

## TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT – 2009-2012

### **Lesson Title** – The Great Depression and the New Deal from Marisa Haralson

**Grade** – High School

**Length of class period** – 60 minutes

**Inquiry** – (What essential question are students answering, what problem are they solving, or what decision are they making?)

- ✓ What is the role of government in providing support for its citizens?
- ✓ What is your belief about the opportunities given to people during the Great Depression?

**Objectives** – (What content and skills do you expect students to learn from this lesson?)

- ✓ Students will be able to interpret and evaluate excerpts from interviews.
- ✓ Students will be able to analyze and evaluate a primary source.

**Materials** – (What primary sources or local resources are the basis for this lesson?)

Passages quoted below are from:

<http://memory.loc.gov/wpaintro/intro01.html>

The Federal Writer's Project

Voices from the Thirties

**Activities** – (What will you and your students do during the lesson to promote learning?)

1. Review the historical events that pertain to the worksheet – brainstorm on the board prior knowledge and create a fact base to build from.
2. Read the passages independently completing the questions.
3. Each student will discuss and explain their answers, as a class discuss the message of the responses, and have students examine what was the purpose of the interviews.
4. After the discussion the students should consider life today in comparison to life in the thirties.

**Assessment** – (How will you assess what student learned during this lesson?)

They will answer questions after each passage.

#### Questions

1. What was the benefit of having the government create the WPA?
2. In the current economy, do you believe that the US government should create programs to help the jobless?
3. Why do you think that a town would not want to have a “pauper list”? What would be the reason to help anyone that came into town?
4. Do you believe that towns still help anyone that needs it? Or is it other groups? Be sure to give and explain examples.
5. Why would the government want to get young boys to work? What is the “lasting benefit” that this person is speaking of?
6. What are programs today that prevent boys (and girls) from becoming a “liability” to the country? Why are they important to have?
7. Why do you think that people are not going to go back to spending like they did in the 1920's?
8. What do you think about the quote “To reach that glorious but rather silly level of spending, we must probably wait until a new generation of spenders, arrives”? Are we currently as a “glorious but rather silly level of spending”?

## **Connecticut Grade Level Expectations**

Ask relevant questions related to social studies/history to initiate, extend, or debate a point of view.

Use evidence to develop an interpretation of a historical event.

Read the following passage and interviews. Answer the questions (on a separate sheet of paper) using your knowledge and opinion of the New Deal as well as details from the writing.

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During the Great Depression of the 1930s, when as many as one out of four Americans could not find jobs, the federal government stepped in to become the employer of last resort. The Works Progress Administration (WPA), an ambitious New Deal program, put 8,500,000 jobless to work, mostly on projects that required manual labor. With Uncle Sam meeting the payroll, countless bridges, highways and parks were constructed or repaired.

**1. What was the benefit of having the government create the WPA?**

**2. In the current economy do you believe that the US government should create programs to help the jobless?**

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"One thing nobody can say, by the gods, is that this office plays politics with relief. That's one thing I don't believe in. A man comes in here and shows where he needs help, and he gets it, regardless of politics. I don't care whether he's a Republican or a Democrat or a Socialist -- or if he isn't even a citizen, if he hasn't got enough to eat, we see that he gets enough to eat. Lots of people are out of work today through no fault of their own. They've got to be helped. No paupers today. We don't have a pauper list any more. And those we can't get on the WPA we do the best we can to help other ways. We got a system here -- we give the ones on direct relief living expenses and they pay the town back so many hours of work at the same rate of pay as WPA. That way, they can't be called paupers. No, sir, no more pauper list in this town."

**1. Why do you think that a town would not want to have a "pauper list"? What would be the reason to help anyone that came into town?**

**2. Do you believe that towns still help anyone that needs it? Or is it other groups? Be sure to give and explain examples.**

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"To my mind one of the greatest accomplishments of the New Deal has been the organization of the Civilian Conservation Camps. The training given the boys will be of lasting benefit. They have changed many a boy from a liability to a valuable asset to his country. They have kept thousands of boys off the roads just idly roaming over the country - hiking and beating rides on freight trains, etc. Many of them have become good citizens."

**1. Why would the government want to get young boys to work? What is the "lasting benefit" that this person is speaking of?**

**2. What are programs today that prevent boys (and girls) from becoming a "liability" to the country? Why are they important to have?**

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"The New Deal policies seem to me to be generally correct, and the American people appear to have some understanding of what is happening. They are not likely to hand the full control back to our former masters. However, I do not think we are going to see the 1929 levels reached rapidly. Too many people are now accustomed to live on a lower consuming level than they did in the 1920's. Very few of these I know who ere earning well during that period are now spending as freely as they did then. To reach that glorious but rather silly level of spending, we must probably wait until a new generation of spenders, arrives."

**1. Why do you think that people are not going to go back to spending like they did in the 1920's?**

**2. What do you think about the quote “To reach that glorious but rather silly level of spending, we must probably wait until a new generation of spenders, arrives”? Are we currently as a “glorious but rather silly level of spending”?**