachers/module18/intro_pop19.html)

Federal Writer' Project, *These Are Our Lives*, (Norton & Co., 1939).

Ellen Woodward, Hot Lunches for a Million School Children, National Archives: WPA Papers. <http://newdeal.feri.org/works/wpa02.htm>

Carter Family, *No Depression in Heaven*. Recorded: 1936

Alden Stevens, "Whither the American Indian," *Survey Magazine of Social Interpretation*, March 1, 1940.

## DOCUMENT A: FIRESIDE CHAT (Modified)

*President Roosevelt gave this speech over the radio on May 7, 1933, two months after he became president. He called these radio addresses “fireside chats,” and this was his second one as president.*

Tonight, I come for the second time to tell you about what we have been doing and what we are planning to do. . . .

First, we are giving opportunity of employment to one-quarter of a million of the unemployed, especially the young men, to go into forestry and flood prevention work...

Next, the Congress is about to pass legislation that will greatly ease the mortgage distress among the farmers and the home owners of the nation, by easing the burden of debt now bearing so heavily upon millions of our people...

I know that the people of this country will understand this and will also understand the spirit in which we are undertaking this policy...

All of us, the Members of the Congress and the members of this Administration owe you, the people of this country, a profound debt of gratitude.

### **Vocabulary**

Imperative – absolutely necessary

Legislation – laws

Mortgage distress – many farmers and homeowners were unable to pay off the loans on their houses and so their property was taken away

Gratitude - thanks

*Source: President Roosevelt’s “fireside chat,” May 7, 1933.*

## DOCUMENT B: AFRICAN AMERICANS AND THE NEW DEAL

Most New Deal programs discriminated against blacks. The NRA (National Recovery Administration), for example, not only offered whites the first crack at jobs but allowed separate and lower wages for blacks. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA) refused to guarantee mortgages for blacks who tried to buy in white neighborhoods, and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) maintained segregated camps. Furthermore, the Social Security Act did not include most jobs blacks historically held.

The story in agriculture was particularly grim. Since 40 percent of all black workers made their living as sharecroppers and tenant farmers, the Agricultural Adjustment Association (AAA) land reduction hit blacks hard. White landlords could make more money by leaving land unplanted than by planting it. As a result, the AAA's policies forced more than 100,000 blacks off the land in 1933 and 1934.

Even more upsetting to black leaders, the president failed to support an anti-lynching law and a law to abolish the poll tax. Roosevelt feared that conservative southern Democrats, would block his bills if he tried to fight them on this issue.

### **Vocabulary**

Mortgage – a loan to buy a house

Grim—negative

**Source:** Modified excerpt from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History online textbook.

## DOCUMENT C: FEDERAL WRITER'S PROJECT BOOK

I do think that Roosevelt is the biggest-hearted man we ever had in the White House...It's the first time in my recollection that a President ever got up and said, "I'm interested in and aim to do somethin' for the workin' man." Just knowin' that for once there was a man to stand up and speak for him, a man that could make what he felt so plain nobody could doubt he meant it, has made a lot of us feel a lot better even when there wasn't much to eat in our homes.

### Vocabulary

Recollection - memory

*Source: George Dobbin was a 67-year old cotton-mill worker when he was interviewed for the book These Are Our Lives, a book put together by the Federal Writer's Project in 1939.*

## DOCUMENT D: HOT LUNCHES FOR SCHOOLCHILDREN (Modified)

One million undernourished children have benefited by the Works Progress Administration's school lunch program. In the past year and a half 80,000,000 hot well-balanced meals have been served at the rate of 500,000 daily in 10,000 schools throughout the country...

For many children, who are required to leave home early in the morning and travel long distances after school hours to reach their homes, the WPA lunch constitutes the only hot meal of the day...

Through the daily service of warm, nourishing food, prepared by qualified, needy women workers, the WPA is making it possible for many underprivileged children of the present to grow into useful, healthy citizens of the future.

### Vocabulary

Constitutes - is

*Source: Speech by Ellen S. Woodward, Assistant Administrator; Works Progress Administration.*

## DOCUMENT E: UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

| <b>YEAR</b> | <b>Unemployment<br/>(% of labor<br/>force)</b> |
|-------------|--|
| <b>1933</b> | 20.6   |
| <b>1934</b> | 16.0   |
| <b>1935</b> | 14.2   |
| <b>1936</b> | 9.9  |
| <b>1937</b> | 9.1  |
| <b>1938</b> | 12.5   |
| <b>1939</b> | 11.3   |
| <b>1940</b> | 9.5  |
| <b>1941</b> | 8.0  |
| <b>1942</b> | 4.7  |
| <b>1943</b> | 1.9  |
| <b>1944</b> | 1.2  |
| <b>1945</b> | 1.9  |

Source: Gene Smiley, "Recent Unemployment Rate Estimates for the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Economic History*, June 1983, 43, 487-93.

## DOCUMENT F: SONG

### NO DEPRESSION IN HEAVEN

Written and Performed by the Carter Family

Recorded: 1936

Out here the hearts of men are failing  
For these are latter days we know  
The great depression now is spreading  
God's words declared it would be so

I'm going where there's no depression  
To the lovely land that's free from care  
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble  
My home's in heaven, I'm going there

In that bright land there'll be no hunger  
No orphan children crying for bread  
No weeping widows toil or struggle  
No shrouds, no coffins, and no dead

I'm going where there's no depression  
To the lovely land that's free from care  
I'll leave this world of toil and trouble  
My home's in heaven, I'm going there

#### **Vocabulary**

Toil– hard and exhausting work

Shroud – a cloth used to cover a corpse

## DOCUMENT G: WITHER THE AMERICAN INDIAN? (Modified)

*Roosevelt appointed John Collier, a leading reformer, as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933. Collier pushed Congress to create the Indian Emergency Conservation Program (IECP), a program that employed more than 85,000 Indians. Collier also made sure that the PWA, WPA, CCC, and NYA hired Native Americans.*

*In 1934 Collier convinced Congress to pass the Indian Reorganization Act, which provided money for tribes to purchase new land. That same year, the government provided federal grants to local school districts, hospitals, and social welfare agencies to assist Native Americans.*

Congress is authorized to appropriate \$10 million from which loans may be made for the purpose of promoting the economic development of the tribes...

About seventy-five of the tribal corporations are now functioning, with varying degrees of success, and the number continues to grow. The Jicarillas have bought their trading post and are running it; the Chippewas run a tourist camp; the Northern Cheyennes have a very successful livestock cooperative: the Swinomish of Washington have a tribal fishing business. There are plenty of others to prove these corporations can be made to work...

The truth is that the New Deal Indian administration is neither as successful as its publicity says it is, nor as black and vicious a failure as the severest critics would have us believe. Many Indian problems remain unsolved, but every one has been addressed.

*Source: Alden Stevens, "Whither the American Indian," Survey Magazine of Social Interpretation, March 1, 1940.*

### **Vocabulary**

appropriate – give