



## LESSON 7.2.12 | WATCH | Crash Course US History #34 The New Deal

### PURPOSE

In this video, you will learn about President Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression, The New Deal. Through this video, you will come to understand the successes and failures of the New Deal. Its essential programs and the lasting impact of the establishment of the welfare state are important ideas worth paying particular attention to.

### LINK

- [Crash Course US History #34 – The New Deal](#)

Watch the video on your own time, either at home, on your phone, or in the library.

### PREVIEW

In which John Green teaches you about the New Deal, which was president Franklin D. Roosevelt's plan to pull the United States out of the Great Depression of the 1930's. Did it work? Maybe. John will teach you about some of the most effective and some of the best known programs of the New Deal. They weren't always the same thing. John will tell you who supported the New Deal, and who opposed it. He'll also get into how the New Deal changed the relationship between the government and citizens, and will even reveal just how the Depression ended. (hint: it was war spending)

### PROCESS

Remember that John speaks very quickly, and you should watch the video with captions. Don't forget to pause and rewind when necessary. Before you watch the video, reread the the Unit 7 Essential Questions and the second of the Lesson 7.2 Essential Questions.



## LESSON 7.2.12 | WATCH | Key Ideas – Factual

Think about the following questions as you watch the video.

1. According to FDR's campaign in the 1932 election, what was the responsibility of the government?
2. What was the New Deal?
3. What is the National Recovery Administration (NRA)?
4. What two laws stand out for their far-reaching effects during the second New Deal?
5. What were the goals of the Congress of Industrial Organizations?
6. In what ways did unions play an important role in shaping the ideology of the second New Deal?



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7. What does Social Security provide, how was it funded, and what did it mean in terms of the relationship between government and citizens?

8. What are Keynesian economics?

9. Describe the initiatives of the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

10. How were southern African-Americans at a disadvantage during the New Deal era?

### LESSON 7.2.12 | WATCH | Conceptual Thinking

Answer the following question to make connections across different concepts and think more critically about the information presented in the video.

1. According to Eric Foner, the New Deal “made the government an institution directly experienced in Americans’ daily lives and directly concerned with their welfare.” Reflect on this given your own experience. How do Americans today view the role of government in their lives? What are the criticisms of government being directly concerned with the lives of citizens?



## LESSON 7.2.13 | READ | Impact of the New Deal

### PURPOSE

This selection, from the Open Source textbook *The American Yawp*, provides you with an overview of how the impacts of the Great Depression and the New Deal were felt by different groups in different parts of the United States. This reading should give you a greater sense of the diversity of experience

in the daily lives of Americans during the period and provide you with a deeper understanding of the New Deal.

### ATTACHMENT

- [Impact of the New Deal](#)

### PROCESS

Read the attached document. As always, you should read actively, marking the text as you go. This will allow you to be better prepared to discuss the reading in class. After completing the reading, be sure to answer the questions at the end of the document. As always, keep the bigger picture in mind and refer back to the unit and lesson Essential Questions as necessary.



## READING | Regional Impacts of the New Deal — Selections from *The American Yawp*, Chapter 23<sup>1</sup>

### The New Deal in the South

The impact of initial New Deal legislation was readily apparent in the South, a region of perpetual poverty especially plagued by the Depression. In 1929 the average per capita income in the American Southeast was \$365, the lowest in the nation. Southern farmers averaged \$183 per year at a time when farmers on the West Coast made more than four times that. Moreover, they were trapped into the production of cotton and corn, crops that depleted the soil and returned ever-diminishing profits. Despite the ceaseless efforts of civic boosters, what little industry the South had remained low-wage, low-skilled, and primarily extractive. Southern workers made significantly less than their national counterparts: 75% of non-southern textile workers, 60% of iron and steel workers, and a paltry 45% of lumber workers. At the time of the crash, southerners were already underpaid, underfed, and undereducated.

Major New Deal programs were designed with the South in mind. FDR hoped that by drastically decreasing the amount of land devoted to cotton, the AAA would arrest its long-plummeting price decline. Farmers plowed up existing crops and left fields fallow, and the market price did rise. But in an agricultural world of landowners and landless farm workers (such as tenants and sharecroppers), the benefits of the AAA bypassed the southerners who needed them most. The government relied

on landowners and local organizations to distribute money fairly to those most affected by production limits, but many owners simply kicked tenants and croppers off their land, kept the subsidy checks for keeping those acres fallow, and reinvested the profits in mechanical farming equipment that further suppressed the demand for labor. Instead of making farming profitable again, the AAA pushed landless southern farm workers off the land.

But Roosevelt's assault on southern poverty took many forms. Southern industrial practices attracted much attention. The NRA encouraged higher wages and better conditions. It began to suppress the rampant use of child labor in southern mills, and, for the first time, provided federal protection for unionized workers all across the country. Those gains were eventually solidified in the 1938 Fair Labor Standards Act, which set a national minimum wage of \$0.25/hour (eventually rising to .40/hour). The minimum wage disproportionately affected low-paid southern workers, and brought southern wages within the reach of northern wages.

The president's support for unionization further impacted the South. Southern industrialists had proven themselves ardent foes of unionization, particularly in the infamous southern textile mills. In 1934, when workers at textile mills across the southern Piedmont struck over low wages and long hours, owners turned to local and state

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.americanyawp.com/text/23-the-great-depression/>



authorities to quash workers' groups, even as they recruited thousands of strikebreakers from the many displaced farmers swelling industrial centers looking for work. But in 1935 the National Labor Relations Act, also known as the Wagner Act, guaranteed the rights of most workers to unionize and bargain collectively. And so unionized workers, backed by the support of the federal government and determined to enforce the reforms of the New Deal, pushed for higher wages, shorter hours, and better conditions. With growing success, union members came to see Roosevelt as a protector of workers' rights. Or, as one union leader put it, an "agent of God."

Perhaps the most successful New Deal program in the South was the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), an ambitious program to use hydroelectric power, agricultural and industrial reform, flood control, economic development, education, and healthcare, to radically remake the impoverished watershed region of the Tennessee River. Though the area of focus was limited, Roosevelt's TVA sought to "make a different type of citizen" out of the area's penniless residents. The TVA built a series of hydroelectric dams to control flooding and distribute electricity to the otherwise non-electrified areas at government-subsidized rates. Agents of the TVA met with residents and offered training and general education classes to improve agricultural practices and exploit new job opportunities. The TVA encapsulates Roosevelt's vision for uplifting the South and integrating it into the larger national economy.

Roosevelt initially courted conservative southern Democrats to ensure the legislative success of the New Deal, all but guaranteeing that the racial and economic inequalities of the region remained intact, but, by the end of his second term, he had won the support of enough non-southern voters that he felt confident in confronting some of the region's most glaring inequalities. Nowhere was this more apparent than in his endorsement of a report, formulated by a group of progressive southern New Dealers, entitled "A Report on Economic Conditions in the South." The pamphlet denounced the hardships wrought by the southern economy—in his introductory letter to the Report, called the region "the Nation's No. 1 economic problem"—and blasted reactionary southern anti-New Dealers. He suggested that the New Deal could save the South and thereby spur a nationwide recovery. The Report was among the first broadsides in Roosevelt's coming reelection campaign that addressed the inequalities that continued to mark southern and national life.

## The New Deal in Appalachia

The New Deal also addressed another poverty-stricken region, Appalachia, the mountain-and-valley communities that roughly follow the Appalachian Mountain Range from southern New York to the foothills of Northern Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. Appalachia's abundant natural resources, including timber and coal, were in high demand during the country's post-Civil War industrial expansion, but Appalachian industry simply extracted these resources for profit in far-off



industries, depressing the coal-producing areas even earlier than the rest of the country. By the mid-1930s, with the Depression suppressing demand, many residents were stranded in small, isolated communities whose few employers stood on the verge of collapse. Relief workers from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) reported serious shortages of medical care, adequate shelter, clothing, and food. Rampant illnesses, including typhus, tuberculosis, pneumonia, and venereal disease, as well as childhood malnutrition, further crippled Appalachia.

Several New Deal programs targeted the region. Under the auspices of the NIRA, Roosevelt established the Division of Subsistence Homesteads (DSH) within the Department of the Interior to give impoverished families an opportunity to relocate “back to the land”: the DSH established 34 homestead communities nationwide, including the Appalachian regions of Alabama, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and West Virginia. The CCC contributed to projects throughout Appalachia, including the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia, reforestation of the Chattahoochee National Forest in Georgia, and state parks such as Pine Mountain Resort State Park in Kentucky. The TVA’s efforts aided communities in Tennessee and North Carolina, and the Rural Electric Administration (REA) brought electricity to 288,000 rural households.

## Equal Rights and the New Deal

The Great Depression was particularly tough for nonwhite Americans. As an African American pensioner told interviewer Studs Terkel, “The

Negro was born in depression. It didn’t mean too much to him. The Great American Depression . . . only became official when it hit the white man.” Black workers were generally the last hired when businesses expanded production and the first fired when businesses experienced downturns. In 1932, with the national unemployment average hovering around 25%, black unemployment reached as high as 50%, while even those black who kept their jobs saw their already low wages cut dramatically.

Blacks faced discrimination everywhere, but suffered especially severe legal inequality in the Jim Crow South. In 1931, for instance, a group of nine young men riding the rails between Chattanooga and Memphis, Tennessee, were pulled from the train near Scottsboro, Alabama, and charged with assaulting two white women. Despite clear evidence that the assault had not occurred, and despite one of the women later recanting, the young men endured a series of sham trials in which all but one were sentenced to death. Only the communist-oriented International Legal Defense came to the aid of the “Scottsboro Boys,” who soon became a national symbol of continuing racial prejudice in America and a rallying point for civil rights-minded Americans. In appeals, the ILD successfully challenged the Boys’ sentencing and the death sentences were either commuted or reversed, although the last of the accused did not receive parole until 1946.

Despite a concerted effort to appoint black advisors to some New Deal programs, Franklin Roosevelt did little to directly address the difficulties black



communities faced. To do so openly would provoke southern Democrats and put his New Deal coalition at risk. Roosevelt not only rejected such proposals as abolishing the poll tax and declaring lynching a federal crime, he refused to specifically target African American needs in any of his larger relief and reform packages. As he explained to the national secretary of the NAACP, “I just can’t take that risk.”

In fact, even many of the programs of the New Deal had made hard times more difficult. When the codes of the NRA set new pay scales, they usually took into account regional differentiation and historical data. In the South, where African Americans had long suffered unequal pay, the new codes simply perpetuated that inequality. The codes also exempted those involved in farm work and domestic labor, the occupations of a majority of southern black men and women. The AAA was equally problematic as owners displaced black tenants and sharecroppers, many of whom were forced to return to their farms as low-paid day labor or to migrate to cities looking for wage work.

Perhaps the most notorious failure of the New Deal to aid African Americans came with the passage of the Social Security Act. Southern politicians chafed at the prospect of African Americans benefiting from federally-sponsored social welfare, afraid that economic security would allow black southerners to escape the cycle of poverty that kept them tied to the land as cheap, exploitable farm laborers. The Jackson (Mississippi) Daily News callously warned that “The average Mississippian can’t imagine

himself chipping in to pay pensions for able-bodied Negroes to sit around in idleness . . . while cotton and corn crops are crying for workers.” Roosevelt agreed to remove domestic workers and farm laborers from the provisions of the bill, excluding many African Americans, already laboring under the strictures of legal racial discrimination, from the benefits of an expanding economic safety net.

Women, too, failed to receive the full benefits of New Deal programs. On one hand, Roosevelt included women in key positions within his administration, including the first female Cabinet secretary, Frances Perkins, and a prominently placed African American advisor in the National Youth Administration, Mary McLeod Bethune. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was a key advisor to the president and became a major voice for economic and racial justice. But many New Deal programs were built upon the assumption that men would serve as “breadwinners” and women as mothers, homemakers, and consumers. New Deal programs aimed to help both but usually by forcing such gendered assumptions, making it difficult for women to attain economic autonomy. New Deal social welfare programs tended to funnel women into means-tested, state administered relief programs while reserving “entitlement” benefits for male workers, creating a kind of two-tiered social welfare state. And so, despite great advances, the New Deal failed to challenge core inequalities that continued to mark life in the United States.







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## WORKSHEET | Questions

5. How did the New Deal impact Appalachia?

6. What is meant by the statement: "The Negro was born in depression."

7. Who were the "Scottsboro Boys"?

8. In what ways did the New Deal fail to address the concerns of African Americans and women?