

Introduction

This unit emphasizes writing and critical thinking. There are basically three types of activities. The news stories, writing exercises and telegrams require students to evaluate, prioritize and write about historical events. They must actually **use** the information rather than just memorize it.

The chronology and data analysis activities require students to detect trends and draw conclusions.

The viewpoints and issues activities present different views of the same event rather than just the single view often presented by textbooks. The critical thinking exercises that accompany these units require the students to evaluate the information.

Many of the activities deal with popular news stories of the decade that are usually not covered in textbooks.

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Creative Activities for Teaching Critical Thinking and Writing U.S. History: The 20th Century

There are nine units in this series.

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- SS141 1910's
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- SS143 1930's
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- SS146 1960's
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The 1930's

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The Depression

President Roosevelt took office in the depths of the Depression. One fourth of the people were out of work. He had to do something to get the economy going. There were several approaches to the problem. Which would you choose?

Choices

A. Get business to cooperate in controlling prices and wages so that prices and wages don't fall.

B. Spend money on public works to put people to work.

C. Loan money to businesses so that they can expand and put people to work.

The Farm Crisis

Farm prices had been depressed since World War I. With the depression farm prices dropped even lower. Farmers produced more than the population was willing to buy. Many farmers had borrowed money to farm. They mortgaged their farms in order to borrow money. With the drop in farm prices they could not pay the loans back. There were several possible solutions.

Choices

A. Farmers should be paid for not growing important crops such as cotton, wheat and corn. This would benefit farmers who have the most land but would cut production, and raise the price of the crops.

B. Small farmers could not make their mortgage payments. Their farms were at risk of repossession. Small farmers should be granted loans so that they could keep their farms.

C. The excess production of U.S. farmers could be taken care of by increasing exports to other countries.

D. The government could print more money. Printing more money would cause prices to rise and reduce the amount that the farmers had to pay for their mortgages.

Directions

If you were President Roosevelt which decision would you make?

The Rights of Factory Workers

Workers had never enjoyed the legal right to organize unions and bargain with their employers. The National Recovery Act had given workers the right to bargain for better wages but employers found the provisions of the law easy to circumvent. The problem with the union representation under the National Recovery Act was, which union would represent workers. There were several possible solutions to the problem. Which would you choose?

Choices

A. The workers could join whatever union they wanted and the union they joined would represent them.

B. Workers would vote for the union they wanted to represent them. The union that won the most votes would represent all of the workers, even those who did not vote for it.

The Supreme Court

Roosevelt and Congress could pass laws to alleviate the Depression. The Supreme Court could decide whether or not these laws were constitutional. The Supreme Court was far more conservative than Roosevelt or Congress. It rejected some of the important legislation such as the National Recovery Act. Roosevelt was frustrated with the negative decisions of the Supreme Court. Supreme Court justices are appointed for life terms. What would you do?

Choices

A. Ask Congress to expand the court by six members.

B. Wait for the existing members to die or retire and appoint new judges.