**Unit 7 Activity Packet: FDR & The New Deal**

**Activity 1: What did Roosevelt do to combat the Great Depression? (SAS)**

**Main Idea Video Notes**

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**Activity 2:** **What Caused the Dust Bowl? (Reading Like a Historian)**

Background Information: The Dust Bowl refers to a period of severe dust storms and soil erosion in the Great Plains during the 1930s.This region included parts of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and smaller parts of New Mexico and Nebraska. There were more than 300 dust storms, also known as “Black Blizzards,” between 1933 and 1938. These storms often featured fast moving clouds of dust several miles wide that covered farms and homes, destroyed crops, and made people sick. One of the hardest hit areas was the Oklahoma Panhandle. Many people left the Dust Bowl region, abandoning their homes and to look for work in Western states, such as California. However, many stayed behind.

**Document A: Henderson**

1. What type of document is this? When was it written? Why was it written?
2. According to Henderson, what are three changes that happened in Oklahoma during the 1910s and 1920s? What is her attitude about these changes?
3. How does the author describe life in Oklahoma in 1935? What are two examples of how people experienced the Dust Bowl?
4. How does this document help you address the question: What caused the Dust Bowl?

**Document B: Svobida**

1. Who wrote this document? When was it written? Why was it written?
2. According to Svobida, how did the dust and wind affect crops?
3. What exactly does Svobida mean by the phrase “power farming”? What would be the difference between traditional farming and “power farming”?
4. What, according to this Svobida, were two causes of the Dust Bowl?
5. How is Svobida’s account similar to and different from Henderson’s letter?

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Document** | **Reasons suggested by this document** | **Evidence from document to support these reasons** |
| **Henderson Letter** |  11.  |  12.  |
| **Svobida Account** |  |  |

**Now read and compare accounts of the Dust Bowl from two people who lived through it. The purpose is to think about what life was like during the Dust Bowl, then to compare the similarities and differences of these documents, and consider how the documents help you answer the Central Historical Question: What caused the Dust Bowl?**

**Document A: Henderson Letter (Modified)**

Caroline Henderson started homesteading in the Oklahoma Panhandle in 1907. She was a published writer who wrote for various magazines. The passage below is an excerpt of a letter she wrote to Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace in 1935 at the age of 58. Wallace would later credit her with helping America understand farmers’ problems and the courage they exhibited.

For twenty-seven years this little spot on the vast expanses of the Great Plains has been the center of all our thought and hope and effort. And marvelous are the changes that we have seen . . . The almost unbroken buffalo grass sod has given way to cultivated fields. The old trails have become wide graded highways. Little towns have sprung up with attractive homes, trees, flowers, schools, churches, and hospitals. Automobiles and trucks, tractors and combines have revolutionized methods of farm work and manner of living. The wonderful crop of 1926 when our country alone produced 10,000,000 bushels of wheat – more it was said than any other equal area in the world – revealed the possibilities of our productive soil under modern methods of farming. It seemed as if at last our dreams were coming true. . . .

Yet now our daily physical torture, confusion of mind, and gradual wearing down of courage, seem to make that long continued hope look like a vanishing dream. For we are in the worst of the dust storm area where “dust to eat” is not merely a figure of speech, but the phrasing of a bitter reality. . . .

In this time of severe stress, credit must be given to the various activities of the federal government. Without such aid as has been furnished, it seems certain that large sections must have been virtually abandoned. Yet common sense suggests that the regions which are no longer entirely self-supporting cannot rely indefinitely upon government aid. So the problem remains and the one satisfactory solution is beyond all human control. Some of our neighbors with small children, fearing the effects upon their health, have left temporarily “until it rains.” Others have left permanently, thinking doubtless that nothing could be worse.

-Source: Caroline Henderson’s letter to Henry A. Wallace, sent July 26,1935

**Document B: Svobida Account (Modified)**

Lawrence Svobida was a young farmer who came to Oklahoma in 1929 and farmed there until 1939. He suffered seven crop failures in eight years. When he left, he wrote an account of his struggles. He wanted to share the story of the “average farmer without sugar coating it,” as he claimed others had. Below are two excerpts from his account.

Excerpt 1: The gales chopped off the plants even with the ground, then proceeded to take the roots out. They did not stop there. They blew away the rich topsoil, leaving the subsoil exposed: and then kept sweeping awaythe “hard-pan,” which is almost as hard as the concrete. This was something new and different from anything I had ever experienced before – a destroying force beyond my wildest imaginings. When some of my own fields started blowing, I was utterly bewildered. . . .According to [my neighbors’] information, there was little hope of saving a crop once the wind had started blowing; and the only known method of checking the movement of the soil was the practice of strip listing. This meant running deep parallel furrows twenty or thirty feet apart, in an east and west direction, across the path of the prevailing winds. This tends to check the force of the wind along the ground and allows the fine silt-like dust to fall into the open furrows.

Excerpt 2: There had been overgrazing before the coming of the settlers and the invasion of barbed wire, but the death knell of the Plains was sounded and the birth of the Great American Desert was inaugurated with the introduction and rapid improvement of power farming. Tractors and combines made the Great Plains regions a new wheat empire, but in doing so they disturbed nature’s balance, and nature is taking its revenge.

-Source: Lawrence Svobida, Farming the Dust Bowl: A First-Hand Account from Kansas, first published in 1940.

**Vocabulary:** gales: strong winds, windstorms death knell: bell or signal announcing death

 bewildered: confused overgrazing: too much grass eaten by cattle

inaugurated: begun combines: a machine that harvests crops

**Document C: Government Report**

1. What kind of document is this? When was it written? Why was it written?
2. What problem is this report addressing?
3. What, according to this report, were three causes of the Dust Bowl?
4. Is this a reliable account? Why or why not?

**Document C: Government Report**

The passage below is an excerpt from the Report on the Great Plains Drought Area Committee. This report was created by was a government committee set up to analyze the causes of the Dust Bowl. Morris Cooke, Administrator of the Rural Electrification Administration, chaired the committee, but the leaders of eight federal agencies, including the Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation Service, signed it.

**Personal and Confidential from Morris Cooke. August 27, 1936**

Dear Mr. President,

The Committee has made a preliminary study of drought conditions in the Great Plains area with the hope of outlining a long-term program which would render future droughts less disastrous. . .The agricultural economy of the Great Plains will become increasingly unstable and unsafe, in view of the impossibility of permanent increase in the amount of rainfall, unless overcropping, overgrazing and improper farm methods are prevented. There is no reason to believe that the primary factors of climate temperature, precipitation and winds in the Great Plains region have undergone any fundamental change. The future of the region must depend, therefore, on the degree to which farming practices conform to natural conditions. Because the situation has now passed out of the individual farmer’s control, the reorganization of farming practices demands the cooperation of many agencies, including the local, State, and Federal governments.

Mistaken public policies have been largely responsible for the situation now existing. The Federal Government must do its full share in remedying the damage caused by a mistaken homesteading policy, by the stimulation of war time demands which led to overcropping and overgrazing, and by encouragement of a system of agriculture which could not be both permanent and prosperous. -Source: Excerpt from the Report of the Great Plains Drought Area Committee, sent to President Roosevelt on August 27, 1936.

**Vocabulary**

preliminary: first, introductory render: to make

overcropping: depleting soil by continually planting crops on it

remedying: making right prosperous: financially successful

**Round Two**

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| ***Document*** | ***Reasons suggested by this document*** | ***Evidence from document to support these reasons*** |
| ***Government Report*** |  | 20.  |

**Now, Write a short essay using text evidence from ALL documents: What Caused the Dust Bowl?**

**­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­Activity 3: African Americans and the New Deal**

**Focus Question: Did the Civil Conservation Corps represent a significant improvement in policy toward African Americans?**

Part 1: African Americans and the New Deal: Movie Notes

Who are they?

1. Franklin Delano Roosevelt:
2. African American CCC workers:Why is it important?
3. Great Depression's effect on African Americans:
4. New Deal:
5. Civilian Conservation Corps:

**Part 2 Directions: For EACH of the following passages READ the passage and SELECT a quote that answers the question: Based on this selected passage, does the Civilian Conservation Corps represent a significant improvement in policy toward African Americans? THEN relate the passage to the question.**

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|  | **Selected Quote** | **Based on this selected passage, does the Civilian Conservation Corps represent a significant improvement in policy toward African Americans?** | **Relate the passage to the question.** |
| **DOCUMENT 1: Roosevelt on African Americans in the CCC**  |  |  |  |
| **DOCUMENT 2: "What the Civilian Conservation Corps is Doing for Colored Youth"**  |  |  |  |
| **DOCUMENT 3: "CCC Youth Refuses To Fan Flies Off Officer; Is Fired"**  |  |  |  |

**African Americans and the New Deal: Documents**

**DOCUMENT 1: Roosevelt on African Americans in the CCC (September 27, 1935)**

27 September 1935

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

Fechner—

In the CCC Camps, where the boys are colored, in the Park Service work, please try to put in colored foremen, not of course in technical work but in the ordinary manual work.

[signed] FDR

**DOCUMENT 2: "What the Civilian Conservation Corps is Doing for Colored Youth" (January 4, 1937)**

Approximately:

150,000 colored CCC Boys have served in the corps since President Roosevelt initiated the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933. The gain in weight has ranged from seven to fifteen pounds for each boy. Regular habits of work, discipline, fresh air and three well prepared and ample meals a day have combined to improve the health of all

enrollees. 31,000 young colored men and war veterans, approximately one tenth of the average CCC strength, are now engaged on work projects throughout the country. $800,000 a month for the past year has been allotted by colored CCC boys to their parents and dependents back home. 90,000 books have been supplied through the War Department and the U.S. Office of Education for camp libraries. Current magazines, daily and weekly newspapers are made available in camp recreation halls. 10,000 colored CCC enrollees in the past three years have completed courses in First-aid through cooperation of

the Emergency Conservation Work and the National Red Cross

...

700 classes in Negro history were conducted in the camps during the past three years.

**DOCUMENT 3: "CCC Youth Refuses To Fan Flies Off Officer; Is Fired" (January 3, 1934)**

NEW YORK, N.Y.—It required just one month and six days to get an honorable discharge from the Civilian Conservation Corps and his last month's pay for Eddie Simons, Harlem youth, after the N.A.A.C.P. took up his case. The story is an interesting one, illustrating as it does some of the difficulties confronting young Negroes in the forestry service officered largely by white Southerners, as well as the Willingness of the administration to do justice when pressed for action. Young Simons was dishonorably discharged and his last month's pay withheld at Camp No. 5, North Lisbon, N.J., on September 26, when he refused to stand and fan flies from a white officer, Lt. J. A. Elmore of the 16th Infantry, temporarily in charge of the camp. Simons told the officer he did not think fanning flies was part of his duty. Lt. Elmore thereupon dishonorably discharged the lad and denied him his last month's pay although admitting that Simons' record was good. The N.A.A.C.P. immediately took up the case and protested to Robert Fechner, director of the Emergency Conservation Work, who acknowledged his letter, and promised investigation. Three weeks later director Fechner again wrote the N.A.A.C.P. that he had directed that Eddie Simons be given an honorable discharge "free from any charge of insubordination" and that "he be paid all cash allowances and allotments due."

**Activity 4: Was the New Deal a Success or a Failure?**

**Divide 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.

**Helpful hints:**

Remember that your 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.

**Directions: 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.**

**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 Gratitude - thanks

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

**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

**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. New Deal

 **DOCUMENT E: UNEMPLOYMENT STATISTICS YEAR**

YEAR Unemployment(% of laborforce)

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 8.0

1942 4.7

1943 1.9

1944 1.2

1945 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 tocreate 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