

ACTIVITY **9**

Document-Based Activities

The Great Depression and the New Deal

Using Source Materials

HISTORICAL CONTEXT During the Great Depression, millions of Americans lost everything. President Hoover believed that the federal government should provide limited help. Franklin Roosevelt disagreed and promised a “New Deal” when he was elected in 1932.

TASK

Using information from the documents in Part A and your knowledge of U.S. history, answer the questions that follow each document. Your answers will help you write the Part B essay, in which you explain the two opposing plans to improve the economy and social conditions during the Great Depression.

PART A

DIRECTIONS Read and examine the following documents. Underline key words and make notes in the margin if you wish. Then answer the questions using complete sentences.

DOCUMENT 1

This is not an issue as to whether people shall go hungry or cold in the United States. It is . . . a question of the best method by which hunger and cold shall be prevented. It is a question as to whether the American people . . . will maintain the spirit of . . . voluntary giving. My own conviction is . . . that if we break down this sense of . . . individual generosity . . . we have not only impaired something infinitely valuable in the life of the American people but have struck at the roots of self-government. Once this has happened . . . we are faced with . . . reliance in future upon Government charity in some form or other . . .

—President Herbert Hoover
from “Statement on Public vs. Private Financing of Relief”, February 3, 1931

1a. Where does President Hoover think money to help the poor should come from?

1b. What does Hoover think will happen if the federal government assumes responsibility?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 2

National Unemployment 1928–1942

Year	Number of People Unemployed	Percent of Civilian Labor Force
1928	1,982,000	4.2
1929	1,550,000	3.2
1930	4,340,000	8.7
1931	8,020,000	15.9
1932	12,060,000	23.6
1933	12,830,000	24.9
1934	11,340,000	21.7
1935	10,610,000	20.1
1936	9,030,000	16.9
1937	7,700,000	14.3
1938	10,390,000	19.0
1939	9,480,000	17.2
1940	8,120,000	14.6
1941	5,560,000	9.9
1942	2,660,000	4.7

*Unemployment shown as percentage of total civilian labor force.
 —data from *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Part 1,
 U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1975

2a. What was the first year when more than 10% of the labor force was unemployed?

2b. For how many consecutive years was the unemployment rate above 14%? What do you think this did to people’s morale?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 3

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *enacted*, *public works*, *material gains*, *infinitely*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

It is essential . . . that measures immediately be enacted aimed at unemployment relief.

The first is the enrollment of workers . . . for such public employment as can be quickly started and will not interfere with the demand for . . . normal employment.

The second is grants to States for relief work.

The third extends to a broad public works labor-creating program . . .

I estimate that 250,000 men can be given temporary employment by early summer if you give me authority to proceed within the next two weeks . . .

More important . . . than the material gains will be the moral and spiritual value of such work. The overwhelming majority of unemployed Americans, who are now walking the streets . . . would infinitely prefer to work . . .

—President Franklin D. Roosevelt
from a speech to Congress, March 1933

3a. What does Roosevelt propose as a step toward unemployment relief?

3b. What other value besides money does Franklin see in giving people the chance to work?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 4



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4a. Who is the employer of these people and how can you tell?

4b. What job are these workers doing?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 5

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *living wages, covenant, subscribe*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

... no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country ...

... the change from starvation wages and starvation employment to living wages and sustained employment can ... be made by an industrial covenant to which all employers shall subscribe ...

The idea is simply for employers to hire more men to do the existing work by reducing the work hours of each man's week and at the same time paying a living wage for the shorter week ...

... if *all* employers in each trade ... agree to act together and at once, none will be hurt and millions of workers ... can raise their heads again ...

—from the Presidential Statement on the National Industrial Recovery Act,
June 16, 1933

5a. What group does the National Industrial Recovery Act seek to control?

5b. How does Roosevelt suggest changing work hours and wages?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

Document 6

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *collectively, concerted, coerce, tenure*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

Rights of Employees

Sec. 7 Employees shall have the right of self-organization, to form, join, or assist labor organizations, to bargain collectively through representatives of their own choosing, and to engage in concerted activities, for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection.

Sec. 8 It shall be an unfair labor practice for an employer—

- (1) To interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees in the exercise of the rights guaranteed in section 7.
- (2) To dominate or interfere with the formation or administration of any labor organization or contribute financial or other support to it . . .

—The National Labor Relations Act
July 5, 1935

6a. What rights does this act guarantee to employees?

6b. According to the passage, how did the government expect employers might respond to the Labor Relations Act?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 7

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *vicissitudes, compensation, compulsory, annuities, dependent, pension, prudent*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

In addressing you on June 8, 1934, I summarized the main objectives of our American program. Among these was, and is, the security of the men, women, and children of the Nation against certain hazards and vicissitudes of life.

At this time I recommend the following types of legislation . . .

1. Unemployment compensation.
2. Old-age benefits, including compulsory and voluntary annuities.
3. Federal aid to dependent children through grants to the States for the support of existing mothers' pension systems and for services for the protection and care of homeless, neglected, dependent, and crippled children.
4. Additional Federal aid to State and local public-health agencies and the strengthening of the Federal Public Health Service . . .

No one can guarantee this country against the dangers of future depressions but we can reduce these dangers . . .

—Franklin D. Roosevelt
from "A Message to Congress on Social Security," January 17, 1935

7a. What kinds of help does the Social Security program hope to provide people in the future?

7b. What does Roosevelt hope the program will do in the future?

Activity 9, The Great Depression and the New Deal, continued

DOCUMENT 8

Before You Read: The following words in the document below may be new to you: *stifle, enterprise, regiment, coerce, stupendous, shackle, thrift*. You may want to look them up in a dictionary.

Speaking just four years ago tonight in closing the Presidential campaign of 1932, I said, “. . . you cannot extend the mastery of government over the daily life of a people without somewhere making it master of people’s souls and thoughts.

The New Deal . . . stifle[s] the growth of small business and discourage[s] new enterprise. By stifling private enterprise the field is tilled for further extension of government . . .

. . . the President has seized the power to alter all wages, all price, all debts, all savings at will . . .

During my four years . . . I rejected the notion of great trade monopolies . . . I rejected the schemes of “economic planning” to regiment and coerce the farmer . . . I refused national plans to put the government into . . . competition with its citizens . . .

I rejected all these things because they would not only delay recovery but because I knew that in the end they would shackle free men . . .

—Herbert Hoover, former president
from the “Challenge to Liberty” speech, October 1936

8a. What does Hoover think is the greatest issue in America after four years of the New Deal?

8b. What does Hoover see as the two problems with New Deal policies?

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Writing a Document-Based Essay

PART B

DIRECTIONS Write a well-organized essay. It should include an introduction, a body of several paragraphs, and a conclusion. Use evidence from at least *four* documents in Part A to support your response. You may draw on any additional knowledge you have acquired about the subject.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT During the Great Depression, millions of Americans lost everything. President Hoover believed that the federal government should provide limited help. Franklin Roosevelt disagreed and promised a “New Deal” when he was elected in 1932.

TASK

Using information from the documents in Part A and your knowledge of U.S. history, write an essay in which you explain the two opposing plans to improve the economy and social conditions during the Great Depression.

GUIDELINES

In your essay, be sure to:

- Provide a thorough response to the Task. Be sure to cover all parts of the assignment.
- Include specific information from at least *four* of the sources in Part A.
- Incorporate relevant information you remember from your textbook and class work.
- Organize your essay in a clear and logical way.
- Support your statements with facts and information that address the topic.
- Write a conclusion that sums up your ideas.

Note: Do not simply restate the Task or Historical Context. Your essay should include more information.