

The New Deal Through Primary Sources: A Unit Plan

Lesson plans for primary sources at the Tennessee State Library & Archives

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Grade Level: 11th grade, can be adapted for 5th grade

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Visit <http://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education> for additional lesson plans.



Introduction:

The following resources and lesson plan are designed to teach a unit that will cover all state US History content standards for the New Deal and effects of the Great Depression. It does not address the causes of the Great Depression, which should be covered previously. Also, the sources in the Tennessee State Library & Archives do not currently support standards covering Social Security, the SEC, Fair Labor Standards Act, the FDIC, or the Cumberland Homesteads.

For each source or group of sources there is/are focus question(s) to direct students towards the objectives. Alternatively, teachers can also use the analysis tools at <http://sos.tn.gov/tsla/education-outreach-classroom-resources> or come up with your own focus questions.

Note on standards covered: This unit plan is based on the 11th grade US History standards, and most of the questions and concepts are developed for high school students. Teachers will want to review and adapt sources and questions for students at other abilities or levels.

Guiding Question(s):

- How did the Great Depression/New Deal impact Tennesseans?
- How did the nation pursue recovery from the Great Depression?

Curriculum Standards:

US.41 Describe the impact of the Great Depression on the American people, including: mass unemployment, migration, and Hoovervilles. (C, E, G, H)

US.40 Analyze the causes of the Dust Bowl, and explain the social, geographic, and economic impacts. (C, E, G, H)

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. (C., E, G, H, P, T)

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US.44 Analyze the effects of and the controversies arising from New Deal economic policies, including charges of socialism and President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s “court packing” attempt. (C, E, H, P)

Materials Needed:

Primary Sources from Tennessee State Library and Archives, National Archives, and Library of Congress. They are all linked within the activity.

Background:

[Tennessee Valley Authority](#)

Author: W. Bruce Wheeler

Source Location: [Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture](#)

Lesson Activities:

Activity 1:

- Listen to [Hobart Parrish’s](#) comments on the Great Depression and the New Deal and the popular song “[Brother, Can You Spare a Dime?](#)” Think about the Great Depression and how it affected both rural and urban areas. How were they affected differently? How does the song describe what is happening in the country? How does it make you feel? Discuss the emotions the song represents with a partner.
- Next, read the first two pages of President Roosevelt’s first [inaugural address](#) and study the [invitation](#). Consider the questions, **a)** How was Roosevelt’s inauguration affected by the Depression? **b)** What are the problems of the nations, according to Roosevelt? **c)** How does Roosevelt express optimism in the speech? **d)** What does “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” mean in the context of the speech? Write down your answers and turn and talk with a partner.
- Finally, read the introduction and look at the four photographs of [Hoovervilles](#). Write down your answers to the following questions: What was a Hooverville? Why do you think they called them Hoovervilles? What elements do all four photographs have in common?

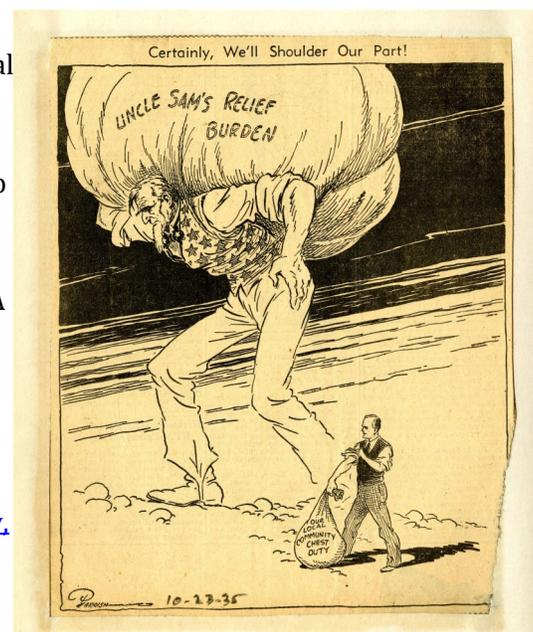
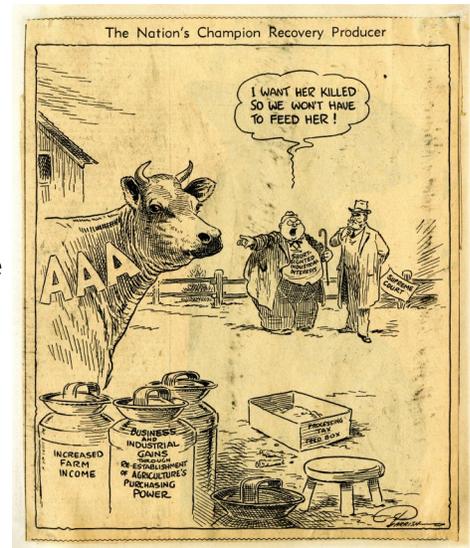
Activity 2:

- Look at the photographs “[Erosion in Fayette County, Tennessee](#),” “[Eroded Crop](#),” and “[Natchez Trace Forest Park](#)” and the [political cartoon](#). Discuss the following questions in groups of two or three. What is happening to the fields in the three photographs? Why? How did erosion contribute to the problems of the nation during the Great Depression? What is the point the cartoonist is trying to make in the “Larger Than Political Party” cartoon?

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Activity 3:

- Read Roosevelt's [presidential nomination address](#) on the New Deal. What, in Roosevelt's words, do the "American people want more than anything else?" What is the purpose of the New Deal?
- Look at the [political cartoon](#) and read its historical note. What was the purpose of the AAA? What were the main products of the AAA? Write down your answers.
- Look at the photographs of the [Tennessee State Office Building](#), the [Davidson County Courthouse](#), the [Tennessee Supreme Court Building](#), the [Post Office](#), [Shady Valley School](#), and [Memphis Airport](#). What kinds of structures were built by the Public Works Administration/Works Progress Administration? Are there common design elements or styles between the buildings? Are these buildings still in use today? How might have the PWA/WPA helped Americans during the Great Depression? Discuss these questions with a small group and then share your answers with the whole class.
- Study the sources on the Civilian Conservation Corps: [Big Ridge Dam](#), [CCC Patch](#), [CCC Erosion Control](#), [Rock Creek Bridge](#), and [Culvert at Harrison Bay State Park](#). Answer the following questions by yourself or with a partner: **a)** How was the CCC a Depression relief program? **b)** Describe the kinds of work the CCC did. **c)** Why were the symbols on the CCC Patch chosen? Approximately 4000 CCC workers constructed roads, trails, and structures in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Explain why building a national park fit the mission of the CCC.
- Consider the [poster](#), [ad](#), and [political cartoon](#) for the National Recovery Administration. Answer the following questions: What is the eagle holding in its claws? Why do you think these symbols were chosen? What did companies have to do to earn a NRA Blue Eagle? How might this have helped American workers during the Depression? According to the cartoonist, was the NRA effective? What results did the NRA create?



Activity 4:

- Look at the political cartoons "[Certainly, We'll Shoulder Our Part](#)," "[The Nation's Champion Recovery Producer](#)," "[Bluntly, He'd Rather Not Have that Bozo Introduced](#)," and "[Washington Horse Traders](#)," the [newspaper clipping](#), and the [telegram](#) that criticize the New Deal. Discuss with a partner how these sources criticize the New Deal.

