**New Deal Essay Research Packet**

\*Carefully read the following sections and

pages from your social studies textbook\*

1. ***Roosevelt’s New Deal* (Pages 737 - 743)**
2. ***New Deal Critics* (Page 740)**
3. **Social Security (Pages 740 – 741)**
4. **Charts on the New Deal (Pages 756 – 761)**

**Other Helpful Sources:**

**-New Deal worksheet and posters**

**-Relief, Recovery and Reform worksheet**

**“A New Deal for Americans”**

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President Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) inherited a nation desperate for solutions to its vast problems. During his presidential campaign, Roosevelt had promised Americans a “New Deal.” The meaning of this term, however, was as unclear to the new president as it was to the American people. FDR had little understanding of the enormous economic crisis, and he did not have a plan of action to solve it. So Roosevelt experimented: The New Deal became an evolving set of various strategies.

Guided by a group of advisors called his “Brain Trust,” Roosevelt acted quickly. Under Roosevelt’s leadership, the federal government took a more active role in the lives of ordinary Americans than it had in the past. Its attempt to fix the economy’s problems and to relieve the troubles of the American people was unprecedented in the nation’s history. Previously, the government had assumed a hands-off approach. But with Congress’s approval, a number of agencies were created to ease the public’s suffering.

By the winter of 1934, the government was offering financial assistance to roughly 20 million Americans through the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and related agencies. Although Roosevelt was uncomfortable with direct payments by the federal government to the poor, at times he saw no other way, given the extent of poverty and unemployment in the United States.

Roosevelt preferred work programs in which the government created temporary employment opportunities. Many New Deal agencies, such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), put millions of Americans to work during the years of high unemployment in the 1930s. Employing more than 3 million men, the CCC was one of the New Deal’s great successes. The New Deal also slowly moved the country out of food lines and into jobs.

During the second half of the 1930s, Roosevelt’s New Deal continued to provide hands-on support to Americans. Programs tackled issues ranging from retirement benefits for the elderly to establishing a minimum hourly wage and maximum workday length for American workers. New laws provided ordinary Americans with a degree of security they had never before experienced.

The New Deal Programs had both supporters and opponents. Although voters showed their appreciation for the relief the New Deal programs offered by electing FDR three more times (1936, 1940, and 1944), many Americans found his policies controversial and criticized the agencies. Small farmers and sharecroppers tended to suffer under the New Deal’s agricultural programs, and small businessmen felt that the federal government favored larger companies. Some industrialists or wealthy “factory owners” questioned the government’s new pro-labor laws.

More traditional business leaders and politicians believed that the New Deal gave the federal government too great a role in managing the economy. By the end of the 1930s, conservatives in Congress were able to successfully block any further advancements of the New Deal. Despite their differences, however, most Republicans and Democrats accepted and supported the basic reforms and key programs created during the New Deal era (the 1930s).

Although the economy experienced a modest recovery in the mid-1930s, another stock market crash in 1937 sent unemployment rates skyrocketing again. Then, as European nations plunged into World War II (1939 – 1945), the U.S. government began to focus on military programs. Ultimately, America’s preparation for its own entry into the conflict created jobs and pulled the country out of its economic difficulties.

Although the New Deal did not end the Depression, it did restore confidence in the U.S. government and its economy. And Roosevelt made the economic security of ordinary Americans an important responsibility of the federal government for future generations.

**\*\*AGAINST\*\* The New Deal Sources**

[**SOURCE 1: 1936 Interview with Dr. M Santos (from the Library of Congress)**](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/timeline/depwwii/newdeal/failure.html)

**\*\*TRUST = several big businesses working together to control trade and become wealthy\*\***

* “As to the New Deal, I believe that it has been a failure as it has protected the trusts more than the American people. Today, the poor are poorer, and the trusts are richer. Another reason: this is a county that is controlled by the trusts. When one stands on the street, and closes his eyes for a moment, and then opens them and looks; everything, absolutely all that one sees is made by the trusts. The automobile that passes by, the street car, the trucks, everything that one wears: shoes, clothes, etc. When one enters a restaurant, he sees the plates, the tables, the spoons; all is made by the trusts. 95% of what one eats is controlled by the trusts. The trusts for more than 200 years have been controlling all the industries, and killing the small business men. We have reached a state in which the trusts dominate all, as they are the owners of the money, or nearly all the money that there is in the United States.
* “The workers earn less today than before the **NRA** -- those who work -- and those who do not work, have multiplied to such an extent that if I should say that 25,000,000 workers are without work at the present moment, I would not be mistaken…”
* “I do not believe that Roosevelt will solve this crisis, for if he had wanted to, as he promised to the American people, he would have solved it, as the Legislature and the Senate have given Roosevelt more power than any other president of the United States…”

[**Source 2: Wall Street Journal Article by Hillsdale College History Professor Burton Folsom Jr.**](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/02/20/Newdeal.debate/index.html?iref=newssearch)

**Article Title =** *Did FDR End the Depression?*

* “It’s a myth. FDR did not get us out of the Great Depression – not during the 1930s and only in a limited sense during World War II.”
* “Let's start with the New Deal. Its various agencies—the WPA, AAA, NRA and even the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority)—failed to create sustainable jobs. In May 1939, U.S. unemployment still exceeded 20%. European countries, according to a League of Nations survey, averaged only about 12% in 1938. The New Deal, by forcing taxes up and discouraging entrepreneurs from investing in the American economy probably did more harm than good.”

**Source 3: ABC-CLIO History Database Article (*“The Folly of New Deal Policies”*)**

* “While politically exciting among American society, many New Deal programs were financially irresponsible (money was spent unwisely), conflicted with each other, and hindered (prevented) real economic growth.”
* “At a time of widespread unemployment, Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) both in 1933. Each program sought to restore dignity to the forgotten man by creating temporary public works jobs. Wildly popular among the working class, these programs were criticized (not supported) as “shovel-leaning” projects that discouraged hard work and independence.”
* “Critics argue many New Deal programs wasted money. One CWA project employed researchers to study the history of the safety pin, another to chase birds away from public buildings. While this kind of job creation may have put people back to work restoring their dignity, this use of public resources weakened the economy by preventing workers from finding real, sustainable (long-lasting), productive employment that would have advanced the American economy.”
* “Among the first programs created by the New Deal was the Public Works Administration (PWA). The intention of the PWA was to provide immediate relief in the form of jobs. Among its many accomplishments is the Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River in Washington, towering today as the largest concrete structure in the United States. On the surface, this project is laudable (worthy of praise) for its immediate relief for the unemployed. However, through this project one arm of the government created new farmlands (by creating irrigation control and vast new farmable land) while another arm, the Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA) simultaneously paid farmers to destroy crops and livestock, a policy which lead to further unemployment.”

**SOURCE 4: 1939 Interview with Sam T. Mayhew (an African American)**

“All the prosperity President Roosevelt has brought to the country has been legislated and is not real. Nothing the president has ever started has been finished. My common way of expressing it is that we are in the middle of the ocean like a ship without an anchor. No good times can come to the country as long as there is so much discrimination practiced…

Take me: I have applied for work at the welfare office, tried hard to get work. All they had for me, they said came under the unskilled head. I tried one of these jobs – digging ditches for the sanitary department of the board of health. With my artificial limb, I simply couldn’t compete with the other men who were digging ditches…

Then I applied again for work, for something in the skilled labor line. I had seen men overseeing groups of workers, keeping their time, and so forth, and this I knew I could do as well as anybody. They told me that only white men had these jobs and that I would have to take something in the unskilled classification or none…Because of my color, I must ditch dig or work on the road, in spite of my college training and in spite of physical handicaps from amputation and high blood pressure…

I don’t think that discrimination is intended at Washington (the nation’s capital), but here in this country the colored race has no chance to get a job when it is a choice between colors. I don’t see much chance for our people to get anywhere when the color line instead of ability determines the opportunities to get ahead economically.”

**SOURCE 5: Book by Petra Press (*Through the Decades – The 1930s* 🡪 Page 104)**

* In each of its goals the New Deal was partially successful. The production controls and price supports created by the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) set up in 1933 helped put many business owners and farmers back on their feet, but the nation’s economy did not regain its 1929 level until the United States entered World War II. The Public Works Administration (PWA) and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) formed in 1935 helped many of the jobless make it through the hard times of the Great Depression, but nearly 9.5 million people remained unemployed in 1939. Probably more than any of Roosevelt’s social programs, it was the war that ultimately wrenched American from the depression. Arms production simulated industry.

**SOURCE 6: ABC-CLIO History Database Article by Brett Piersma**

**Article Title:** *How Successful was the New Deal in Pulling America out of the Great Depression?*

* “The Great Depression was a time in American history when a quarter of the population was jobless; many people struggled to feed, house, and clothe themselves and their families; and businesses and banks failed regularly. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to change the course of the Great Depression with his innovative series of relief policies, dubbed the “New Deal.” While improving the quality of life and ending the Great Depression was the foremost aim of the New Deal, **these things did not truly happen until the start of World War II**. All three of our perspective authors agree that the New Deal alone did not end the Great Depression.”
* “The majority of Roosevelt’s programs, such as the Agricultural Adjustment Agency (AAA), were nonsensical at best and destructive at worst. Too many of the New Deal programs, were irresponsible, worked against each other, and hindered real economic growth.”

[**SOURCE 7: 2009 Interview with Jim Powell (Historian & New Deal Expert) by CNN**](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/02/20/Newdeal.debate/index.html?iref=newssearch)

**Article Title =** *New Deal or Raw Deal?*

**Question =** *Did the New Deal help lift the United States out of the Great Depression?*

* “It certainly did not. The New Deal prolonged the Great Depression not because of one mistake, but because of a combination of policies that make it more expensive to hire people.”
* “Some of the time during the 1930s, the economy expanded, but chronic high unemployment persisted throughout the period. It averaged 17 percent. The best the New Deal could do was 14 % (double what we have now), and at times, New Deal unemployment was over 20 %.”
* “The chronic high unemployment is what concerns everybody. FDR might have lifted people's spirits, but he never could figure out how to promote the recovery of private-sector employment.”

**\*\*FOR (SUPPORT)\*\* - The New Deal Sources**

**SOURCE 1: 1938 Interview with Charles Fusco (from the Library of Congress)**

* “I can get a job today even we (America) got a depression. I don’t mean that I wasn’t on relief when things got tough because there was a time when everything was shut down and I had to get on relief for a job. It isn’t so long ago I was working for the WPA. Believe me it was a big help.”
* “When it came my turn that I needed help the politicians told me that I had to go on relief – well, when I did I was handed a shovel and pick…Roosevelt is a damn good man – you take all these young fellows and you can’t talk to them like in the old days to convince them to vote for you. Today all these kids are satisfied on the WPA and the NYA. My son works there and gets 44 cents an hour.”
* “You take the NRA. I think that was very good – it gave everybody a chance except those who are misers (people who are cheap) and are never satisfied if they make 100 dollars a week.”

**SOURCE 2: ABC-CLIO History Database Article (*“The New Deal Enabled Economic Recovery”*)**

* “Only three years into the Great Depression, Roosevelt became president in 1933. Following a cautiously experimental Herbert Hoover, Roosevelt initially worked to reestablish the American people’s faith in private banking as well as to assist the neediest citizens with temporary federal support. Over the next half decade, he bolstered private investing by creating the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) and the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC), both designed to foster working-class confidence in banking and the stock market.”
* “It was because of Roosevelt’s New Deal policies that the U.S. economy was ready not only to recover completely by the 1940s, but also meet the international demand for industrial war goods.”
* “Turning back to the initial statement – **“The New Deal didn’t end the Great Depression, World War II ended the Great Depression”** – technically speaking is true. The American economic landscape was not overtly healthy even as late as 1939. Millions of people were still out of work, and the $20 billion dollars of New Deal deficit spending seemed to have done little more than keep the economy barely afloat. But what was well in place by 1939 was a newly regenerated American capitalism. With banking and investment safeguards in place as well as a better organized relationship between capital and labor, the nation was completely ready to emerge as an economically thriving world industrial world power overnight. If the New Deal did not immediately end the Great Depression, it put America on a foundation well ready to overcome the hardships of the depression.”

**SOURCE 3: 1939 Interview with George Dobbin (a Mill Worker):**

“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 in the time of the country they 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 sight better even when they wasn’t much to eat in our homes.

Roosevelt picked us up out of the mud and stood us up but whenever he turns us loose I’m afraid we’re goin’ to fall and go deeper in the mud than we was before. That’s because so many of his own political party has turned against him and brought defeat to lots of his thinkin’ and plannin’.

If they keep abuckin’ against him (not supporting President Roosevelt) and bigheads get in there that try to make too a quick a turn back, desolation and poverty will follow in our country.

Roosevelt is the only President we ever had that thought the Constitution belonged to the poor man too…Yes sir, it took Roosevelt to read the Constitution and find out them folks way back yonder that made it was talkin’ about the pore man right along with the rich one. I am a Roosevelt man.”

**Source 4: “The New Deal Was a Tremendous Achievement” (Page 91-98)**

* **Alan Brinkley, an expert on U.S. History,** believed*“the shortcomings of the New Deal vanished in the general perspective of its supreme success: the restoration of democracy as a workable way of life. The New Deal took a broken and despairing land and gave it new confidence in itself.”*
* Before the New Deal, many of the government institutions and social programs that Americans now take for granted, and consider vital to their security and happiness, did not exist. There was no national old-age pension plan, no aid to dependent children, no federal housing, no federal compensation for the unemployed, no regulation (monitoring) of the stock market, no federal school lunch program for poor children, no minimum wage, and no government welfare system.
* Many people today regard the last of these – welfare – as money badly spent, partly, they say, because it destroys the work ethic and also because many people on welfare abuse (take advantage) of the system. Yet even that system’s most staunchest (toughest) critics admit that some minimum level of welfare is needed in a humane society; and this minimum level, and nothing more, is what the New Deal originally provided at a time when society’s truly needy had quite literally nowhere else to turn.
* **Historian Anthony Badger** argues *“the New Deal welfare programs gave the unemployed money and jobs. The Social Security Act created insurance for the old and unemployed which had existed nowhere before. Social Security also initiated a quantum leap in the provision of assistance to the old, the blind and dependent children. New Deal welfare programs provided direct assistance to perhaps as many as 35 percent of the population.”*
* The tally of other New Deal achievements that have made American life more comfortable and secure is enormous. The 1934 Securities and Exchange Act provided for government supervision of the stock exchanges, making another crash like the one that initiated the Depression less likely. In housing, the 1933 Home Owners Loan Corporation refinanced home mortgages, saving tens of thousands of people from losing their homes due to foreclosure. In 1934 the Federal Housing Administration began insuring construction loans, making it possible for millions of Americans to build or renovate their homes. In addition, the New Deal wiped out most sweatshops, which exploited and took advantage of poor, desperate workers. The New Deal also removed over 150,000 child laborers from dangerous factory jobs and improved working conditions in all workplaces by mandating (requiring) various minimum work safety standards.
* In addition to providing so many important and lasting material benefits for the nation, the New Deal greatly boosted the American people’s morale (self-esteem) at a time when it had reached a dangerously low level; and thereby it restored the country’s belief in itself and what it could achieve.

**SOURCE 5: Book by Petra Press (*Through the Decades – The 1930s* 🡪 Pages 98 – 99)**

* “Because of the New Deal, Americans in the 1930s had the unprecedented opportunity to soak up cheap or free culture. The New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA) did more than put shovels in workers’ hands and construct buildings. It sponsored musicians, actors, and artists to provide free or cheap concerts, plays, art exhibits, and even self-improvement courses in music, arts, and crafts.”
* “The WPA also hired playwrights, directors, scene designers, actors, make-up artists, and musicians who otherwise would have remained on breadlines. The WPA also provided free or inexpensive puppet shows, dance recitals, musical presentations, and dramas. Never before or since has the American government so extensively sponsored and financially supported the arts.”
* The New Deal arts projects provided work for jobless artists, but they also had a larger mission: to promote American art and culture and to give more Americans access to what Roosevelt described as ‘an abundant life.’ New Deal projects saved thousands of artists from poverty and despair and enabled Americans all across the country to see an original painting for the first time, attend their first professional live theater, or take their first music or drawing class.”

**SOURCE 6: ABC-CLIO History Database Article by Chris Mullin**

**Article Title:** *How Successful was the New Deal in Pulling America out of the Great Depression?*

* “The Great Depression was a time in American history when a quarter of the population was jobless; many people struggled to feed, house, and clothe themselves and their families; and businesses and banks failed regularly. President Franklin D. Roosevelt attempted to change the course of the Great Depression with his innovative series of relief policies, dubbed the “New Deal.” While improving the quality of life and ending the Great Depression was the foremost aim of the New Deal, **these things did not truly happen until the start of World War II**. All three of our perspective authors agree that the New Deal alone did not end the Great Depression.”
* “Without Roosevelt’s New Deal policies, the U.S. economy would not have recovered quickly enough to meet the international demand for war goods and services initiated by World War II. The New Deal was, therefore, a success in that it stimulated economic growth and, equally important, allowed Roosevelt to maintain a capitalist free market economy; conversely, when faced with the same dilemmas, much of Europe had embraced socialist or communist policies as a measure of control.”

[**SOURCE 7: 2009 Interview with Adam Cohen (Historian & New Deal Expert) by CNN**](http://www.cnn.com/2009/US/02/20/Newdeal.debate/index.html?iref=newssearch)

**Article Title =** *New Deal or Raw Deal?*

**Question =** *Did the New Deal help lift the United States out of the Great Depression?*

* “Yes, and in two different ways. One, it had a definite impact on the U.S. economy. From 1933 on, you saw a steady increase in the GDP [gross national product], which showed that it was helping with economic activity. You also saw unemployment going down.”
* “It is true that the Great Depression didn't end until World War II, with the [fiscal] stimulation it provided. That really suggests we just needed more spending. The New Deal was working, but we needed more of the New Deal. We needed more New Deal spending.”
* “People who say the New Deal didn't help also ignore the fact that the New Deal put millions of people to work. Ronald Reagan's father had a New Deal job. People could see actual progress on the ground. They could see the economy getting better. If people believe things are getting better, they start spending.”

**Additional Important New Deal Facts (\*SEE FOOTNOTE # BELOW FOR AUTHOR\*):**

* “Before the New Deal, government had been expected to provide conditions that would help business. But government was expected to do nothing for the workers who made business profits possible. With Roosevelt, many laws were passed to help workers, farmers, and ordinary citizens. Government money was spent on the poor. Some people didn’t like that idea. But others understood that, if it was done wisely, the nation would be stronger and better for it.”[[1]](#footnote-1)
* “Between 1933 and 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) gave work and training in forestry, farming, flood control, and clearing up to more than 2.5 million young people. Many of today’s roads, airports, parks, bridges, and schools were built as Works Progress Administration (WPA) projects. By 1940, about 8.5 million people got jobs through the WPA and the agency had constructed or rebuilt 200,000 buildings and bridges and 600,000 miles of roads and water pipes.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* One especially valuable WPA project writers undertook was compiling the *American Slave Narratives*. In doing this, writers interviewed more than 2,300 former slaves. Many of these individuals were quite old, and it was important to capture their life stories before they died. As a result of this project, there exists a firsthand account of what slavery was like in the U.S.[[3]](#footnote-3)

1. Joy Hakim, A History of US: War, Peace, and All That Jazz 1918-1945 (Page 110). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Sally Senzell Isaacs, America in the time of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Pages 16-17). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Elaine Landau, Cornerstones of Freedom: The Great Depression (2nd Series) (Page 37). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)