

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 was their motive? Are they reliable?*

Example: *If a representative from the WPA says that the New Deal is so great, students 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:

Document A

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). Retrieved from <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14636>.

Document B

Digital History, African Americans and the New Deal, Retrieved from http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/disp_textbook.cfm?smtID=2&psid=3447.

Document C

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

Document D

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

Document E

Gene Smiley, "Recent Unemployment Rate Estimates for the 1920s and 1930s," *Journal of Economic History*, June 1983.

Document F

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

Document G

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**.

Source: *President Roosevelt’s “Fireside Chat,” May 7, 1933.*

Vocabulary

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

Document B: African Americans and the New Deal

Most New Deal programs discriminated against blacks. The National Recovery Administration, for example, not only offered whites the first crack at jobs, but authorized separate and lower pay scales 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 maintained segregated camps. Furthermore, the Social Security Act excluded those job categories blacks traditionally filled.

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 Administration (AAA) acreage reduction hit blacks hard. White landlords could make more money by leaving land untilled than by putting land back into production. As a result, the AAA's policies forced more than 100,000 blacks off the land in 1933 and 1934. Even more **galling** to black leaders, the president failed to support an anti-lynching bill and a bill to abolish the poll tax. Roosevelt feared that conservative southern Democrats, who had seniority in Congress and controlled many committee chairmanships, would block his bills if he tried to fight them on the race question.

Source: *This excerpt is from the Digital History online textbook.*

Vocabulary

mortgage: a loan to buy a house

grim: worrisome, severe

galling: irritating

Document C: Interview with Cotton Mill Worker

*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 Writers' Project in 1939.*

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.

Source: *George Dobbin in These Are Our Lives, Federal Writers' Project, 1939.*

Vocabulary

recollection: memory

Document D: Hot Lunches for a Million School Children (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.

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

Vocabulary

constitutes: equals

Document E: Unemployment Statistics

YEAR	Unemployment (% of labor force)
1929	3.2
1930	8.7
1931	15.3
1932	22.5
1933	20.6
1934	16.0
1935	14.2
1936	9.9
1937	9.1
1938	12.5
1939	11.3
1940	9.5
1941	6.0

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

Document F: Song

“No Depression in Heaven”

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

Source: *The Carter Family, “No Depression in Heaven,” 1936.*

Vocabulary

toil: hard and exhausting work

shroud: a cloth used to cover a corpse

Document G: Whither the American Indian? (Modified)

Roosevelt appointed John Collier, a leading social 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