



Reading Through History

A "New Deal" for America

The New Deal

The WPA

The CCC

The TVA

The New Deal

When Franklin Roosevelt became president, he offered a “New Deal” for the American people. What was the New Deal? How was it put in place?

One of the primary reasons Roosevelt won the presidency in 1932 was because he promised to try and do something to end the economic crisis the country was facing. As he entered the office, Roosevelt hoped to do three things. First, he hoped to provide relief for the poor and the unemployed. Next, he wanted the economy to recover to its normal levels. Finally, he wished to reform the financial systems so that an economic depression would not happen again. Relief, recovery, and reform became known as the three R’s.



To accomplish these goals, Roosevelt implemented a series of government programs in between 1933 and 1938. Some of these programs were approved by Congress, while others he enforced through executive order. Collectively, these programs became known as “The New Deal”.

The New Deal is frequently referred to in two different parts. The “First New Deal” (1933-1934) was largely concerned with restructuring the nation’s economy and offering relief to the banking industry. The “Second New Deal” (1935-1938) sought to improve the use of the nation’s resources, provided relief for farmers, and created various government work programs.

Words to watch for:

implemented scenario

socialism adherence

There were many different types of programs that were a part of the New Deal. These programs had a variety of different intended purposes. Programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) were designed to put unemployed people to work. The Social Security Act was created to provide financial relief to the elderly. Meanwhile, the Tennessee Valley Authority brought much needed electricity to rural areas in the South.

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) was another important agency created by the New Deal. The FDIC guaranteed the safety of money in banks. Citizens no longer had to fear losing their money if their bank closed (this scenario was quite common in the early stages of the Depression). The FDIC is still in operation today to insure money deposited in banks.

Aside from the FDIC, there are many government agencies that were created by the New Deal which still exist. Amongst them are the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation (FCIC), and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC).

Not everyone was a fan of the New Deal. Many felt that Roosevelt was leading the United States down the path of socialism. Others saw the New Deal projects as a waste of money and resources. Today, some economists and historians believe that Roosevelt’s adherence to New Deal policies actually prolonged the Great Depression.

However, New Deal programs did put millions of people to work, providing economic relief for struggling families. The New Deal initiatives also allowed for the construction of roads, schools, parks, hospitals, and many other facilities that were needed throughout the nation.

Summarize: *Answer the following questions in the space provided. Attempt to respond in a complete sentence for each question. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation!*

1. Who implemented the New Deal?
2. What were programs like the WPA and the CCC designed to do?
3. When was the Second New Deal? (What years?)
4. Where did the TVA provide electricity to?
5. Why did many people not like the New Deal?
6. How did New Deal programs help struggling families?

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of three to five complete sentences.*

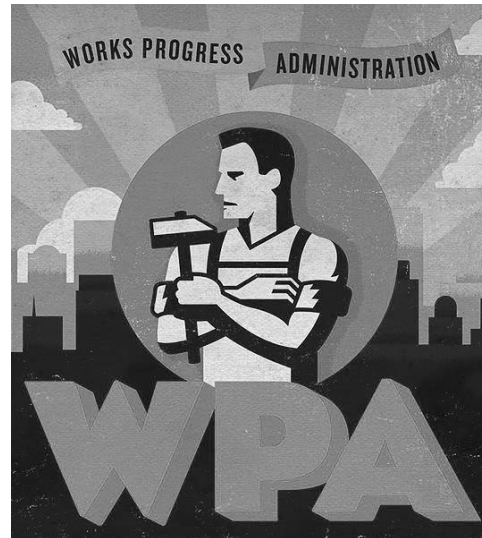
7. Imagine if your family lost all of its money in the bank. Describe the emotions you would feel. How would your family cope with this situation? Be as descriptive as possible.

The Works Progress Administration

One of the most ambitious programs enacted by the Franklin Roosevelt Administration during the Great Depression was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). What was the WPA? What kinds of projects were they concerned with?

Created by an executive order from President Roosevelt, the goal of the Works Progress Administration was to provide a paying job for any family whose primary wage-earner was unemployed. Most of the workers the WPA employed were unskilled laborers who were hired for construction projects.

There were many different kinds of WPA projects. Parks, bridges, roads, courthouses, schools, and hospitals were all constructed by WPA workers. Museums, city halls, and swimming pools were constructed as well. To this day, most communities in the United States have a park, bridge, or school that was built by the agency. The program greatly benefited rural areas in the South and western regions of the nation where facilities such as these were desperately needed.



The WPA also assisted women who found themselves unemployed during the Great Depression. The Household Service Demonstration Project trained 30,000 women in skills needed to be a domestic servant (such as a house-keeper or maid). Trainees were taught how to cook, sew, wash and iron clothes, and many other skills that might be needed.

Not all of the WPA programs were for unskilled workers. The Federal Theatre Project, Federal Writers Project, Federal Music Project, and Federal Art Project were all branches of the WPA intended to assist out-of-work authors, artists, actors, and musicians.

Words to watch for:

domestic onset

diminished conscripted

Not everyone approved of the WPA. Many felt that such government work programs were a way of introducing communism into the United States. Additionally, some believed that WPA construction efforts were being distributed on a political basis. For example, they claimed that the South received a large number of WPA projects because President Roosevelt was hoping to win votes in that part of the country. Others felt that WPA workers were lazy and developed poor work habits while involved in the program.

1938 proved to be the peak year for the WPA. That year, jobs were provided to more than three million people. Throughout the entirety of the program, the WPA provided short-term labor for eight million Americans.

With the onset of U.S. involvement in World War II in 1941, the need for the program diminished as millions of American men were conscripted into military service. The remainder of the nation's laborers found jobs in American factories, producing tanks and planes for America's war effort. With the need for the program gone, Congress terminated the WPA in 1943.

Over the course of its existence, the WPA constructed more than 40,000 new buildings and improved another 85,000. Amongst these structures were nearly 6,000 new schools and more than 1,000 libraries.

Summarize: *Answer the following questions in the space provided. Attempt to respond in a complete sentence for each question. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation!*

1. Who created the WPA through an executive order?
2. What kinds of buildings did the WPA construct?
3. When was the peak year for the WPA?
4. Which parts of the nation were helped the most by the WPA?
5. Why did some suspect that WPA projects were being awarded on a political basis?
6. How were women trained in the Household Service Demonstration Project?

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of three to five complete sentences.*

7. Which buildings in your community might have been constructed by the WPA? If you don't know, try to find out. (Most WPA-built buildings will have a plaque stating that it was constructed by the WPA).

The Civilian Conservation Corps

One of the most popular programs implemented by Franklin Roosevelt as part of the New Deal was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). What was the CCC? Who was it intended for?

The Civilian Conservation Corps was started in March of 1933 as a work relief program. It was intended to provide jobs for young unmarried men, age 18-25, who were out of work due to the Great Depression. By July of 1933, there were 250,000 young men enrolled, working in 1,463 different camps.

When one became a member of the CCC, he signed a commitment to participate in the program for a minimum of six months. At the conclusion of this time period, he could choose to enlist for another six months. The maximum limit was a total of four terms (or two years) that one could stay in the program.



Each enlistee was required to take a physical examination prior to joining. Physical fitness was important because of the demanding labor that would be involved.

Each CCC worker was given meals, housing, a uniform, and thirty dollars a month. Twenty-five of the thirty dollars was sent home to their parents. The workers lived in camps and were housed in barracks (fifty workers to a tent). Aside from the barracks, the CCC camps also featured an education building, a medical facility, a mess hall, a recreation area, restrooms and showers, a tool room and blacksmith shop, and garages.

Words to watch for:

barracks recreation

erosion terraces

The primary function of the CCC was to conserve natural resources and clean up the national parks and forests. Their very first projects related to soil erosion control in Alabama. Soil erosion projects became especially important in the Great Plains states, which were being ravaged by the Dust Bowl. One of the most important CCC projects was re-forestation (planting trees). The trees were needed to serve as wind blocks, which helped control the soil erosion problem.

Before long, CCC camps were all over the country, tackling many different kinds of tasks. CCC projects included everything from building fire lookout towers, roads, and airport landing fields, to controlling insects and diseases, fish stocking, and eliminating predatory animals. They also constructed terraces, built dams, and established campgrounds.

By 1940, the program started being reduced significantly. The Great Depression was approaching its end, and there was less need to employ young workers. In 1941, when the United States entered World War II, this need became even less, because most men of this age were either enlisting or being drafted to help in the war effort. The program was officially ended on June 30, 1942.

At the time of its conclusion, the CCC had employed over 2.5 million young men. They had built over 97,000 miles of road, constructed more than 800 parks, and planted more than 3 billion trees.

Summarize: *Answer the following questions in the space provided. Attempt to respond in a complete sentence for each question. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation.*

1. Who was eligible to be in the CCC?
2. What kinds of facilities did a CCC camp feature?
3. When was the CCC started?
4. Where were the very first CCC projects?
5. Why was physical fitness important?
6. How did planting trees help with soil erosion?

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of three to five complete sentences.*

7. If you had been a young man living during the Great Depression, do you think you would have joined an organization such as the CCC? If so, what about the organization would have appealed to you? If not, why not?

The Tennessee Valley Authority

During the 1930s, there were few regions of the country that were worse off than the region known as the Tennessee Valley. Where is the Tennessee Valley? How did the New Deal help this area?

The area known as the Tennessee Valley includes portions of Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Kentucky. For years, this region was far behind the rest of the nation in many areas of life. Electricity, running water, sewers, and proper sanitation were all elements of our modern life that were sorely lacking in the Tennessee Valley during the 1930s. One of the major goals of many New Deal programs was to help modernize the South and improve living conditions in those states.

The most notable of these New Deal programs became known as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). The TVA's goal was to build hydroelectric dams throughout the area, which would bring electricity into thousands of homes. Eventually, the TVA would construct and maintain more than 30 hydroelectric dams that provided inexpensive power to millions of Southerners. In 1933, it was estimated that only 2% of homes in the Tennessee Valley had electricity. By 1945, this number had been improved to 75%.



Bringing electricity to the region was extremely important. Not only did home appliances and electric lighting make life easier, but there were other benefits as well. Factories and other businesses were now able to locate in the region and employ thousands of workers.

There were also health benefits to the increased availability of electricity. Better lighting meant improved eyesight and a reduced risk of accidents. Electric refrigerators allowed Southerners to keep food longer without it spoiling. This meant they could purchase food from the grocery store, rather than depending on homegrown produce and dairy products.

Electricity also meant that Southerners could purchase what the rest of the nation had been enjoying for the past decade or more, a radio. The radio proved very meaningful in the isolated Tennessee Valley region. It helped Southerners feel more connected to the rest of the nation. They could now listen to the same news and radio programs that people from New York to Los Angeles were listening to.

Aside from providing electricity, the TVA was also concerned with soil conservation. The organization promoted the use of fertilizers and crop rotation to improve soil conditions. The TVA also had programs to improve fish and wildlife habitats, control wild fires, and replant forests.

The TVA was not always popular. The construction of the hydroelectric dams caused more than 15,000 families to lose their homes. Those areas were flooded to make lakes and reservoirs. Also, many Southerners were suspicious of government officials. Therefore, the TVA had to recruit local citizens to speak to their neighbors about soil conservation techniques.

Words to watch for:
appliances isolated
conservation reservoirs

Other New Deal programs were created to help fight diseases. Hookworm, pellagra, malaria, typhoid, and diphtheria had long plagued the South. These diseases were spread through poor sewage and sanitation systems (which allowed germs and bacteria to spread rapidly). New sewer systems in major cities helped reduce the number of deaths caused by diphtheria and typhoid. New water treatment facilities also improved the condition of drinking water.

Swamp drainage in South Carolina resulted in a 16% drop in malaria cases, and mosquito eradication efforts helped reduce malaria-related deaths by 66%. There were similar successes in reducing the number of cases of dysentery, hookworm, and pellagra.

Summarize: *Answer the following questions in the space provided. Attempt to respond in a complete sentence for each question. Be sure to use correct capitalization and punctuation!*

1. Who benefitted the most from the Tennessee Valley Authority?

2. What was one of the major goals of many New Deal programs?

3. When was electricity available to 75% of the homes in the Tennessee Valley?

4. Where was swamp land drained to reduce the number of malaria cases?

5. Why did the TVA have to recruit local citizens to speak to their neighbors about soil conservation techniques?

6. How were diseases like hookworm, pellagra, typhoid, and diphtheria spread?

Student Response: *Write a paragraph addressing the questions raised below. A thorough response should consist of three to five complete sentences.*

7. Try to imagine life without electricity. Of all the changes that would mean for your life, what would be the most difficult thing to do without? Explain your answer as thoroughly as possible.